

Acts

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 July 1997

Preacher: Shaw, Geoffrey Mark (1925-1997)

- [0 : 0 0] Direct to help us, let us turn to the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 20 and verse 32.
- The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 20 and verse 32. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.
- Now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.
- Now, we read together this evening a portion of the letter that Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus.
- And it was evident in that portion as it is indeed in the whole of the letter of His love and of His concern, His care, and His desire for the church at Ephesus.
- [1 : 4 7] And this constitutes the spoken desire of His heart towards them.
- For we know that He had called the elders of the church together. And it was these things that He spoke unto them.
- And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.
- Oh, how great a desire there is in those words in Paul's soul, spirit, being for those of the Lord.
- And it is a wondrous revelation, I believe, of that love and union that exists among the true brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- [3 : 1 2] I want to try as hell to consider what the apostle desired for the church.
- And notice, first of all, that he speaks to them as brethren. There is that sense of union, of oneness, of fellowship.
- And let us notice that it is unto the brethren alone that these things are addressed. And now, brethren, I commend you to God.
- It is a wondrous thing if in love and by faith we can commit our dearest, our loved ones unto almighty God.
- You know that there are those who would seek to commit those that are near unto them to others, other creatures.
- [4 : 4 9] Perhaps to trusts that they have established to all sorts of things. But dear friend, oh, to be enabled in love and by faith to commit our loved ones unto the Lord.
- Well, the apostle says, I commend you to God.
- And I believe when he says, I commend you to God. He means God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.
- And God the Holy Ghost. Dear friend, how vital it is that we both see, know, and believe in the three persons in the Trinity, yet one God.

If we were to take away any one of those persons, or leave them out, we should be lost and without hope altogether.

[6 : 32] And what I mean is this. If you take away the Father's electing love, we have no hope, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and we are the children of wrath, even as others.

If we have no hope, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and we have no hope, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And not only the electing love of the Father, but also that which we read in this first chapter.

If we have no hope, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and we have no hope, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Why? In heaven, as it is God has not in heaven■■■■ ... things. Where are we? What are we? I'm certain of this, we shall not be found around the throne of God in heaven if we lack those things which the Father hath purposed and bestowed upon his children. So let us rejoice in God the Father who loved us and gave us unto his

Son. And God the Son, if we take him away, how shall we be washed of our sins? For the word of God declares concerning him and his people in that day shall a fountain be opened for sin and for uncleanness. Oh, the atoning work of God the Son. Not only the atoning work, but that wondrous obedience that he hath wrought whereby. He hath made a righteousness not for himself, but for his people in the fulfilling of all things perfectly, wondrously of the Father's will and of the law, so that there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ

Jesus. Oh, how needful the Son of God. Otherwise we are under condemnation save only as we be found in him and he hath wrought our righteousness. And God the Holy Ghost. Oh, how needful is the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 38] We know surely that we have read and heard the Word, the Truth, the Law and the Gospel from our earliest years. And there were many years when it had no effect.

We were conversant with it and yet ignorant of it in its reality until the divine power and influence of the Holy Spirit applied it unto the heart and unto the conscience.

And dear friend, it is his office to take of the things of Jesus and reveal them to us and seal them upon our hearts and consciences.

So when the apostle speaks unto his dear ones at Ephesus, it is no little thing that he says when he commits them to God.

Indeed, none of the desires of the soul of a living soul a little. They may not fully comprehend the largeness of them, but if we know by God's Word, those sweet divine influences of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of the Father and of the Son, how immense, how great is that which God hath wrought for us and in us.

[13 : 00] Well, then he says unto the Word of his grace. If we think of grace. If we think of grace, many are content to describe it as the free and unmerited favour of Almighty God, which it is.

But dear friend, in thinking upon these things, my mind went to another occasion when the apostle Paul leaves on record something concerning himself under the grace of God.

For we know that he had a thorn in the flesh. For we know that he had a thorn in the flesh. And he said, a messenger of Satan that buffeted me.

And I prayed unto the Lord thrice that he might take it away. And it was these words that began the impression upon my heart.

The word says, and he said to me. Oh, what a wonderful thing that is. That Almighty God stoops and bends and condescends to speak unto his children.

[14 : 58] And to speak in such a way that they know it is God. And that they know he has spoken to them. For the power, the sweetness and the blessedness enters into their souls.

So that they can be no question. It is as certain as this, that if Satan were to come and challenge it, the recipient will be able to say, but I know.

Nothing can take it away. He said unto me. And what did God say? My grace is sufficient for thee.

For my strength is made perfect in weakness. And I couldn't help thinking in reading those lines over.

The fullness that there seemed to be in that word, my grace. It seemed to convey to me far more than the favour of Almighty God.

