

# The difference that grace makes (Quality: Average)

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Date: 04 April 1990

Preacher: Pont, Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] The first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 15, verses 9 and 10.

The first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 15, verses 9 and 10. For I am the least of the apostles, and am not me to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all.

Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. For I am the least of the apostles, and am not me to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all.

[ 1 : 33 ] Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Perhaps it was last Lord's Day, it was very recently, but I made this comment that grace is not hereditary.

The only thing that you and I take on from our parents, and they from their parents, is sin. The grace of God is the grace of God, freely, sovereignly, mercifully bestowed.

And it was indeed so to this dear apostle he could trace the grace of God, and that wondrous moment and time when the Lord Jesus Christ not only met him, but stopped him in and on that Damascus road.

And there under divine grace he learnt what it was to be a sinner. And the grace that was granted there and found in his heart ever from that moment onwards was the grace that made him a servant of God.

The question he asked, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do, was the evidence of a servant, of the grace of God in his heart.

[ 3 : 22 ] Prior to that, under religious zeal and false zeal at that, he went forth, hailing men and women to prison and to death, who were believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But grace made the wondrous change. We sang it in that hymn that we close with this morning. Grace made the wondrous change.

You remember, I'm sure you do, as I turn to it. Could I joy his saints to meet, choose the way I once abhorred, find at times the promise sweet, if I did not love the Lord.

This was the grace that this dear apostle was blessed with. And we said one or two things this morning that I hope described the fruit of grace.

For it was saving grace in his soul. And it was grace in his pathway that made him to bear all the shame and all the derision and all the persecution of the way that believers have to bear as they follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 4 : 56 ] The natural spirit of man rises up against any sort of opposition. But the spirit of grace in a child of grace, if it is indeed in the exercise, the influence of that grace is to bow to these things as that which is of the enemy, that which is against the grace of God.

But the humility of this dear man, for I am the least of the apostles that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Where he was in the church of God, he was there by divine grace. And what maintained him through his pilgrimage journey, right to the end of the journey, was this grace.

What brought him at the end, to write to his son in the faith, Timothy, and with all grace, write, I am now ready to be offered.

For the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.

[ 6 : 24 ] It was but the fruit of grace. In the soul of that dear man. That I am not made to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church.

All the wonders of grace. Because, my friends, grace superabounds over sin.

That he was a persecutor of the church was no secret. It was no secret. It was openly manifested, his hatred to Christ and his gospel.

Not the least, in a measure, is that not found in every unregenerate soul. But he openly persecuted the church of God.

But does it not display the wonders of that grace? That instead of confining him to the pit, where hope and mercy can never come, he was a trouble to the church in his day.

[ 7 : 31 ] What fears must have gone through the very spirit of Ananias, when the Lord spoke of this man Saul coming to Damascus.

Having known a little of his opposition to the truth, what fears, you know, sometimes when the church of God has enemies raised up against them, the Lord deals with them.

You remember Hezekiah, and that enemy that opposed Judah and Jerusalem. You remember Jehoshaphat, and so on.

But instead of destroying the enemies that he did in those cases, in this case, the enemy to the church of Christ was stopped by grace, and not by judgment.

He was to learn terrible things in righteousness, but not terrible things in judgment. And from being a persecutor, he was brought by grace to be a preacher, because I persecuted the church of God.

[ 8 : 42 ] Oh, how it makes grace shine the brighter. And the mercy of God is seen in grace also, that such a man as Saul, such an enemy of the church, in one moment, should be brought as a child down before Christ.

And the spirit of Saul of Tarsus was brought under the subjection and holy will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

and he was raised up as servant of God. And he said, as he wrote to this church at Corinth, that he was willing to spend and be spent, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am. I felt that was the most simple and yet the most profound statement.

In everything that concerned this man, from his ministry to his missionary journeys, to his imprisonment, who but a child of grace and under grace, writing from a prison, should say, but I would, that ye should understand this, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.

[ 10 : 16 ] The natural man was schemed to find a way out of prison. But this dear man profited by being in prison. And those epistles that he wrote from prison have been by the Holy Spirit's blessing, such mercies to the church of Christ.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am. But then we come to this second part of this tenth verse.

