

My name is Josh Patterson. I'm one of the pastors here on staff. Matt obviously is not here. He's actually speaking this weekend to a group of Major League baseball players, which is kind of a cool deal for him to be able to go and do that. He was real juiced up for that. That was a steroid joke. And so, he said it actually went really, really well. He had a great opportunity to meet with a group of guys who are actually really hurting and really searching. And he said it was just a great, great opportunity. He'll be back next week.

I want to let you know out of the gate that the message might be a little PG-13. If you're excited about that, I can maybe take it up to an R level and see where we can go with it, but I'll try to kind of hover around the PG-13 area. And I just want to say that. So if you've got some kids in here, you can do whatever you feel like you need to do with your kiddos. I'll be pretty vague. It's just pretty much at the beginning of the message. And so, I want to read a quote to you and then we'll jump in. Chuck Swindoll, who is a pastor of a church here in the area, in Frisco says this, "The neighborhood bar is possibly the best counterfeit that there is to the fellowship Christ wants to give his church. It's an imitation, dispensing liquor instead of grace, escape rather than reality-but it is a permissive, accepting, and inclusive fellowship. You can tell people secrets, and they usually don't tell others or even want to. The bar flourishes not because most people are alcoholics, but because God has put into the human heart the desire to know and be known, to love and be loved, and so many seek a counterfeit at the price of a few beers." And then he writes, "Now let me get painfully specific with you. Where do you turn when the bottom drops out of your life? Or when you face an issue that is embarrassing...maybe even scandalous?"

I just want to share a story with you from my own life that was just that, embarrassing and you might even say scandalous. And I want to let you know where I turned, and I want to talk to you about the grace of our great God. This summer, my wife went to the girl doctor for her annual and she got an abnormal report. And so we were praying and hoping and asking that the Lord would do something and that the next time it would go away. That was as simple as we could put it, that it would go away. She had her girl friends praying on her behalf and we were praying as a family. And then when she goes back, her doctor who she's actually grown up with, she's literally known him her whole life, he goes, "Natalie I know that you've lived your life a certain way and the reason this report came back was because you have something. And I'm not sure how you would have it, except for maybe from your husband." So my wife calls me and says, "Hey, I got the report back." And I said, "Well, what did they say?" She said, "Well, they said that I've got something. Do you know anything about that?"

And I really didn't. I really had no idea. And so I said, "I don't know anything about it. What's the deal?" You see, Natalie she had...true love waits, right. And then Josh didn't know about true love and didn't wait. PG-13, are you with me? And that decision led to some consequences. That's fine. It's on me, right? It's on me. But it's not. It's on my wife. It's on her. And so I was at the office, I walked back into a back room and I just sat down and I could just feel the shame building up all over me. I felt dirty, I felt like a jerk. I just sat there and I said, "Lord, what's this? She had nothing to do with that. What is this?" I was frustrated, I was surprised, I was angry. And here's the deal. The enemy just used that and hooked me in. Because before I got married, here was my fear. I came from a dysfunctional family. If anyone comes from a functional family, let me know but ours was dysfunctional and my parent's had split up. And I just had all of these fears about marriage. And my number one fear, I could boil it down to this. My fear was that I was going to wreck this woman. You see, she was sweet and pristine and had just lived this kind of life and she was too good to be true. And I was going

to wreck it. And on that day, the enemy was going, "It's your fault. You wrecked it. Right here, flesh and blood, you did it, man. You did it. It took you four years, but you did it." So I went home, walked into the kitchen and just said, "Hey, I'm sorry. I'm sorry." And she said, "I know. I forgive you." And it was in that moment that the shame that was building up and the fear and the anger and all the frustration dissipated just a bit. I mean, it just took a blow because grace entered that room, grace entered that kitchen. And when my wife came towards me and said, "Hey, I love you. I'm in this with you. This doesn't change anything. I'm in this. I love you," I just embraced her. "Undeserving, unmerited, it is my fault. You could heap that on me for the rest of our lives, but yet you give me grace." And so I said, "Thank you. If you need to work some of this out with some of your girl friends, if you need to tell some people, I understand. I'm going to tell the whole church. So if you just need to tell a few people, you do whatever you need to do."