[16 : 28] It seemed to convey to me nothing less than Christ himself. For he is the manifested grace of God. And I believe that the apostle saw it in like manner.

For he said that when the Lord had thus spoken to him, he said, Most gladly therefore will I rejoice in my infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon me.

Oh, it wasn't just a word, a favour. It was a coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in sweetness, in power, in love, and in mercy unto his soul.

What a change it made. We know that he himself declared that this thorn in the flesh grieved him, wounded him, burdened him, annoyed him even.

And he felt it most keenly. But even beyond that, we know that he said that he was a messenger of Satan to buffet him.

[17 : 49] To buffet him. So he knew what he was as it were to be assaulted by these very things, to be tempted, to be tried, to be battered.

So it was no light thing when he went unto the Lord and prayed that the Lord would take it away. But when the Lord showed unto him my grace.

He was enabled to say most gladly therefore. And you see, I believe that when he so desired these benefits and blessings unto the church at Ephesus, he makes a distinction, though it is not stated, between grace.

For grace is the very essence of the Godhead. Nothing less than that. There are many aspects to the essence of the Godhead.

Righteousness, truth, holiness, justice, love, mercy, grace.

[19 : 16] But dear friend, it hath pleased Almighty God in love unto his children to send unto them the word of grace, that the blessings of the essence of his grace be brought down into their souls, and they know the experience of them in themselves.

And when the apostle desires for the church at Ephesus, I commend you to God and the word of his grace.

His desire was that they might know that which came down into their inward parts, by the word of his grace, by the word and by the Holy Spirit into the soul, that they might be edified, that there might be that building up, that effect, that consequence within them.

Well, if we have favoured to know somewhat the word of his grace, those communications of the very essence of Almighty God unto the soul, in and through Jesus Christ the Lord, what is it that we find it to be experimentally?

Well, we read in the epistle to Timothy, and in the third chapter, and the sixteenth verse, all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect or mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

[21 : 41] So there are various aspects and consequences of the word of his grace, of scripture unto his children.

And we must of necessity notice that the law, as well as the gospel, is the word of his grace.

Some may wonder, or even resist the thought, that the law is the word of his grace.

But consider that he himself has said that the law is the schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

Furthermore, the law makes known the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And if Almighty God, in his boundless grace, so comes and teaches you and me these very things, then we shall see the largeness of his grace in having compassion upon us when we were dead, in trespasses and in sin.

[23 : 19] We shall be able to say with a real understanding and with a heartfelt thankfulness, He saw me ruined in the fall, yet loved me, notwithstanding all.

And doesn't the Lord purpose that his children shall know in some measure of his wondrous grace in quickening them?

For he says, look unto the whole of the pit, whence ye are deep. And dear friend, if the Lord brings us there, oh, what grace has been manifested!

You can't look at the whole of the pit while you're still in it. Only God can lift the sinner out of it. And when he causes him to consider and to know, oh, there is an overflowing of heart and of soul in thankfulness unto him.

Well, when the law comes, it lays us in ruins.

[24 : 53] I wonder whether we have seen some of those ancient ruined cities, that once proud, prosperous, busy, inhabited.

And now they're in ruins, not one stone upon another or perhaps one or two. Desolate, forsaken of men.

Only the wild beasts and the birds find a sanctuary there. It's a scene of desolation.

Dear friend, when the word of the law is applied unto the heart and the conscience, we shall know what it is to be in ruins, like that ruined city.

What a mercy it is if the Lord is so compassionate towards us that he looks upon us, and has mercy upon us, and awakens us out of sleep, to show us our ruin and our desolation.

[26 : 32] For the word of Scripture says concerning those to whom he comes, to whom he speaks, to awaken and to quicken, he that hath heard hath learned of the Father, and cometh to me.

Oh, what a precious word of grace it is that the Lord hath given unto his people.

He does not merely intend to show them their utter ruin, their lost and ruined state, but to cause them to flee, to flee unto Jesus.

And so that word of grace proclaims the gospel to them. Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved.

And I want to look at the word of his grace in a different aspect.

[28 : 00] It may be that some will say that the word of his grace is found in the promises, and so it is.

If we go to the third chapter in Genesis, we have the word of his grace.

We have the promise of him who shall come of the seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent's head. And we can go throughout all the scripture and we can find the unfolding in the promises, in the type, in the shadow, in the law, in the psalms, of the word of his grace.

And there are many that have found such weakness in the promises, the word of his grace.

But sometimes there are circumstances, there are those of the Lord's dear people, who perhaps long for a promise, and long for it to be applied unto their own soul, so that they can call it mine, so that they can come like the psalmist, back to the throne of grace with it.

[29 : 44] For I believe that every promise sealed by the Holy Spirit is brought back unto the throne of grace in the time of the child's need.

For the psalmist says, remember the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope. Oh, what a word of grace it is when the Lord applies a promise.

