

**Grace is Enough – Days of Awe Series**  
**Pastor Deborah Oakley – GFC – Nov. 3, 2019**

It's good to be home...I thoroughly enjoyed my prayer and study retreat. I want to thank all the staff for being so gracious about me going. That really touched me.

So, we are in a series titled "Days of Awe." Today I am preaching on "Grace is Enough." I can't think of anything that is more awe inspiring than the grace of God.

One way I have learned that grace is enough is through failure. So, I thank God for failure. If it wasn't for failure, I never would have known that the life-changing grace of God was enough for me. I would still be trying to earn righteousness by doing right things.

It took failing over and over for me to finally realize I couldn't make myself righteous enough to please God. Of course, there's nothing wrong with doing right things, but they don't make us righteous...

I spent many years thinking I could do enough to earn God's acceptance. I would compare myself to others and think I wasn't so bad. I just needed a little help from God, and all would be good. If I would just try a little harder, I could get it right. I believed that I could be good enough which meant I didn't really believe His grace was enough. But I just keep failing at being good enough.

That was when I realized that God doesn't accept me because I'm good enough, He accepts me in spite of the fact that I'm not – and never will be - good enough. But His grace is enough. As God told Paul that in 2 Corinthians 12:9-

*My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.*

According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, the word sufficient has 2 main meanings: "to be possessed of unflinching strength; and to be enough." Thank God I finally realized that I would never measure up to God's holiness by trying harder. It was impossible for me to make myself holy, or good enough, or strong enough. And I didn't have to because His grace is enough. And that was a big step for me in understanding grace.

You see, grace is God's unmerited favor and power in our lives. Grace is the power of God to save us and the power of God to keep us. So, God's grace is God's power and God's power is always enough.

I spent so many years trying to add to God's grace. But I failed over and over because nothing can be added to His grace. God's grace is enough. His grace is an abundant grace, boundless grace, amazing grace, matchless grace, overflowing grace, saving grace, unflinching grace, wonderful grace, an all-sufficient grace and

an awe-inspiring grace. And when we try to add to God's grace by our own efforts or by doing good works, that's called legalism. What we are really saying is that Jesus' sacrifice was not enough to save us. There is more that must be done. But guess what? There is nothing any of us can do to add to grace.

When we try to add to grace, we are being legalistic. Legalism and grace do not mix! In fact, when we're legalistic, we're not applying grace. It's so sad because when we are legalistic, we become full of guilt and condemnation. But when we're walking in God's grace there is no condemnation! Romans 8:1-4 says:

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

The Old Covenant ministered condemnation, but the New Covenant ministers righteousness! So, you do not have to beat yourself up when you mess up. Because, when you mess up, He will pick you up. You don't have to try harder or do more in your own strength! His grace is enough.

Whatever struggle you have in your life... if you will rely on the grace of God... He will see you through to victory. He will give you the ability to endure the most difficult times of your life. He will give you the power to overcome.

Okay, so can I be vulnerable with you today? One of the biggest struggles I've had in my life is being a woman pastor. Last time I spoke I shared that being a pastor is one of it not the hardest things I've ever done. Well...being a woman pastor is doubly hard. Don't get me wrong...I love being a pastor – but it's hard. If it had not been for the grace of God in my life...I never would have made it this far.

I remember the first time Joe and I did a marriage seminar for a group of elders and their wives in 1995. This wasn't the first time we led together, but it was the first time I opened the meeting. All I did was welcome everyone and pray. But, immediately we could tell something was wrong and later we found out it was because I opened the meeting and not Joe. They didn't approve of a woman taking a lead role.

I also can't count the times that I couldn't attend a pastors' meeting because I was a woman. I can't count the times I would be in a group of male pastors and ask a question only for them to direct the answer to Joe. It was like I was invisible. Not to mention I stuck out like a sore thumb in a group of all men. Then, there were the times people felt they needed to tell me that they loved Joe's preaching, but they wouldn't attend if I was preaching because they didn't believe in woman preachers.

Listen, I understand that people have different interpretations of the Bible regarding women in ministry. I respect that. But it's hard when things happen like John MacArthur condescendingly telling Bible teacher Beth Moore to go home.

All of these things are difficult, but the most difficult was Joe's resistance to me. Listen, Pastor Joe has taught me almost everything I know. He helps me with probably every sermon I've preached. He has mentored me and still is my mentor.

But in the early days, due to his Baptist upbringing, he really struggled with relating to me as a woman pastor and leader. This caused a lot of tension between us. Thank God we've overcome most of that. You can read about it in our book *Leading Side by Side*.

So, when I say I'm standing here today by the grace of God. I mean I'm standing here by the grace of God. His unmerited grace, His enabling power has kept me. And His grace will keep you, too. Because His grace is enough. I am awed by the grace of God.

God's grace is God's power and God's power is always enough. Grace is the power of God to save us. Grace is also the power of God to keep us. And grace is the power to get us through what God wants us to go through.

- His grace is enough when you're on a mountain top and His grace is enough when you're in a valley!
- His grace is enough when you're flowing in the river of God and His grace is enough when you're in a barren desert.
- His grace is enough whether His answer is yes or no or wait!

No matter what, His grace is always enough! And God's grace will bring you through standing up! Romans 5:1-2 says:

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*

God's grace is not going to let you fall.  
 God's grace is not going to cause you to barely make it.  
 God's grace enables you to stand.  
 God's grace empowers you to fight and overcome!

Romans 5:17 tells us that *...those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.*

God's grace gives you the power to reign in life!