The next day, this was in August, she goes to her Bible study. And they had been praying faithfully for her and they said, "Hey, what was the report?" And so she just told them. And do you know what she was given? Because as the enemy starts coming in and going, "Dirty, tainted, not beautiful, gross," all of these things, the hand of fellowship pulls her in and says, "Lovely, daughter of the King, beautiful. You do not buy into the lies of the enemy." I was in a meeting when I got a text message about 20 minutes after their Bible study ended and Matt says, "Hey bro, just thinking of you today. I wanted to let you know you're on my heart and I'm just praying for you." I text back, "Liar, you just talked to your wife. And so all my buddies whose wives are in this study, they're coming by my office just going, "You okay, man? You alright?" We went out to dinner that night with the Bleeckers and we sat across the table and they just extended the hand of grace. Our families extended the hand of grace. And is it embarrassing? Absolutely. But where do you go when the bottom of your life drops out? You go to the church, you go to the gospel, you go to grace. It's here. It absolutely matters. So the reason why I would stand up, which is foolish and ridiculous, and share this with you is because grace is better conveyed than explained. It's here. Grace is here today for you, for me, for our lives.

Gordon McDonald said this, "The world can do almost anything as well as or better than can the church. You need not be a Christian to build houses, feeds the hungry, or heal the sick." Anybody can do that, anybody. Any corporation that wants to do community development can do those things. You see, the church has tried to be this big production. We put on these amazing shows and concerts and think that's what's going to draw the world in. We try to compete with U2. We can't compete with U2, we can't compete with Coldplay, we can't compete with Mute Math. They're just better. Their music is better. So what we have to offer the world is not a production. It's not the fact that we can go out and do what they do. Here's what we offer the world. There's one thing the world cannot do, one thing. It cannot offer grace. And what we have, we have grace, to be able to walk into a room and be loved despite who you are, to be accepted as you are known. That's life changing, it's powerful, it's grace.

I've you've ever seen the musical or movie *Les Misérables*, it's my favorite. I'm going to ruin it if you haven't seen it. There's this guy, his name's Jean Valjean, he's a criminal. He's a criminal and he's lived a life of crime. It wasn't really his fault, he just stole a loaf of bread. But anyway, he gets thrown in prison, he comes out and he steals again. And this priest shows him grace. He shows him grace and he never gets over it. It changes his life from that day forward. And he lives and he sits in that grace and he gives grace. He becomes a man who gives grace over the towns that he rules, he's a mayor. He gives grace to those who need it, he gives grace to those who don't deserve it. And his enemy, Javert, chases him all of his life, and Javert can't seem to get it. He doesn't understand grace. It flies in the face of the way the world thinks, it flies in the face of law and legalism and morality. It doesn't add up. $1 + 1$ does not equal 2 in Scripture. God uses a different kind of math. It's not fair; it's grace. And at the end of the story, Jean Valjean is there, he has his opportunity to get his revenge on Javert. But he shows him grace. And Javert breaks. Do you know what he does? He jumps off a bridge. It just blows every circuit in his mind. He's got nothing for it. The world doesn't know it. We've got it. It's right here, it's grace.

So I don't know where you are this morning. I don't know what you know about grace, if it's just a word for you that kind of dangles out there for you to look at and think might be really, really cool. It might just be just some doctrine or some system. It might be your conception of God. It might be somewhere over here. But if grace is not over here, if it's not in you, if you're not sitting in it, you cannot give it. And Christ, our sweet, sweet savior dies on the cross. It's grace. So wherever your marriage is, wherever your kids are, whatever you're facing, whatever issue might seem so scandalous, so embarrassing, there is grace. Come on.

I want to look at Ephesians 1. Ephesians might be my favorite book in the Bible. And as we talk about your life, my life, the life of this church, as we talk about salvation, I can really think of no better passage to go to than Ephesians 1. We'll start in verse 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." Paul opens this letter and he says this, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That word there "blessed" there is where we get our English word eulogy, which means to praise, to give praise to, to exalt, to say wonderful things about. It's only used of deity, it's only used of the Father in the New Testament. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why? Why is He to be blessed? Because He has blessed us, He has given every spiritual blessing. Where are these blessings? They're in the heavenlies. These blessings come from above. These are not spiritual blessings that you and I can conjure up because we try to. These are not things that we cannot make up or fix up. These are things that are handed down by grace. These are given to you and to me. These are things we cannot purchase, we cannot acquire, we cannot beg enough for. If He does not condescend and give, we don't get. But He did and we do. We have these things, these spiritual blessings that are from above by grace.

