

XII. The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Biblical Perspective
The Majesty, Message and Ministry of the Gospel
“Sanctification: Transforming Grace”
Philippians 2:5-16
Dr. Harry Reeder
December 16, 2012 – Morning Sermon

I am in the midst of preparing all of this for you because of what I believe is the importance of this series of understanding the whole counsel of God, the Gospel. I will be getting all of this to you in some kind of printed form at the conclusion of this series in which I have one more study after this on glorification. In this study we will be looking at sanctification, God’s transforming grace. There is justifying grace where God takes us right where we are. There is sanctifying grace which is transforming grace where God never leaves us where we are but brings us more to be like His Son, our Savior.

Let’s look at Philippians 2:5-16 which says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. [14] Do all things without grumbling or disputing, [15] that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God **without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation**, among whom you shine as lights in the world, [16] holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever, and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

We have come to this glorious part of the text. Remember our central statement which is the Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the Christian life. I am also fully aware of the events that happened at Newtown, Connecticut this last week. I also went through the same process that many of you went through as I talked with many this past week. People wanted me to preach toward this event but my answer is no not specifically but yes in that God’s kind providence I don’t know of a more important subject I could be addressing than the Gospel and the Gospel’s sanctifying grace in the lives of His people as they live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. I don’t know of anything more important than to be saying in this study. I don’t know of anything more important than what I have to say in this study.

When this horrific event occurred I think of teachers, parents, grandparents, officials, small town and this eruption of death and despair and all that has taken place in Newtown, Connecticut. I wish this was just an isolated event that I could speak to but it is clearly woven into the fabric of a death culture that’s in a death spiral as Newtown

takes its place alongside of Aurora, Colorado, Virginia Tech, Columbine and Oklahoma City. You are living in the unraveling of a once, not perfect but highly influenced culture, once saturated with Biblical truth and the salt and light of God's people so that there was redeeming grace where people were being saved and common grace where even those who did not yet know the Lord would rather 'in God we trust' than to say 'in sex we trust' or 'in power we trust' or 'in the state we trust' or 'in government we trust' or 'in a person we trust.'

It is an unraveling of a culture that is described in Romans 1 where God gives them over and as He does this the death culture goes into a death spiral. What was once would have been an anomaly has become regular fair even though people would say 'no it's not rare, it's rare.' It's not. Even in the day it happens our own city breaks into the news with two different shootings where people take lives and where people destroy lives. Predictably you have the knee jerk responses right and left. Those on the right say "If I had my gun there this wouldn't have happened." That sure isn't appropriate to say at a moment like this. Then there are those who would say "If we would just outlaw guns this wouldn't have happened." You handle the second amendment issues. I don't even own a gun.

When I hear that I understand perhaps the motivation but we go to the instrument and we don't go to what is happening in the culture. That's like saying Oklahoma City was blown up by a bomb so let's outlaw fertilizer or after 9/11 let's outlaw airplanes. I'm not trying to have this political talk on the second amendment or I have my guns and I don't want anyone to take them. That's not my issue. My issue is we are missing something that's very obvious. We are in a death culture that has said 'no' to God and 'yes' to secularism, state-ism and sexuality.' We are in a gothic culture that is obsessed with death with no answers to death that is sexually obsessed, consumer addicted and all those things that are absolutely impinging upon us.

I have people coming to me and look at what happens there and say "Pastor, where was God?" I'm glad to give the answer but I want to ask the question back "Why don't you recognize Him in that school building before then? Why ask me where He was when it happened then? Why say He has no place there before when you want to know where He is now?" You are wondering why children are killing children in this death culture and they have just witnessed political movements that cheer the taking of a life of an unborn. Cheers are raised up at conventions where the most innocent of all human life humanly speaking, in the most protected of all places, cheer for the right to take that life. So the children that simply did not lose their life with the fifty plus million that have since 1973, perhaps they want to be significant and what are the lives of those around me? My life in the womb was nothing unless I was convenient and wanted.

So I'm in a culture that has lost the sanctity of life and elevates the sanctity of death. I wonder why the children that survive then get absorbed in a death culture, death entertainment, death fascination, death dress and death games and then turn on each other, when we have been a part of a culture that has destroyed the fabric of marriage and family. I watch how people today cannot recognize evil or know what it is and cannot recognize personal responsibility. So we'll blame teachers or security guards and so predictably there will be laws against the instruments of death and there will be attempts to raise up walls so that schools are no longer schools but they become prisons to

incarcerate children to protect them from the death culture that we've created on the outside.