That is where we left it all, left off this morning, I believe. We did just say that that the grace of God is needed by the child of grace to walk his pathway out.

And I thought, I said, I believe in my meditation this morning that when the Lord leads his people to places where by nature they would not go, when they have to leave all for Christ's sake, my friends, this is when they need this grace, lean upon this grace of which God is the maintainer as well as the altar.

I felt, my friends, this is so true in believers' lives, whatever their pathway may be, the untrodden steps, your tomorrow's as I often explain it.

[ 11 : 58 ] My friends, we don't know what the tomorrows may hold or what may unfold. His purposes, his appointments, his decrees, unchangeable as he is, often, if not always, contrary to the nature of man.

My friends, this is where grace reigns supreme. I believe I quoted that hymn of Anne Steele, O bend my will to thine.

My friends, that is where grace is needed. And I believe we've closed this morning in speaking of the grace that's needed when we come to the end of our journey, when we have to leave behind all whom we know and love, when we have to lay this body of sin and death down, and tread the verge of Jordan.

You know, you can sing it as loud as you like, beautiful hymn and beautiful tune, when I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside, death of death and hell's destruction land me safe on Canyon side.

My friends, you'll need grace then. You'll need grace then. To part with all, that's the last step, that's the most solemn step.

[ 13 : 27 ] There's no return. Eternity is vast. The glory of heaven lies before the people of God, that they shall enjoy it for all eternities beyond description.

But it's the hour and article of death that the most gracious characters have feared, who through all their lifetime, the apostle said, are subject to bondage through fear of death.

Dear friends, this will take the fear of death away, this grace. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. I remember a dear old saint of God, a minister, I've spoken about him lots of times, and somebody tried to, I suppose, trip him up in what he may have said, and he said, you know, I'm not as good as you think I ought to be.

And I thought that was a good description. My friends, he was a very gracious character. He said, I'm not as good as you think I ought to be. But he was what he was.

Though he was a fallen sinner by nature, as we all are, by the grace of God, he was an eminent minister of the gospel in all its simplicity.

[ 14 : 48 ] But let us continue with the text. And his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain. Now there is an answer to those poor saints, saints of God, poor sinners called by grace, who think they are no more than cumberers to the ground, who feel that they don't bring forth fruit to his honour and to his praise and to his glory.

There is a truth. My friends, may it abide with us, though we shall not necessarily have these things manifested in the way that we would like them to be manifested, yet the truth is, his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain.

Now if it wasn't in vain, then it was used of God, and indeed there was the evidence of the use of grace, and it is in every believer's, we're not to preach the apostle's pathway, only that it is an example, but to try to encourage the child of grace who feels that there are no more than cumberers to the ground.

My friends, if you and I are under grace, it will be not in vain. And the Lord help us to try to describe what these things mean, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.

When he calls his children by his grace, when he brings them under the influence and teaching of grace, when he puts them in the pathway which they shall need grace, when they shall be brought to lean upon his grace, it will not be in vain.

[ 16 : 44 ] What did you sing just now? Perhaps it's the hymn previous. Although the hymn we sang, it was grace that called our souls at first, by grace thus far we come, and grace will help us through the worst and lead us safely home.

I believe this, my friends, if you know something of the, your own heart, your natural heart and your sinful state, and if by his grace and mercy that you're brought to recognise it and fear it, you'll seek to see his grace in all matters.

For him previously, grace taught my soul to pray. Well, this man had been praying all his life.

He was a Pharisee and he was well known for his prayers, were Pharisees. But you know, grace made a difference to his prayers. It does yours.

It does yours. Grace does, you know. Even in the simplest things. And you know, right up to the end of his journey, he was to learn by this grace.

[ 18 : 03 ] We reminded you this morning of his thorn in the flesh. Well, he did what we all would do. Seek the throne of grace that it will be taken away. Now, we learnt grace there.

And what was that grace, my friends, submission. Submission. Grace taught my soul to pray, then the poet said. But grace will teach you to pray.

