

Privileged Part 7 – Life-giving Grace (NLT Unless **Marked Red**)

We are currently in this series we've been calling "Privileged – God's Favor is for everyone." I hope that over these past few weeks and the next couple weeks to come that you are learning and growing in your understanding of God's grace and His favor in your life.

A key scripture we've been looking at is in Romans 5:1-2

"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have **peace**^[a] with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. ² Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory."

As believers and followers of Jesus, we stand in a place of undeserved privilege, It's not based on anything we've done, it's simply a gift that God has made available to Everyone who puts their faith in Jesus.

This morning I want to look at that little three-word phrase In verse one which says we have "peace with God" Do you feel like you are truly a peace with God? Do you confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's Glory?

Will you open your Bibles with me to Genesis chapter 2:4-7

"When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶ Instead, springs^[a] came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the

ground. He breathed the breath of **life** into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person."

Skip to verse 21

2:21-25

"²¹ So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs^[a] and closed up the opening. ²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³ "At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!

She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

²⁴ This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵ Now the man and his wife were both naked, **but they felt no shame.**

What we just read is the Biblical account of God's very first expression of Grace and favor towards mankind. What was that expression?

It was God's gift of life! It's God taking what was, not even dead, but non-existent and making him and her a living, breathing, being!

What did Adam and Eve do to deserve God's bringing them into existence? NOTHING! It was God's Grace and favor. It was out of God's creativity, out of His desire to create a living being that was made in his image, that He could have a meaningful, personal, and eternal relationship with. This is what sets us apart!

We are all here as an overflow of His love and desire to be loved, and it's from that image (likeness) we were created.

Again, not one of us has breath in our lungs, because of anything we did! Our very existence has nothing to do with us! It has everything to do with God and His incredible love and favor towards us.

Every breath, every heartbeat, every new memory, every cell in your body is an expression of His Grace! Do you believe that?

This was and is God's plan and desire for you. To have life, and not just life here on earth, but to have life eternally with Him!

And not only that, but look back at the last verse of that passage we read v. 25

“NOW THE MAN AND HIS WIFE WERE BOTH NAKED, BUT THEY FELT NO SHAME!” They were in perfect peace with God and with one another.

That's the life God intended. That even at our most vulnerable, transparent, naked and exposed times of our life; when everything is seen and known about us, we can feel no shame. No judgment, no condemnation.

WOW what a beautiful state of existence!

But as many of us know, that's not the reality for most of our world today is it? It's not the reality for many of us here today.

What happened?

Skip over to chapter 3

After God had made Adam, he told him that He could enjoy the fruit from every tree in the garden they had been placed in except one. And God warned him that if he did eat of that tree that he would die.

3:1-8

“The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

² “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. ³ “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

⁴ “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷ **At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness.** So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸ When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man^[a] and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. **So they hid from the Lord God** among the trees.

God is the source of all life

Sin is rebellion against, and the rejection of God and His Favor

Sin separates us from God who is life

Separation from the life-giver brings death

A result of this state of separation is Shame, Guilt, Condemnation, and the Fear of Judgement. a reminder that we are not at peace with God.

So we have a problem. Because God's plan and desire is to give life and to be in relationship with us (which we don't deserve). But we have given in to sin, and now face the effect and penalty of that sin (which we do deserve.)

Let's look and see how God responds to Adam and Eve's sin

We won't read the whole passage, but essentially. Out of their shame and guilt. Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the snake.

God gives all three some immediate consequences.

Snake:

- Cursed above all other animals
- Crawl on your belly
- Hostility with mankind
- A prophesy that one will come and strike the snakes head and the snake will strike the man's heel.

Woman:

- Sharpened pain of pregnancy and child birth
- A desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.

Man:

- Struggle to work the land and earn a living
- Thorns and thistles
- Eventual death

He didn't kill them immediately? He let them live! He delayed their punishment. Yes, there consequence was eventual death, but why drag it out?

God spares their life so that they could continue to live and so that future generations could experience His life-giving Grace as well.

Grace... Favor.... Life

God had a plan. His Grace is greater than sin. His favor is greater than evil. His love is greater than our mistakes.

God gives us a little glimpse of His greater plan in verse 21.

3:21

“²¹ And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.”

God wants to provide a way to take away the guilt and shame, which is a side-effect of our sinful nature.

Mankind doesn't get better after this. Actually, it gets worse. So bad that in Genesis chapter 6 God is so heart-broken and fed up with man's wickedness that he vows to destroy every living being on earth. He's ready to judge the world of their sinfulness right then and there and give them the just and deserved punishment of their rebellion: DEATH.

He's ready to do it, but look at verse 8 of chapter 6

Gen. 6:8-9

“⁸ But Noah found favor with the Lord.

Why did Noah find favor with God

Verse 9

“Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.

Was Noah blameless because he was sinless?

No, the Bible tells us that everyone has sinned. Noah was made or declared righteous and blameless, not because he lived a morally pure life, but because He walked in close fellowship with God. It was in this fellowship that He found favor with God.

And once again, if you know the story, God extends His life-giving Grace towards Noah and His family and saves them from His wrath and instead preserves their LIFE. Another glimpse/foreshadow into God’s bigger plan to save mankind from the deserved punishment of our sin.