I know what the only answer is. The answer is exactly what I've been preaching for twelve weeks now. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that is loved and lived by God's people so that they become shining lights in a crooked and perverse generation and either see transforming grace of people saved or restraining grace of God's common grace so that a culture does not get obsessed in this. Here's where the real problem is. It's the real problem with me for I've lost saltiness. I've lost light. I'm not shining therefore what ought to be restraining the inevitable death culture of a world has been removed because we're much more concerned today with drive-by church, let me here three points on how to control kids, how to be successful in business and let me get the car I always wanted. So here we are in this infantile consumer driven definition of the church and Gospel. We have lost impact.

The moment that event happened in Newtown I began to pray "God, please get some Gospel drenched, saturated Christians and churches to these people, please! Is there one there Lord?" Then I began to ask myself, "Are we ready to go there or when God's people show up do they become like Job's friends?" They don't understand they were saved by grace when they step into a situation like that for they become Job's friends where they speak true things but speak them hurtfully to people because they don't understand the Gospel of grace that saves them and therefore they're not gracious in a moment like that, when there ought to be a time for silence and to hug, much less use it for a platform for my latest political obsession.

Where I'm looking to is not that the world is obsessed in the death culture but I see that it is unraveling all the way around me, where marriage is redefined, sexuality/sexual immorality is accepted, sexual perversity become normal and affirmed. The family is disintegrated but where I'm really looking is at us because we're only a few percentage points behind the world in our marriages and families. Paul seems to say what makes a difference is you shine different. The way you connect with the world is not living like them but loving them and living in a way that they say there's hope. I can be forgiven of sins. I can be released from the power of sin. I can even walk away from the practice of sin – transforming grace and sanctification. There can be a culture of life.

There is only one place that it, it erupts from. The culture of death will erupt from the government. It will erupt from every institution, everywhere but the culture of life and the Gospel ought to be erupting from believers and the church of our Savior. For many of us we have even lost the Gospel. Paul lived in a crooked and perverse generation. They threw babies into the river when they didn't want them. They killed women when they weren't useful anymore. They copulated in the town square. They committed all kinds of sexual perversity. That was the Roman Empire so what did Paul do first? He said "I want every letter - Gospel, Gospel, Gospel – here is the letter of the Gospel and here is the call of the Gospel."

There is an unmistakable pattern. In 11 chapters of Romans here are the Gospel blessings. Then after giving praise to God in the Gospel he then says in Romans 12:1-2, *[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

In Ephesians in three chapters and twenty nine times it says “In Christ” and the Paul gets to Ephesians 4:1 and says *[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord (In Christ), urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.*

There’s an unmistakable pattern that shows up in text after text. In I Thessalonians Paul talks about the blessings of the Gospel and then says in I Thessalonians 4:1-3a says *[1] Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. [2] For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. [3a] For this is the will of God, your sanctification.* Here you are in Christ and here is what you do for Christ. He never tells you what to do for Christ, lest you think what you do for Christ is what puts you in Christ. He always tells you what you are in Christ by God’s sovereign grace and love but he never leaves off now that you’re saved this is what you do for Christ, by His grace.

He always has that rhythm that’s before us. “If...then...” **If** you have been raised up with Christ, **then** set your mind... If...then... Then Philippians gives us another marvelous text which is in front of us in this study. So this Gospel is the foundation, the formation and the motivation of the Christian life. The best thing I can do for Newtown is that I might be a part of a believing community and believers who know how to come with Gospel words and Gospel deeds in just the right way because they have been saved by grace and understand the hope of grace. The best thing I can do for Newtown, Aurora and Birmingham is the make sure there are Gospel preaching, living churches that are in place because that’s the only hope for the death and despair in a culture that is unraveling. It’s the life and liberty that comes through the redeeming work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It’s what Paul put in and as Rome disintegrated the Gospel of Jesus Christ multiplied and propagated throughout the whole world because he taught them how to live and for Christ.