Not only, my friends, to pray in that respect, but to pray according to the will of God. To seek the throne of grace and to know wisdom and grace to pray for what is right in God's sight.

You know, there's a vast difference between a professor and a possessor. Those who merely have a name to live in religion and are dead can somehow, we have to leave the way, but somehow they have, they seem to be able to live so freely in this world of sin and woe, and yet seem to be religious and under this teaching.

And the things of the world, my friends, things of the world, the things that the world enjoy, and the ways of the world, it seems so as if they could put their feet in both camps.

[ 19 : 35 ] They can walk with the world and walk with the church. My friends, this is where you will see the grace of God in the working out of it, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.

there comes a time when you have to say enough's enough, this is not according to the will and purposes of God, this is not according to the influence of grace.

Often, you know, you've heard those things, you've heard these sayings where they've said, well, if you're in these matters, can you ask the Lord's blessing? My friends, there's many a time in the world when you fear to ask the Lord's blessing because it was not according to his will and purposes.

And everything, the path of providence, everything, what we do, where we go, and so on, my friends, really grace should be the influence in our soul respecting them.

There should be like I've said recently, David, when he was brought to see the destruction of Ziklag, Ziklag, and all his, all the loved ones of himself and his men were all removed as captives.

[ 21 : 00 ] And they were, well, they would have stunned David because of the sadness, distress, and overwhelmed them, really.

But we read this lovely word, and David inquired of the Lord. He inquired of the Lord. He sought to know the will of God.

Shall I pursue? He said, shall I overtake? He wanted his loved ones back as much as those others did. My friends, I believe that's one of the simplest evidences of grace in prayer, is not to open one's mouth and to pour out all we need.

The Lord help us so to do, because the Lord knows the needs of his people, but rather by his grace to inquire at his footstool these matters which are for our profit and good in our soul.

You know what Nehemiah said when he confronts the elders of Israel with their ways that they were mortgaging the Jews?

[ 22 : 16 ] And he explains their pathway, and then he says, I believe humbly says, so did not I, because of the fear of God. my friends, we have to learn what grace is, that it is also the means God uses to keep us from the depths of sin, and indeed the ways of the world which are so solemnly still attractive to the old nature that we carry about.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. It was the means to teach him to pray, it was the means God used to so bring him to the knowledge of his fallen state.

We quoted those words this morning from the Semper Romans, O wretched man that I am, who taught him that? My friends, who taught him that? Who taught you you as a sinner?

Did you learn it from a pulpit, or did you learn it from heaven? Did you learn it from your parents? Or did you hear it as a still small voice within your soul?

My friends, grace brings this teaching to the believer that they are sinners and grace brings them to need the Saviour.

[ 23 : 43 ] His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. And all that he did, this preaching, this writing, these journeys, which he did for Christ's sake.

My friends, was the evidence of grace. Well, it's like a Bible class, isn't it? I'm sorry, I didn't mean to so speak alone of the Apostle Paul, but try to bring the word that it applies to everyone under grace.

grace. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. Now, grace, as we said earlier on, and also this morning, grace has its opposition.

And it was because of the grace of God that was seen in this man, and his, and his, the way that he held to the truth, and the way that he proclaimed the truth of Jesus Christ.

My friends, if you hold to the truth, if you cling to the old past, if you seek to be faithful, you'll find opposition.

[ 25 : 02 ] Those that would live godly shall suffer persecution. You become a mark for Satan. Oh, he'll aim his arrows of distress if you're under grace, if grace is working within.

And you'll find, too, you can't walk with everybody. I've always prayed for this house of God that the Lord will bring us those in here that we can walk with.

And, my friends, those who we can walk with are those who are not only called by grace, but walk by grace also. And you'll find that there's many a companion in the way you'll come across, but there's a, that grace makes the difference.

My friends, that's the solemn, and yet that's the truth about the grace of God in the way and in the company. You know, it will separate those who you could once walk with, not of course as the Pharisee does this happen, my friends, but out of conscience sake, that grace will keep you from those things which are indeed unprofitable to the soul.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. I might ask the question, my friends, to ourselves, all that we do in the way of our walk and witness and pathway of a believer, do we do it as under the influence of grace or do we do it to appear before men to be right?

