

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 25th February 2024 10 am

Receiving grace

Welcome to all

Opening Scripture.....

Hymn MP 708 To God be the Glory

Scripture Psalm 95/96 (page)

Prayer

Sleepout slides Testimony

Chorus MP 40 Ascribe Greatness

MP 782 Worthy O Worthy are you Lord

Notices Fellowship lunch, Trident Monday, Members meeting

Prayer and Lord's prayer

Readings I Corinthians 1:1-9 (page 1144)

Hymn MP

Sermon Receiving grace

Hymn MP 1151 Amazing Grace (new version)

Closing Prayer:

349 It Passeth knowledge that dear love of thine

486 Now thank we all our God

Prayer and Exordium

- Do you remember the children's talk about the farmer who found a great treasure? That treasure; gold, silver and jewels glittered in the sun, it was worth a fortune. The farmer then gave up all he had – that it might be his.

This morning we are considering a better treasure, not the silverware, not metal or gems - but true treasure. The grace of God. The title this morning is *Receiving grace*. x2

In the city of Corinth Christ's Church was formed of godless people from a godless city. How? Because those godless people in that godless city had received grace. grace. That is what changed them completely.

So here at KNBC the church is made up of those who have received grace.

A Christian is someone who has received grace. That is why Paul often started his letters with the phrase: 3 **Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

But if you know the first thing about this letter that Paul felt he had to write, you will know it is full of correcting the churches many problems. So why does he start with this passage of grace? Is it some sort of delusional positive thinking? Or is he trying to butter them up, or soften them up before he goes for the jugular? To answer that we need to understand what grace is.

So what is grace?

Grace or the Greek word 'charis' means gift x2. It is something received. And this grace comes **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

In one sense everyone receives grace from God, for all we have comes from him. We have nothing of our own, - except our sin. God created everything which both the unbeliever and the believer share and enjoy. So too the patience of God, a measure of peace in the heart, the fragile but evident harmony we see between people, all these are part of what we call common grace. He gives to all because God is kind to all, as Jesus said God is **kind to the ungrateful and wicked.** Lu 6:35

But there is a specific grace he says - **grace given you in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus, the One full of grace and truth.** This is not the general gifts of God dispersed among his creation, this is specifically found in Jesus, in Jesus. We could better say that this gift, this grace IS Jesus. x2

The grace of Christ, is Christ himself! Have Him, and you have this grace.

And who is this grace for? The man or woman who turns from their sinful ways in repentance and faith receives from God the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. **I am in Him and He is in me. I in Him, and He in me.**

Those Christians had received that grace, as every true Christian has.

This grace is personal, life changing, and shows! Paul returning from his missionary journeys reported back to the church at Antioch what the Lord had done saying how he saw **evidence for the grace of God** in people.

This grace defines who we are. No wonder Paul starts with the apostolical benediction. **Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Turn to Jesus to seek forgiveness for your sins, look to Christ crucified and you will find grace, you will receive the peace of God, you will experience the love of God. It is indeed the summary of all blessings.

⇒ **That is because who Jesus is and what he achieved now becomes mine.**

His victory at Calvary becomes mine, His ascension to heaven is mine. His eternal favour with God Almighty becomes mine.

Forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, the life of God, the peace of God, the Joy of God, the Hope of God, the fatherly love of God, the assurance of God, the unbroken presence of God, the wisdom of God, understanding from God, are all mine in Christ Jesus. Whatever Jesus has – I now have. x2

⇒ **This is all summed up in the word ‘grace’ for it is grace in Christ Jesus**

Grace had come to those at Corinth

Those in Corinth had received this Grace and that had changed everything.

Thus Paul starts to write to the church, a church with a host of problems, which he will soon be addressing, by reminding them of who they now are:

- Just as General Eisenhower’s message to the troops prior to D Day. He reminds the troops who they now are and who they represent.
- Army leaders know of all the problems; poor training, disease and sickness, low morale, jealousies between officers and men of different nationalities etc., etc. Yet while they don’t ignore the problems, they are reminded who they are. They are an army under arms, under the banner, commissioned to fight, ready to fight, sent out to fight.

If Paul had any doubt about the grace given to the Christians then he would not have written a letter addressing the problems. No point. But they had received this grace from the Lord. So Paul rightly starts with thanksgiving 4 **I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.**

2a

Do you have this grace? Have you received this treasure?

This is one of those yes / no questions. Like that check box on a form, it is one or the other, it cannot be anything else. You can’t fudge it.