The Gospel is the majestic message and ministry that God’s grace “has, is and will” deliver His people from their sins through the life, death, resurrection, intercession and second coming of His Son our Savior, Jesus Christ. God delivers us from our sins to Himself. How? It is by the grace of God that is found in Jesus Christ – His life, death, resurrection, intercession and His second coming. When Paul talked about the Gospel he would always say this; ‘You have been saved from your sins. You are being saved from your sins. You will be saved from your sins.’ What does he mean by ‘I have, I am and I will be’? The Gospel of grace has delivered me from my sins. It is delivering me from my sins. It will deliver me from my sins. What does Paul mean by that Gospel language? All of that deliverance comes because of the perfect life, the atoning death, the victorious resurrection and the present effective intercession of Jesus who intercedes for you right now and the victorious second coming of that Savior. Because of all that He has, He is and He will deliver us from our sins.

I have put this in terms of past grace, present grace and future grace. This chart is the timeline of every Christian. It started as a process where God’s Word came externally through evangelism as the Holy Spirit sent people to you. Then the Holy Spirit came to you internally and there was this effectual calling that culminated in an event called conversion. In conversion you have been regenerated, justified and adopted. Then that set you into another process of life that we’re looking in this study which is sanctification – present grace where He is saving you from your sins. Past grace is He

has saved you from your sins and future grace where He will save you from your sins. All of that conversion is going to a consummation in your glorification where He will save you from the very presence of your sins. This is a tapestry that can't be lost.

One of the great mistakes the church makes is it takes any one of these elements and it makes any one of them the Gospel, instead of understanding that they are all the Gospel. You have been called, born again, justified, adopted, you're being sanctified and you're going to be glorified. We hear the phrase 'preach the Gospel to yourself' and I have no problem with that phrase as long as we remember that the Gospel is not just adoption or just justification or just regeneration but it's all these that are woven together in and through Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

So in effectual calling you have been delivered from the persuasion of sin. You have been delivered to a new perspective in Christ. You have been given eyes to see and ears to hear. I am a sinner. There is a Savior. I leave my irreligion or my religion and I flee to Christ because I have eyes to see and ears to hear. Then that leads to conversion which has the blessing of regeneration where God has delivered us from the power of sin. He has delivered us to a new heart. So you have a new heart in Jesus Christ where you repent, turn from your sins to Christ and by faith you believe in Christ. The new heart is able to turn to Christ and believe in Christ.

When you have done that now that you're in Christ is the blessing of justification where He has delivered us from the penalty of sin. He has now delivered us to a new record. This new record has erased my old record of its sin because I'm cleansed with the blood of Jesus Christ and it has given me a new record of the righteousness of Christ. I'm clothed with the righteousness of Christ. I've been cleansed by His blood, I'm forgiven and all my sins have been paid for, removed from me as far as the East is from the West. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

More than that, I have also been accepted in the Beloved One. I've been declared innocent because I not only have my sins gone but I have His righteousness that clothes me. That leads me to adoption and now that I'm in Christ, I'm His. I have been delivered from the position of sin. No longer am I doing the works of Satan as if he's my father. No longer am I walking with the children of wrath but now God has delivered me from the position of sin. He has delivered me to a new family. So in past grace I have a new perspective, new heart, new record and a new family.

Then that leads me to present grace. That is the work of sanctification. In other words, when the ministry of the Gospel began its glorious work in your life and my life, it relentlessly brings a sinner from the tomb of death to the triumph of life and it inevitably changes them. In past grace there is personal change through effectual calling. You get a new perspective. In past grace there is also a Spiritual change in regeneration where you get a new heart. The power of sin has been broken. There is a legal change through justification where you get a new record. The old record has been eradicated. There is a relational change through adoption and you now have a new family where God is your Father and God's people are your brothers and sisters. That past grace leads you to present grace.

There is a vocational change. Now what is your calling, your vocation? Whatsoever you eat or drink or do, do all to the glory of God. Instead of sinning where my vocation is falling short of the glory of God, now the glory of God is my vocation in the exaltation of Jesus Christ. That is now what He has called me to. I now have a new

life in Jesus Christ. To understand it let's look at Philippians 2 the passage we read at the beginning and I'll give you four things in an overview of this passage.