He gives unto us a ground to come. He gives us the word to speak. And he has applied the comfort of the hope unto the soul, and an expectation in him and from him at the throne of grace.

But sometimes the Lord is pleased to remain silent.

But you know, the word of his grace, while it is found in the promises, the word of his grace is also the word of his oath.

[31 : 13] That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, he hath given unto us a strong consolation and a good hope through grace.

Oh, dear friend, if you look for a promise and seem not to have it, take the word of his oath.

For he hath taken that oath upon every essence of the Godhead.

There's no firmer ground upon which a sinner may trust. For consider that in the fulfilment of his covenant purposes, that his oath might be fulfilled in a sufficiency that meets the need of every one of his dear children he gave, his only begotten Son.

You see, the word of his grace is the word of his oath, and it is the word of his sufficiency in all things.

[32 : 50] It is a mercy if we are led to perceive the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man.

For there we shall see such a sufficiency in the grace of God, that we can never stand in need, we can never be deficient, we can never be without or lack anything.

And why is it necessary that we be brought to know the sufficiency that is in Christ Jesus the Lord, the word of his grace?

Well, there's two lines of a hymn that we sing, and they have been upon my mind and heart a long while now, and they don't go away.

And these are the lines, how shall I come to thee, O God, who holy art? There's no sufficiency in me.

[34 : 34] On the contrary, the Lord cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance.

And he that saith he hath no sin is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

And there's no sufficiency in forms and ceremonies. There's no sufficiency in any creature, or in the angels.

There's no sufficiency in the law. And how shall I come to thee, O God, who holy art?

O to be brought to see the sufficiency that is in Christ Jesus the Lord, so that that which we read in this first chapter in Hebrews is made over unto us and sealed upon our hearts and consciences.

[35 : 44] For there we read, accepted in the beloved. O to see and to know him, the word of God's grace, the Son of God and the Son of Man.

And it is needful that we see him and know him thus. For no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever he will reveal him.

So there is a knowledge of the Father by Jesus Christ the Lord.

And he reveals the things of the Father. And he most perfectly and fully, for he was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity.

There is not one thought, not one intent, not one purpose, not one breathing, not one desire, of the Father with which he is, not party, and in full agreement, and the full knowledge.

[37 : 14] And what a wonderful thing that is. when we are trying, when we are questioned, when we are tempted, when we are harassed, when we are tempted, when we are harassed, to perceive him, who is one with the Father, with the Father, who knows all the Father's mind and will and purpose, his determination, his love, his holiness, every aspect of the Godhead.

Because Job, feeling his need by reason, sin made known, felt a need of a days man, one who should put his hand upon the Almighty, and put his hand upon Job.

And who can put his hand upon the Almighty, save only the Son? We read concerning the holy angels, they veil their faces, they cover them, and they cry, holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty.

But the Son, co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, of whom the Father says, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Oh, the complacency of the Father, in Christ Jesus the Lord, and the love of the Lord Jesus unto the Father.

[39 : 09] And he declares, when he takes unto himself our nature, all that the Father hath given me, I have told you.

And how wonderful that is, when we see him, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, coming where we are, so that he can put his hand upon us.

That's what Job desired, and that's what you and I will desire. If we're quickened into newness of life, if the law is applied unto our hearts and consciences, like Job we shall have to say, I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

And how precious was the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Mediator, the Days Man unto his soul.

And he saw a sufficiency in Christ Jesus the Lord. Dear friend, you and I, sufficiency in the eternal Son, who took unto himself our nature, that he might know and understand as well as obey and redeem and ransom and lay down his life.

[40 : 58] For you know the sufficiency that God hath purposed in Christ Jesus the Lord is so deep that I sometimes feel I only know so vague and little of the purposes of Almighty God and of the sufficiency that is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

But when we consider that which he hath wrought by his sufferings, by his death, to save us from our sins, and then read that though he were a Son, he was made perfect.

Now dear friend, there's no imperfection in the eternal Son. There's no imperfection in his holy nature.

For consider his generation was of the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. And the angel declared, that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

So there was no imperfection. So what does it mean when he said being made perfect? Oh dear friend, almighty God purposed that there should be no insufficiency, nothing that a poor sinner could come and stand in need of and look to God for and not find in full perfection, in absolute satisfaction.

[42 : 56] For we have such an high priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

To think that such is the love of almighty God, the wisdom and the grace of his purpose, that the Son suffered, that he might feel, that he might understand, that he might know what you and I feel in every circumstances, so that when we come and bring our concerns to him, it's not something notional.

He has felt the same. Or can we comprehend the sufficiency of the grace of almighty God in his sovereign purposes unto his people?

Well, I see the time has gone. May the Lord add his blessing. Amen.