We live in an age of spiritual vagueness. It is from the world where nothing is definitely in – and nothing is definitely out, nothing is definitely yes and nothing is definitely no.

It is on one level quite a comfortable place to be because you say to yourself “I am not extreme, I am a moderate”. It is comfortable because it also means I am vague about commitment, and I like it that way. It’s an easy way.

There are Christians, who have without realizing it, taken on this way of thinking, and the result is little commitment, little serving, little love.

There is nothing of that in Jesus’s language, or his life. He loved good and hated wickedness. He gave himself 100% to His father’s will. And he said that those who follow Him are to do the same. Deny yourself, give yourself fully over to His service. He demands your all. It is at any one moment all or nothing. Which is it for you? Are you willing to forsake all? Have you?, are you like the man who saw the treasure, and willing to forsaken all for it?

As I said if Paul had any doubt about the grace given to the Christians at Corinth he would not have written a letter addressing the problems. No point. Why? No grace no change.

What’s the point pressing people to behave in a way that they can’t?

Can a sheep become a goat? No. Can a weed become wheat? No. Can a man still in sin love righteousness? No. Can a man or woman without the Spirit of Christ love Christ? No.

⇒ **It is impossible for anyone, man, woman, boy or girl to live in accordance with the new nature that Christ brings - if you do not have it.**

But these Christians had, so Paul expects them to live up to what they now have. And Christ expects you, if you have received His grace to live like it.

Paul thanks God because he knows himself what it is to receive God’s Grace in Christ, - he knows what Jesus does in a man’s life.

He knows that if that grace is there, then whatever the problems - they will be overcome. **Like the flower pushing through that impenetrable concrete** grace will be evident however hard the problems, they will overcome!

2b

When I speak to someone about their problems, or they speak to me, I am first of all wanting to know one thing, is Christ there?? x2

If he is not there, then I don't expect any fundamental change, If he is there then I expect, by his power, a lasting change, even if it takes time, even if there's a barrow load of struggle along the way.

⇒ **In Christ we have the victory!**

His Grace makes us who we are, His grace is the source, Christ is that font, that never ending stream, from whom living waters flow, down from the throne, to the lowest point, me.

Enriched:

5 For in him you have been enriched in every way

Christian you are *enriched in Christ!*, being made one with him, you now share in everything that he has received from the Father.

⇒ **If you have Christ then you are rich! He who was rich became poor so that we through his poverty can become rich!**

⇒ **In Him we have everything, the riches of heaven. Now we have the cheque book of heaven, go on! - draw all you need for the masters service!**

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Php 4:19

Many of you are not doing well with the daily troubles you have in this life. The troubles the Lord has purposely brought to you. He says **do not be anxious**, pray. **Do not worry** trust. Do you realise being anxious is a sin?! **Do not be anxious about anything**, x2 Sin takes us away from God.

■ With all the water around the ground is now waterlogged and very soft. So beware of the car going off the road – you will easily become stuck. The more you spin your wheels the worse it becomes.

Same with **worry**, we are commanded not to worry, to do so is to be disobedient, worrying is sin. This is what the worldly man or woman does. They do not have God, so they worry. But if you have received grace then know that his **grace is sufficient for you**. x2

■ A car cooling system is controlled by a thermostat. The hotter the engine - the more the water is released to cool things down. Same with the release of CO2 from the sea – we do not need to worry!

⇒ **Saving grace - is keeping grace - is growing grace**

3a

This grace shows in many ways. Paul mentions two which would have been very highly prized by the Corinthians.

— **in all your speaking and in all your knowledge — speaking and knowledge.**

1. Speech – telling forth the truth
2. Knowledge - the grasp of truth

They go together, they are essential for every Christian.

Grace in Speech

The first outward sign of true conversion is a changed tongue. The language is cleaned up. The swearing and blasphemy stop. Yes this is instant, for no Christian can be a blasphemer. No blasphemer is a Christian. The quickest way to doubt the genuineness of someone's faith is poor speech.

Cleaned up language is the sign of a cleaned-up heart. The font of filthy and nasty words is the dirty heart.

The immediate sign of grace is that this person speaks the truth, no more lying, no more slur, no more innuendo, no more deception, no more trickery. We speak the truth, always.

A change of heart, a new source, now the words are full of grace, and you?