The first thing we see is very clearly the Apostle Paul knows you can't live right until you have a right relationship. He says in Philippians 2:5 that he wants us who are in Christ to have this mind. You can't live for Christ until you're in Christ. So for those who are in Christ I want you to have this mind in yourself. You not only see that right living comes from a right relationship but you have the relationship because of past grace and now present grace is living that out. The first step in right living for those in a right relationship is to get a right mind. It is right thinking. When you became a Christian you received a new perspective, a new heart, a new record, a new family but you did not get a new mind.

That's why it says in Romans 12:2 [2] *Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* In my mind I have a default program. It's all about me. I need the grace of God to start thinking that it's all about Him. I need that to permeate my life. So right living comes from a right relationship and it is learned by right thinking. In other words, a life for Christ must first be a life in Christ but a life for Christ that's in Christ must live by the mind of Christ which is revealed in God's Word.

The second thing from this text is that gaining the life in Christ is intentionally focused on Christ. Jesus has laid out the markers. Here is His incarnation. He humbled Himself to be found in appearance as a man. He was born to set us free. He shared in flesh and blood. His incarnation led to a life of humiliation and suffering which led to death and that led to God exalting Him at the right time. There is your new life. Christ is living in you, the Incarnation Truth. You now humble yourself and die to yourself. Then you rise in obedience to follow Him and you do this by asking God everyday to help you die to yourself. There is my liberty. If I want to live, I have to die. Paul says in Galatians 2:20, [20] *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Paul, are you living or dying? Yes. I die to myself. I live unto Christ.

He tells us to intentionally take hold of this. That's why if you want to know those whom Christ is working with, it is those who love Gospel obedience. It's not their obedience that saves them. Their obedience is the mark that they know the Savior. They have this mind. They die to themselves. They are living unto Christ. They humble themselves. They hold fast to God's Word. They are intentionally with a grace empowered life of transformation, living for their Savior. They are not doing this to be saved. They are living this because of their Savior who has given them a new mind and a new relationship.

The third thing is how do you become a shining light? It is because you are working out what God is working into your life. That's the life of the believer. Notice the phrase He uses; 'fear and trembling.' That is Bible code language for worship. I will be covering this in the whole next year. It is Gospel worship. God saved you not only to gather for worship but to live a life of worship so that whatsoever you eat, drink or do, you do all to the glory of God. He saved you that you might work out in worship, fear and trembling. You able to work out, because the sovereign God is working in you, to

will and to work for His good pleasure. He is willing and working in you that you may work out for Him. He doesn't say to work for your salvation. He says to work out your salvation. You already have your salvation which is in Christ. You're not working for salvation but you're working out your salvation as an act of worship because He is working in you. Sovereignly and sufficiently you are His work and when you become His work you work out what He is working in. That is the life of the believer all the way to glory.

So what is sanctification? Sanctification is that you are being delivered from the practice of sin. It is no longer you have been delivered from the practice of sin. You have been delivered from the persuasion of sin, the power of sin, penalty of sin and the position of sin but you are being delivered from the practice of sin. This is present grace. Past grace is done. God has worked it in your life. Present grace is what He is doing right now and you are anticipating future grace which is glorification in which He'll eradicate the presence of sin. We will cover glorification in the next study. Now He is eradicating through you by the power of grace the practice of sin. You are being delivered from the practice of sin and you are being delivered to a new life.

What is the new life look like? It is one of grace empowered obedience where you first put off the old man in order to put on the new. You put off to put on. Many of us want to be believers living like a Christian but we don't take the time to put off. It's like a person who gets up in the morning who has their pajamas on and puts their clothes on, on top of the pajamas. That will be pretty uncomfortable. As they are uncomfortable something will come off. What will come off? What will come off is what you put on. If you want to put something on to keep it on you have to put off what you already had on. We put off the old man to put on the new man. Let me get a little clearer. You not only put off the old man but you kill him. Let's look at Romans 8.

I want to encourage you on your own to read Romans 6. I don't have time to cover it here. This whole thing I'm talking about is wrapped up there but for now I'd like to look in Romans 8:12-15 which says *[12] So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. [13] For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [15] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

We have been given the power of the Son of God in our life so that according to verse 13, by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body. You kill the sin in order to embrace the life of obedience so that we are putting off the old man to put on the new man in Christ, then we can pursue holiness in the Lord. That is what God has called us to. Kill sin and pursue holiness. Hebrews 12:14 says *[14] Strive for (pursue) peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* God's people live for Him. That is not what saves them but that's the mark of those who have been saved by Him.