[ 26 : 57 ] That is what a Pharisee did. He did a lot of good things. But what he did was to show off his righteousness. My friends, that isn't grace.

But the praying people of God, my friends, will want this grace to be, and will be brought to feel the need of it.

Brought to feel the need of it. And his grace which was stowed upon me was not in vain.

But I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I. You know, there's one thing very certain, my friends, that you and I will be plagued with this I.

I was looking at the word of God yesterday, a word I wrote, read rather many a time. of those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 28 : 04 ] I felt perhaps one day we might have to preach it, but not so today. And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself.

That surely must be the hardest part of the walk of a believer. if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Dear friends, if you have a real religion, it will cost something. I labored, but I labored more abundantly than they all.

It wasn't a boast. It wasn't the boasting of old Saul of Tarsus. that was the confession of the new man of grace, because he hastens to say, yet not I.

Those labors that he did would have never been done in the flesh. One of the solemn points, even of a believer's laboring or pathway, my friends, is the presence or the fear of the presence of pride.

[ 29 : 25 ] More than once I've had to beg of the Lord. I don't know whether you do. I only have to speak for myself in these matters, even in a pulpit.

Not so long ago, oh, so, so frequently have I had to beg the Lord, feeling a little liberty and light. I've had to plead with the Lord that it was of grace and not of flesh.

Because flesh will bolster itself as it were, build itself up and it will be proud. The Lord keep us from it. The Lord keep us not only as humble walkers, my friends, but humble talkers.

You know, there's two things that a believer must do and that's walk. And he also may talk, but may his talk be as his walk is, or should be, humility.

But I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I. And when the dear apostle wrote this, I believe he had a single eye to the honour and glory of his Lord and master.

[ 30 : 44 ] He who met him on the Damascus road, whatever this dear man was to do and how he was to lay his life down for the cause of Christ in the earth, how he spent and was spent, how he travelled and did preach.

My friends, whatever it was, he could look at it with this view that it wasn't I. Yet not I. Now that takes, my friends, much of the influence of grace, that I laboured more abundantly than they all.

Yet not I. Blessed be God to have a religion that this flesh opposes. If you've got warfare within, and you will have if you're under grace, if the flesh opposes the spirit, for it surely must do so, it's not, and it cannot ever walk together.

If your religion finds opposition from the flesh, then there's no room for I, and there's no presence of I. But if you left to your own spirit, within your own, within religion, within the walk, within the pathway, my friends, and I raises its head, as it were, and it does it in two ways.

First of all, it exalts itself, does I? Oh, it loves homage, and it loves the praise of men, and those things which bolster up this dreadful pride.

[ 32 : 29 ] But then on the other hand, there's another effect of I, you know, and that's opposing the things of God, and the hardships of the way, and the trials of the way. That's something else that I will do.

You know, all the time the paths move, and all the time there's providential and spiritual blessings, well, we drift along quite nice.

But should there be opposition, should there be those that oppose things come along, you know, that make the pathway difficult, then this old I would soon raise up, and speak against it, and would distress the new man of grace.

And the trouble with I is that he's got solemnly a union with the enemy of the soul, you know, and you get the enemy of your soul and your old nature together, you got a formidable warfare going on, and it needs much grace.

And you won't find that, my friends, as an easy path, but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I. Consider just for a moment another way to, in the ways of grace, and it has many ways of describing it.

[ 34 : 02 ] You know, faith is a grace, as well as love is a grace. But when you're in a trying path, and the word of God is shut up, or you're shut up from the word of God, when it's dark and Jesus has not come, when impossibilities lie before you, and, well, seeming destruction seems to be the end of it all, and you're deceived, old nature will say, and Satan will agree with old nature.

And you lose sight of the marks of grace, marks of grace, I cannot see, the poet said, all polluted is my breast. The Lord knows.