So what are they? What are the spiritual blessings. What are they that He says, "They're everything that you and I need." And he starts off by talking about the selection of the Father. The Father selected you, believer. The Father has chosen you before the foundation of the world. Look at verse 4. "...even as [the Father] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,..." Before time began, you were chosen by grace. He predestined you for this, that you and I would stand, that I would stand in that kitchen that day, holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us. All of this to the praise of His glorious grace, all of me stands before Him, all of my junk, all of my issues, all of the sin in my life, all of it. And He says, "You, you're Mine. I'm taking you. You are Mine." Why? Because I did some really good things? Because I helped some people? Because I built some houses? No. It was all before I did anything. It was before the foundation of the world that He says, "You, you! In love..." It's grace. The Father selects and it goes on. Look in verse 7. He says, "In [Jesus] we have redemption..." How? "...through his blood..." The cross. What did it purchase? "...the forgiveness of our trespasses,..." Why? All of this is "...according to the riches of his grace,..." And look how He gave it to us. "...He lavished [it] upon us, in all wisdom and insight." So as the Son comes down and incarnates in flesh and lives a perfect and sinless life and hangs on the cross as the perfect atoning sacrifice for the Father, He does it for grace. And by grace you and I stand and sit before the flood. He purchased for you and me forgiveness.

We're forgiven now, right now. He redeems us, He buys us back, He gets us back from the bondage that we were under. We'll look at in chapter 2, that we were under the bondage of the prince of this world. By nature children of wrath, Jesus buys us back. Why? Grace. It doesn't add up. It's stupid. It doesn't make sense. Why would He do this? The Father selects the Son He sacrifices.

And then the Spirit seals. Verse 13, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation," and when you believed in that great gospel, you "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." The Spirit seals. It's done. He has sealed me, which means that as I stand in the midst of scandal, as I stand in the midst of embarrassment and as shame and guilt well up, I'm reminded I'm His. I'm His. I have been sealed with the Spirit. And this seal for these believers is they would read this and be reminded of the king as he writes a letter to his people, he would seal it with his ring that shows the mark that says, "This is mine." It's a point of identification. So I stand before you today as His, marked with the Spirit that says I am His. I'm His. That seal is also a sense of protection. It's a guarantee. It cannot be opened until the Father opens it on that day, that day of promised redemption. You see, the fullness of redemption is not here yet, is it? It's just not. If you don't believe me, Go down to Children's Medical. If you don't believe me, Google what's going on in Kenya. If you don't believe me, open your eyes. It's not here yet. But the deposit is here, and that deposit dwells in me. That deposit dwells in you. If you know Christ, you have been sealed with the Spirit, who is both a deposit and a guarantee of your redemption until you acquire full possession of it, the fullness of it when Christ comes back for His church and eliminates this place and builds up a new heaven and a new earth. And then it says He will dwell with His people, and until that day we groan for it, we hope for it and we live in the reality that we've been sealed with a deposit that says we'll be a part of it. So I can stand in that kitchen knowing that before time the Father selected me, that the Son by grace sacrificed for me and that the Spirit right now is a seal and a guarantee for me. By grace, by grace, by grace, all of it's by grace.