You’d hope it would get better from here, but it still doesn’t

- Noah gets drunk
- Abraham lies
- Jacob deceives and steals
- Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers

Which eventually we are brought to a man named Moses, It’s to this man that God gives a set of laws and commandments that reveal the Holy, God-honoring, moral life that God expects His creation to live. These laws include moral laws, social laws, and religious/worship laws.

But knowing that men and women would be unable to live according to these moral standards, Even if they genuinely tried to, God also gave Moses and the people of Israel the procedures and steps of how to go about getting seeking forgiveness from God for their sinful acts.

Leviticus 4:27-31 ESV

²⁷ “If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, ²⁸ or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat (or lamb), a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. ²⁹ And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering. ³⁰ And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. ³¹ And all its fat he shall remove, as the fat is removed from the peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the Lord. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.”

So, as you can imagine this system and lifestyle was a constant reminder of the broken state of humanity's relationship with God. It was a constant reminder of the guilt and shame, and fear that came with being separated from a Holy Creator. It was a constant reminder that death is the just punishment for sin.

But it was also a system that demonstrated God's Life-giving Grace and favor in which the sinner was allowed to LIVE (by the undeserved grace of God) if a sacrifice would die in his/her place. It was again a glimpse of God's future plan to restore His relationship with mankind once and for all.

A plan that would involve sending His one and only Son, God himself, Jesus Christ to earth to make everything right again.

Mark chapter 15:6-15

⁶ Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover celebration to release one prisoner—anyone the people requested.

⁷ One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, a revolutionary who had committed murder in an uprising. ⁸ The crowd went to Pilate and asked him to release a prisoner as usual.

⁹ “Would you like me to release to you this ‘King of the Jews’?” Pilate asked. ¹⁰ (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.) ¹¹ But at this point the leading priests stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. ¹² Pilate asked them, “Then what should I do with this man you call the king of the Jews?”

¹³ They shouted back, “Crucify him!”

¹⁴ “Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?”

But the mob roared even louder, “Crucify him!”

¹⁵ So to pacify the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified.

I'm Barabbas... You are Barabbas

We have been found guilty and deserving for the just punishment of Death. But Jesus took our place and as a result we are set free. He died so that we could live.

This is why we refer to Jesus as the sacrificial lamb of God. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice that appeases the punishment for all sin; for all men and woman who will put their faith in Jesus as their substitute.

This is God's LIFE-GIVING GRACE AND FAVOR that fully restores us back to God's original plan and desire. To give men and women life and life eternal and to experience pure and unified relationship with their creator.

But here is the sad thing. Many of us didn't have a problem initially receiving God's Life-Giving Grace when we became a believer in Jesus. What most of us struggle with is continuing to live in that life-giving grace God has provided through the sacrificial death of Jesus.

Many of us think that in some way every time we sin that we somehow abuse or take advantage of Christ...that in some way every time we sin we are putting another nail into Jesus hands, that every time we have to ask for forgiveness that we are somehow frustrating God. We often continue to live in guilt, shame, condemnation and fear..

CHURCH GOD'S WRATH TOWARDS YOUR SIN HAS BEEN APPEASED.
WITH JESUS, YOU ARE NOW AT PEACE WITH GOD.

Romans 8:1-4

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.
² And because you belong to him, the power^[f] of the life-giving Spirit has freed you^[g] from the power of sin that leads to death. ³ The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature.^[h] So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be **fully satisfied** for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit

Many of us think too highly and too often of our sin. We get so fixated on how weak we are and forget that God's Grace cost Jesus everything! We get so self-absorbed that our failures become more real to us than Jesus' Sacrifice.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross, just moments before He took His last breath, the Gospel of John tells us that Jesus yelled out these three words, "It is finished."

You can't do anything to mess up God's Grace. God's plan has been finished on the cross! Grace is greater than Sin!

As followers of Jesus, if we continue to live a life that is controlled by guilt, shame, condemnation, and fear of Judgement, THEN WE HAVE NOT FULLY RECEIVED NOR LIVE UNDER GOD'S LIFE-GIVING GRACE AND LOVE.

Look at how John wrote it in 1 John 4:16-18

¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. "

When we truly realize and experience God's Life-Giving Grace and love; guilt, shame, condemnation, and the fear of judgment no longer have to be a part of our daily lives. It won't be in our language. We can live free, no longer bound to sin or its influences to blur the truth of our pure relationship with God.

So, how are you doing in this area? How are you doing with shame of sins past and present? How are you dealing with the fear of one day standing before God and being held accountable for your life? How well

do you feel with feelings of judgment and feeling condemned? Are you truly at peace with God? Are you truly at peace with others?

God's never-ending love and life-giving Grace has been given so that you can live free and confident that you are at Peace with God. And when you are at peace with God, you can truly be at peace with others.

Pray that we will truly experience God's life-giving grace that frees us from guilt, shame, condemnation, and fear and instead gives us freedom, innocence, confidence, and assurance. I pray that we would live in a state of peace with God, fully alive in God's endless love. and that we would never forget that although we will experience earthly consequences of our sins, Jesus has fully paid the eternal punishment of our sin and in exchange given us eternal life with God the Father!