When they heard Jesus speak **All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.** "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. Lu 4:22

Will your family and neighbours say the same, will they say isn't this (put your name here) will they now be **amazed at the gracious words that came from your lips**? Words of grace, words that no longer hurt - but heal.

And then grace in knowledge

— **in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—**

⇒ **telling forth the truth - and Knowledge, that grasp of truth.**

We live in an information age – yet we live in an age of ignorance. Tech, IT, data in mind blowing quantities exponentially rising year on year. We know so much about so much - yet we are ignorant.

Ignorant of ourselves, ignorant of human nature, ignorant of God, ignorant of the gospel, Ignorant even of the events of Christmas and Easter. Ignorant of Jesus's suffering, death and Ascension. And who speaks of Christ's return? Educated people, media particularly ignorant of our Reformation history and cannot tell the difference between a Protestant and a RC!

3b

- Wycliffe (1328 – 1384) said in his day; "I live in an age of ignorance, England is full of books yet it they were all put together there isn't an ounce of wisdom to be found amongst them".

So today in Britain we live in an age of ignorance.

When Paul uses the word 'knowledge' he is speaking of truth found through knowing Christ - **In whom all the treasures of knowledge are hid.** Col 2:3

⇒ **To have the Spirit of God - is to understand the things of God.**

Jesus said, "**The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.** Mt 13:11 Not to others, they have the parables, But to you the truths, the secrets, the things revealed spiritual – are given.

Finally - This grace of knowledge changes how you live

Where God has given these two gifts **speaking and knowledge** he has given great capacity for usefulness. Many talk much but their conversation is empty, vain and useless. Others treasure knowledge, but it never comes to you, **it's a present still in its wrapper.** But, where God gives both, you find a man or a woman qualified for eminent usefulness.

6 because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.

God sealed the truth of his Son in the Corinthian believers. Paul said to all around "I told you Christ changes lives look at those Christians at Corinth!"

- **When Josh and I go out we say if you come to KNBC you will see people whose lives are changed you will see people who live differently from those around, you will have a taste of heaven. A living testimony to Jesus. Come and see. And so when folk come in here what do they see? Welcoming people? Smiley people? Nice people? Or is it deeper, do they meet an image bearer of Christ.**

They have not meet Jesus Christ, but when they meet you – they meet Him!

7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift

Grace 'charis' is really the same as gifts 'charismata', **grace brings the gifts.**

This "grace-gift" is the operation of *grace*. He divinely empowers believers to serve each other, to love and forgive one another, grace overlooks a sin, grace does what Jesus did which is to cover it up. The Lord commends the one who does this **it is to his glory to overlook an offence. That is wisdom** Pr 19:11 How different our communal life would be if we covered over each other's sins and failings. It is NOT the natural way, it is *Spirit* empowered.

It is through the giving of **spiritual gifts** that the Lord *carries out His plan for His people*. Every true believer is equipped with gifts because every part of the body has a function. What has the Lord called you to do?

What is your gift? Are you doing what he has saved you to do? **Think about your body... is there any part of it which you would say, this does nothing I can get rid of it? Even the appendix we now know has a function.** In the same way every part of Christ's body the church has a function. How are you using your grace-gifts in serving Christ's body?

Paul gave over two chapters in his letter to the church at Corinth to explain how they should use their God given gifts, gifts they were using them for themselves and not for each other. Love for one another was sadly lacking. So the Lord places Ch 13 that wonderful chapter of love in the middle.

⇒ **If you have received grace, then let us display grace to one another.**

Paul says **as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.**

That is the next event, so let no pettiness, small mindedness steal away that crown to come for Christ's faithful servants. Do you eagerly await it? That is a sign of where your heart is. On heavenly things not on earthly things.

⇒ **The Grace that comes to Christ's people not only saves, not only keeps but will bring us safely into that final harbour.**

8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those in Christ will be presented **blameless** in Him on that day. We will not share in the Judgment Day condemnation awaiting those who die still guilty.

As Christians we must **all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ**, the podium as at the games, to, if we have run well, if we have served well, receive the prize, the crown. 2Co 5:10

To this we were called. So let us daily make progress to that end, we have the tools, we have the encouragement, we have the presence of Christ.

9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. Be faithful to Him - for we shall never find him unfaithful to us. **He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail,** Ps 89:33.

⇒ **Those who trust and hope in him will never be put to shame.**

Receiving grace is the title, that is all you can do with grace – but once you have it then - the Christ who saves is the Christ who keeps - and the Christ who will bring you safely into your final harbour. **END**