Have you ever seen the movie, *Good Will Hunting*? It's rated-R, so you probably haven't seen it. I've seen it, and I know you've seen it. It's great. There's that scene, the climax of the movie. Will is in Robin William's office, he's just sitting there. They had been butting heads, no breakthrough. And he looks at Will and says, "You know Will, it's not your fault." Will says, "I know." "It's not your fault, Will." "I know." "Will, it's not your fault. All of this is not your fault." "I know." And you could feel the tension build. You could feel the animosity in Will raising up. And he was drawing it out of him and he says, "It's not your fault, Will. It's not your fault...It's not your fault." And then Will finally says, "I know!" and then he breaks, he just breaks. And for the first time in Will Hunting's life, he comes alive. For the first time, healing rushes in. For the first time, he let's somebody in, because he was self-sufficient, he was so self-preserving. And he breaks and joy finally rushes in. Now here's the reality. It's our fault. It's your fault. You're forgiven. You are forgiven, church. You have been selected by the Father. You have had the sacrifice of the Son on your behalf. The Spirit is now a seal and a guarantee for you. You can stand in that grace, live in that reality. And for so many of us, it has become so blasé to say that Jesus died on the cross or that God loves me. It's just become so routine, so ho-hum. But whenever God dies, that's something big. Jesus died on the cross. It forever changed the rules, it forever changed reality and grace is here. It's here now for you and for me to live in. So rise up, church, and live in the grace that is here.

So what does grace afford for you and me? What does grace do? What does it do in me? What does it do in you? As I read Ephesians 1, I know this much. It absolutely invigorates worship. Paul starts off and he says, "Blessed be, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...to the praise of His glorious grace...to the praise of His glory...to the praise of His glorious grace." And he goes on and on and on and says that the Father is worthy of all praise and all glory. And you know this, believer, that it is grace that wells up praise in you. So as I stood in the kitchen and as I received grace from my wife, grace from my friends, I'm overwhelmed by gratitude. I don't become haughty. I don't become prideful. I'm overwhelmed with praise. I don't go, "You know what? You're right. I'm glad you saw it the right way." I am humbled

under the mercy of a great and gracious God and I just want to tell Him about it, I just want to thank Him. And Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." So grace, it just invigorates worship in the church. If your worship is stale or stagnant, if your life is just kind of flat, go back to the gospel, sit in the gospel. Don't sit in here and try to muster it up and go, "I'm going to feel it today." Go back to the reality that the gospel says about life and praise will well up.

Grace also eliminates pride. It wells up worship and it eliminates pride. Look at Ephesians 2:8-9. Paul continues in this theme and he says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Grace is that gift. It is given to the undeserving, and as it's received, it absolutely eliminates any ability for boasting. It just eliminates it. Because here's the reality, church. I grew up and have been a scoundrel. You take my wife who's on the other end, who is just Mary Poppins. You know what? She needs grace. She absolutely needs grace. And this has been one of the greatest things in our marriage as we have seen our lives as polar opposites in so many different ways. You know what we have in common? The need for grace. She was raised in a great, wonderful Christian home; I wasn't. I did all this bad stuff; she didn't. She was moral; I wasn't. True love waited; I didn't. All of it. Do you know what matters? Grace matters. Look at Ephesians 2:1, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." Like the rest of us, all of us. Verse 4 is one of my favorite transitions in all of Scripture. Like the rest of mankind, we're children of wrath, "But God, being rich in mercy," He has given us grace, He has made us alive together with Christ and seated us at the right hand. By grace you've been saved. It's grace. So no matter where you come from, what your background is, if you're moral, if you're good, if you help old people across the street or you hate old people, you need grace. Grace, it's the gospel. It just levels the playing field. It eliminates pride. It invigorates worship.

It motivates service. It's why you see people giving up their lives. It's why you see people changing diapers, helping in the parking lot, helping people find seats, teaching at Kid's Village, leading up here for free every weekend in worship. It's why they do it. Grace has changed them. If you've seen the movie "Amazing Grace," William Wilberforce changed life because of grace, John Newton, the hymn that we sang "Amazing Grace," all of it motivates us to serve. It's why we would do what's seemingly above us. It's why the savior would wash the feet of the disciples. It's grace. It's a proper understanding of our position in this world. And grace motivates us to serve. It's why those who would leave the comforts of this place and go Asia or Africa or Mexico to give their life for the gospel. They're motivated to serve because grace has taken root. It's grace. And Paul says this for the benefit of the believer. In verse 9-10, he says, "...not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship..." That's the Greek word for poem. We're His poem "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Grace invigorates worship, it wells up worship in you and me. Grace eliminates pride as the gospel has leveled the playing field. It's our fault and we're forgiven. Grace motivates service. And finally, grace doesn't leave us here. I am not the same guy I was when the gospel came to me at age 19. I'm not. I'm different. I'm a different man because of the gospel. Grace initiates change. The church has sometimes taken grace to mean this, "Hey, it's fine. Do whatever you want to do. Grace will make up for it on the other end." Grace is seen as license. It's seen as that kind of trump card where "Oh by the way, there's grace. I'll live the way I want to live but don't worry, there's grace." That's not biblical grace. That's not the grace of the gospel. Grace initiates change. If you read the rest of Ephesians 1, it is seen through the triune God: The Father selects, the Son sacrifices and the Spirit saves. And then he says, "Because of this, I'm praying for you that you would get this, that you would understand this." He says, "By the way, you were dead, but God who is rich in mercy, by grace has saved you and has created a new community so that those who were far are now brought near, that Jews and gentiles could be reconciled, that people can relate to one another, that barriers are broken down." A new community