With this new life in Christ what are some things that we need to be thinking about? Here are some takeaways I'd like to give you in conclusion. The Christian life in Christ is an unmistakable pattern of working in and working out. God works in and you work out. God works in by His grace. Here are the vows we take when we become members and are baptized. "In humble reliance upon Divine grace and the power of the

Holy Spirit I will endeavor.” In other words, I will work out while I’m relying on Him working in. It is impossible for you to work out the Christian life without God’s grace working in. Without Him I can do nothing (John 15:5) but when He does work in you I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). So when He works in, I can work out. It is impossible to work out the Christian life without for Christ, not for salvation, without Him working in.

Here is another side of that. It is impossible for Him to be working in if something is not coming out. If He is working in then something is going to come out. II Corinthians 5:17 says *[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* He’s not perfect but he is changed. There is a vocational change that is taking place in the life of a believer. You can’t work out without Him working in but if He’s working in something will start coming out. Let me put it this way. God is not dependent upon me working out to work in. He works in my life out of His own good pleasure. Philippians 2:13 says *[13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* He is not dependent upon me but I am utterly dependent upon Him to work out what He’s working in.

Jerry Bridges puts it like an airplane. It’s not fifty percent God and fifty percent you. It’s a hundred percent God and a hundred percent you. It’s a hundred percent God whom you rely upon. It is humble reliance on Divine grace and it’s a hundred percent transformational power of “I will endeavor.” You don’t honor God’s grace by passivity. You honor God’s grace by resting in His power and working out His power in your life. That is what the picture is of the life of sanctification.

The second principle is progress and regress. When you live this Christian life some progress is going to be so exciting and quick. Sometimes in your Christian life God is growing you like a Crockpot. Sometimes He microwaves you. When I became a Christian certain things in my life were just gone instantly and that was it. There are some things I have been dealing with since the day I was converted and I’m still dealing with them. He’s crock-potting them out. You’ll take five steps forward and two backwards. You’ll take two forward and five backwards. The key is perseverance, not perfection. God is persevering you that you’ll persevere in Him. There is progress and there’s regress.

Thirdly, there are means and merit. If you want to grow in grace you lay hold of the means of grace. Get in God’s Word and study it. Hear it preached. The most important thing for you in your Christian life to grow is I believe, to be under faithful, sound, Gospel, Biblical preaching. The Bible says it is through the preaching of the Word that we are being saved from our sins. Then you need to read God’s Word and examine it. Acts 17:11b says *[11b] they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* You need to be regularly in prayer. Prayer and the Word are your lifelines. You get prayer and the Word in worship, preaching, fellowship and in your quiet time with the Lord but those things aren’t merits. They don’t make God save you. You don’t do those to be saved but you do those to draw close to your Savior. You’re not meriting His love but you’re being informed and growing in His love. You’re drawing near to God. Draw near to God and He’ll draw near to you. Now He has already saved you but you’ll grow in your intimacy. You’re not meriting His love but you’re going to the means to know the depths and intimacy of His love.

There was a man on staff with me while I pastored a church in Charlotte. He was a wonderful, fun, loving guy. We would try to play golf every once in a while and the course we would play was along Hwy 51 which had eight lanes on the right side of the first hole for all of the slicers in the world. When I would go to tee up on the first hole I could just see the ball going out into those eight lanes and all the lawsuits going against me at Christ Covenant Church but we played that day. Thankfully when I hit my first shot it went down the middle of the fairway and I thought "Praise the Lord." I said "Okay Tom, it's your turn." He took this big swing and it was an outside in swing. It started off great and then that outside in spin took over and it took off for Hwy 51. Elvis was leaving the building right there. It was in the middle of 4 o'clock traffic and I could just see all the lawsuits coming at us but before the ball left the golf course it hit the tallest pine tree at the very top and careened back into the fairway. It landed on the cart path which was going downhill and tilted into the fairway. It rolled into fairway twenty yards from the green and the whole was 410 yards long. He ended up with a 390 yard drive landing in the middle of the fairway. He turned and said to me "Well, I had my quiet time this morning."