So, in order to really understand grace, we must understand covenant. In the Bible, there were two main covenants between God and His people. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties, to uphold certain conditions and perform certain actions. In the Old Testament, the people were under a different covenant with God than in the New Testament. The Old Testament covenant was based on keeping certain laws or requirements to be right with God. It was a covenant of law. It was a conditional covenant that required obedience in order to be accepted by God.

But this covenant ceased in order to make way for a new and better covenant. That's why we all need an understanding of the covenant of grace! The New Covenant was and is a covenant of Grace.

The old covenant was based on outward obedience to the Law.  
The new covenant is based in an inner change of heart.

The old covenant was based on man's ability and strength.  
The new covenant is based on God's ability – called God's grace.

The old covenant of law had no power.  
The new covenant has the power of God's grace!

It requires faith in Jesus Christ and is based on grace and not works. When Jesus came... He changed everything forever. Salvation, justification, righteousness, favor with God, the power of God, the love of God – the matchless grace of God is ours in abundance. Romans 10:4 says:

*Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

That doesn't mean the law is bad. It means that the purpose of the law was to reveal our sin, show us that we were powerless to overcome our sin and then to lead us to Christ.

The truth is, the law could never save anyone! Legalism is the belief that we can be saved by keeping the law. But the Law cannot impart righteousness!

Much of the Old Testament is the story of God's people breaking covenant, reaping disastrous results, and then repenting. This happened over and over. That's why a new covenant was needed! Hebrews 8:7 says:

*For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.*

That's why Philippians 2:13 says:

*It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Grace is the power of God working in you to do what you can't do on your own! That's why the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant. It is a better and superior covenant of grace. Hebrews 8:6 says:

*But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.*

So, we are not under the new covenant, not the old. Yet, many of us are still trying to be right with God by doing good works or keeping the laws of God. But Jesus did away with that. So, why do we seem to rely on the law to be right with God? Maybe it's because it appeals to our flesh. Something in us wants to believe we can do it - we can earn God's favor. We think we have something good in us that can add to grace. But, Galatians 2:16 says:

*A man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

So, you know that terrible sin you committed...it doesn't change who you are in Christ. You are still a blood bought, righteous, justified by faith, child of God. You just need to repent and turn from your sin. God's grace is enough to forgive you, cleanse you, heal you, destroy the power of sin over you, and restore you to God. And you will never have peace until you repent and accept God's grace.

You see God gave us the law so we would know when we are disobeying or sinning. You may try to justify yourself, but you know when you're doing wrong. Because the law makes you conscious of sin. It's called conviction. Romans 3:20 says:

*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

The law was given so that it can convict us of sin and bring us to Jesus Christ who by his grace will break the power of sin over us. Galatians 3:24-25 says:

*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

Here's the thing...apart from grace we are wretched. So, if we are relying on our own righteousness to save us... well then...we have a big problem. Because how can a wretched person save themselves? Well, they can't. Paul said in Romans 7:24-25

*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Webster's defines wretched as: deeply afflicted, dejected, or distressed in body or mind. Extremely or deplorably bad or distressing.

We don't usually use the word wretched much anymore. About the only time we hear it though is in the context of grace! We hear it when we sing, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!"

That song was written by John Newton, who was the captain of a slave ship before He converted to Christianity. Newton gave up the slave trade and eventually became a minister. At 82, just before he died - Newton said, "Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior."

John Newton understood wretchedness and as a result John Newton understood God's amazing grace. We talk about grace and sing about amazing grace, but few of us really know what grace is because we don't understand our wretchedness.

Last week Pastor Joe taught us that we will never understand the grace and mercy of God until we understand the wrath of God. And I want to add to that today that we never understand the grace of God until we understand our own wretchedness apart from God.

We don't need grace because we are so good! We need grace because apart from Christ we are wretched and lost.

If you see your sin as little sin – you will see Christ as a little Savior! But if you – like John Newton – see that your sins are great – you will then see Christ as a great Savior! Notice again what Paul said in Romans 7:24-25

*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Paul says we need to be rescued from this body of death. Another way to say this is body of sin. This expression "body of death" is believed to refer to someone who is wounded in battle, taken prisoner and surrounded by all the dead bodies of those who were killed in battle.

If that's not bad enough, to add to his misery there was an ancient custom where some tyrants would bound a dead body to a living person until the decay from the dead body killed him. He had to carry it with him where ever he went. He was chained to the dead, decaying flesh of a corpse.

This is what sin does to us. It's like dragging around a dead body everywhere we go. In the end sin will contaminate and kill us spiritually. Isaiah 64:6 says:

*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*

These verses make it as clear as can be that in and of ourselves we are as far from righteous as can be. If we ever had a shred of doubt that we can't obtain righteousness - these verses remove all doubt forever. But in Jesus Christ, under grace, we are the righteousness of God. And, God's grace is enough. Grace is the power of God to get us through whatever we go through.

God's grace brought the Children of Israel through the Red Sea.  
God's grace brought Daniel through the lion's den.  
God's grace brought Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego through the fire.  
God's grace brought David through the fight with Goliath.  
God's grace brought the disciples through the storm on the sea.

And no matter what difficulties you may face, God's grace will always be enough for you!

If you need financial help, His grace is enough.  
If you need healing, His grace is enough.  
If you need forgiveness, His Grace is enough.  
If you need help in a relationship, His grace is enough.

It doesn't matter what the devil or the world throws at you, because no matter what - God's grace will always be enough!