is formed because of grace. It changes things. In chapter 3 Paul says this, "This mystery is beyond me and it has been revealed to me for this time." Grace is here. Please know it. Please get it.

I pray for you, church, that you would be rooted and grounded in this love. In chapter 4, he shifts gears and says, "Because of grace, live this way. We have done it the other way around. "Live this way, and we'll be nice to you." Paul says the gospel says, "Grace is here not because we lived this way." So when you read the text that says, "Hey, speak truth to one another in love," that's because of grace. When you read the text, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the church" and you read that out of the context of grace and it doesn't make sense. "Wives, submit to your husbands." Why would you do that if you haven't understood the grace of chapters 1, 2 and 3? Grace initiates a change. It doesn't leave us where we are. It doesn't leave us here.

And so as we think about grace, we've just got to live in it. It's got to take root in your heart and in my heart. We've got to live in grace. You and I have to understand chapter 1 literally. Verses 3-14, we've got to get that. The Father chose you before the foundation of the world, the Son has sacrificed for you, the Spirit has sealed you so that you stand before Him forgiven. As you live in grace, then you are able to give grace. You can give grace if you live in grace. That's why Paul says, "Hey gentiles, you can be reconciled with Jews. This can happen, you can give grace. Wives, this is why you can give grace to your husbands. Husbands, this is why you can give grace to your wives. Children, this is why you can give grace to your parents, and parents to your children. You can give grace because you are living in grace. What does the world need? The world needs grace.

Listen to this by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he wrote a great book called "The Cost of Discipleship." He writes this about grace, "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace...Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him...Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "You were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us." It's grace and it's costly. It is the grace of our great God and King. It's amazing. It's a force that the world can't reckon with. It's other-worldly. It's beyond us. It's grace. It's supernatural. It's from above.

And so my hope for the Village is that we would continue to be a place of grace but that we would even more fight for costly grace. My hope is that we would be a place that lives in grace, that we as individuals and corporately would know that the Father has chosen us before the foundation of the world, what He has sent His Son to be a sacrifice and His Spirit even now as a seal and a guarantee. And because of that stability and security for the church, I hope that we could be a place that boldly proclaims grace and gives it, that we would give it to the beggar, that we would give it prostitute, that we would give it to the self-righteous, that we would give it to the moral and immoral, that we would be a place who gives grace to those who don't deserve it. Because our Lord said this, "Hey, what's it to you if you're nice to nice people? Big deal. The world does that all the time. You love your enemies, you love those who persecute you, you love the unlovely and you watch the world turn upside down." Grace, it's the one thing the world doesn't have, but it's the one thing that we've got. We've got grace. We've got the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Richard Neibuhr wrote this, "The great Christian revolutions come not by the discovery of something that was not known before." So the great revolutions of Christendom, they come not from the discovery of something that was previously

unknown. He says this, "They happen when someone takes radically something that has always been there." And before the foundation of the world there was grace. It's here, church. It's here.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You that grace is here, that we have the grace of Your Spirit living in us even now and Your Son who sacrificed. And as You selected us before the foundation of the world, what seems so embarrassing and scandalous loses its luster as it's washed over with the cleansing power of grace. I thank You for that. And Father, I want to close with Your prayer of Your saint, Your apostle Paul, who says after discussing the grace that's found in the gospel, "For this reason [because of the gospel], because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand." And all of this we pray, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen."

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