Regular worship, regular preaching, regular prayer, regular fellowship, sacraments, time alone with God, Word and prayer, don't earn a status with God but they draw and deepen your status, intimacy and relationship with God. They are means and not merits of God's grace in your life.

The fourth thing is monergistic and synergistic. Monergistic means the power and energy of one. Synergistic means power and energy in this case of two. Everything I'm trying to teach you about the Gospel is monergistic. You didn't call yourself. Who called you? It was God. Faithful is He who calls you and He will bring it to pass. You didn't regenerate yourself. You were regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. You didn't justify yourself. It is God who justifies His people. You did not adopt yourself. God adopted you with the Spirit of adoption. The Father adopted you. In the next study we'll see that you don't glorify yourself. At the right time God will exalt you and bring you to glory. Every piece of the Gospel is monergistic except one and that is sanctification which is synergistic – work out, work in. You are intentionally obedient but you're not relying on yourself.

Most of us try to do fifty percent reliance and fifty percent engaged. No, it's one hundred percent reliant and one hundred percent devoted and committed to the Lord. Yet you can't do it unless He is doing it in you. So you are one hundred percent reliant but yet your reliance isn't magnified by passivity. It's magnified by God centered, Christ exalting activity where you're humbling yourself, studying, fleeing temptation, taking hold, pursuing holiness and all of those things, because it's God who is at work in you, so it's working out of you. So there is this monergistic in all of the blessings of the Gospel in past grace and future grace but in present grace it is synergistic where you know who you are in Christ and now by the power of Christ you're working out what He has worked in.

Fifthly, there is past grace and present grace. Present grace is obeying Jesus, growing in grace, putting to death sin, putting off the old man, pursuing holiness, putting on the new man, right? So let's say when you finishing reading this in present grace, by God's grace in humble reliance upon the Holy Spirit you begin to work out what He is working in. You never miss a quiet time. You're always consistent under the preaching

of the Word. You love the priority of worship on the Lord's Day. You embrace the sacraments. You enjoy the fellowship of God's people. You have family worship. You have kids that grow up and all become effective missionaries. You lead three people to Christ every day for the rest of your life. This isn't a bad life you have going here, right? If that is true of you, you will never be more called than you are right now. You will never be more born again than you are right now. You will never be more justified than you are right now. You will never be more adopted than you are right now.

It's not God saying "Look how good Harry is doing so I'll really make him born again." No, past grace is done. In the bank of redemption and the victory of Jesus Christ, He calls you. He has regenerated you, justified you, adopted you and He can't love you any more than He has already loved you but you will know His love deeper as you grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. You will know Him more intimately. You know Him more deeply and you'll be more surrendered to Him and it will manifest. The growth in present grace never enhances the work of past grace but the work of past grace will always make itself known in present grace. It will be the evidence and the growth in grace and knowledge of Christ.

This is why this is the most important thing I could preach today. Just as He came 2000 years ago born to set us free, He actually came into a place where the innocent were slaughtered in Bethlehem. He came to go to a cross to give Himself. He is not a God detached from the suffering of this world but He's a God who came into it and I want Jesus to come to Newtown. How does He come to Newtown? He comes through Spirit filled, Gospel drenched, saturated believers who know how to speak the Truth with love and who know how to live out the Truth because the love of Christ constrains them, to offer to people in a broken world the Gospel of grace. This world isn't fixed by walls and laws. I know there's a place for walls and laws, I'm not saying that but it's fixed with the hope that is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, right there. Jesus shows up at Newtown the way He shows up in Birmingham, through the Gospel saturated body of Christ, His people. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. If there is any time that man does not know his own time, it's right now. Would You help us please Father, to be faithfully embracing the truth of the Gospel so that we know who we are in Christ and how we ought to live for Christ? Thank You that You have given us an ought to life because You have empowered us. We don't live for grace, we live by grace yet grace produces a changed life. Father, we have the privilege to be embracing intentionally that new life in Christ. So O Lord, be praised in the lives of Your people as they put off the old man and put on the new man because they have been saved by grace in Jesus Christ. May we again bring salt to the death spiral of a death culture. May we shine as lights in humble, not arrogant, reliance upon Divine grace, speaking and living the light of the Gospel to those in darkness. I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.