My friends, that's when I and Satan gets together to distress the child of God. thankful to God if you've got a religion that's not got much eye, but be careful.

My friends, be careful. Watch over what's of God. Plead for the Lord to keep you in spirit as well as in truth. And especially when the way gets hard, then there's murmuring.

Murmuring doesn't come from the old new man, you know. Murmuring comes from the old man. that's when eye comes to show itself in the path of religion.

[ 35 : 25 ] The murmuring, the rebellious heart, that's old man, that's the eye that we've all troubled with. We need grace to pray for that grace that subdues this old nature.

Look at the persecutions of the Church of Christ as it's described in the Acts of the Apostles. You know, when they were let out of prison after a thrashing, what did they do?

My friends, old nature would have run. New nature rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for the name and cause of Christ.

Christ. Oh, you'll soon find real religion, my friends, and you'll soon find what's counterfeit and all. Because they won't live under persecution and it won't live under the hatred of men, you know.

Oh, they'll soon be getting rid of what they thought was real and going on with the things of time and sense which are more comfortable. But I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I.

[ 36 : 46 ] But the grace of God which was with me. And it matters whether you, matters not whether you stand the pulpit or whether you sit in the pew.

My friends, if you and I are under divine grace, we shall depend on that grace all the days of our life. And the Lord will see that we will.

Just the same as this dear man had to learn the need of grace when his thorn in the flesh was made apparent. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient.

And then of course, we must also remind you the attendance on the Lord's house. grace. My friends, if you sit in the Lord's house, if you're a grace-taught soul, you will pray the Lord that you might be, that your hearing will be influenced by grace, let alone your walk and pathway, but your hearing say, well, that's a strange thing to want grace for.

What happens, my friends, if the word of God that is preached in your ears are words that trouble you and distress you?

[ 38 : 07 ] What are those times in the house of the Lord when the ministry is sent to strip you of all that's false and all that is of the old nature and all that's flesh?

Grace won't bolster up old nature, my friends. Won't bring anything comfortable that will make old nature agree with it. But the grace of God which was with me, you know there's a falling under the word of God that surely must be.

It isn't all in the ministry that is so comfortable, is it? We would love it so. There's a place in Isaiah which speaks, preach unto us smooth things.

What happens when the minister preaches unto you difficult things, trying things, hard things. What happens then? Do you shut your ears to it or do you beg for grace to fall under it?

But the grace of God which was with me, the hearing of the word of God, just as well as the pathway that he brings you in, suddenly you might be brought into a most difficult pathway.

[ 39 : 25 ] my friends, you will fly to the mercy seat for the Lord's removing or deliverance of that pathway so that you can go on your way rejoicing.

But then, my friends, it may not be so and you will feel the need of grace to fall under that way of God which he has appointed.

but the grace of God, not man's grace, those who have better upbringings or better educational upbringings than what we have had, seem to be able to learn a grace and they know how to cope with life and they're trained to it and it's inbred in the, my friends, that's not disgrace.

This is God's gift. But then there is a pattern, perhaps we should have thought of this or said it earlier, but it comes to my mind there is a pattern of grace and that's in Christ.

And what does it say in this epistle or perhaps in the second epistle? For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty become rich.

[ 40 : 56 ] You sang in your first hymn about being nothing. The apostle, it was taken from the apostle's own words, but I am nothing. It needs a lot of grace to be nothing, my friends, because we've got that nature that would be somebody.

Well, we must leave the word because the table's before us. But let it be a word that is sent of God this day for some poor soul, but it is God's word and it's God's grace.

Fight against it, you may, my friends, but this is certain. It's the gift of God, it's the sovereign gift of God bestowed upon all his people.

It is that which lights the way that they shall walk. It is that which gives them strength to walk that way. May it be granted to us, for I am the least of the apostles that are not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.



Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 42 : 39 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The notes this week are as follows.

God willing, Mr. Izzard will preach tomorrow evening at 6.30. The prayer meeting will be on Wednesday evening.

Our pastor will preach next or today. The amount collected on the building fund box at the door for the month of March was £95.

£90. I'll sing our last hymn, hymn 766.

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