

Good morning! Are living under God's grace this morning? I am---and I'm glad of it! We need God's amazing grace and we couldn't live a single day without it. Because God's grace is such an important part of our lives, let's spend a few days this week considering some of the facets of it. Martin Luther called grace "God's unmerited favor." My favorite theologian, J. I. Packer, says "The grace of God is love freely shown towards guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity, and had no reason to expect anything but severity". I like that, don't you? Let's look this morning, at a familiar passage of scripture and then we'll take a few moments to unpack it together:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Eph. 2:8-9

We see from this passage that, first of all, that grace is a gift from God. It is not dependent upon the good (or bad) behavior of the person receiving it. I like that--- In fact, I *need* that, and you do, too! This concept is demonstrated in two ways. First, *grace stops being grace if God must give it because a person has earned it*. We cannot by any means earn God's grace. Second, *grace stops being grace if God must take it away because of our bad behavior*. Indeed, grace is only wonderfully and infinitely glorious when it operates, as Packer says, "in defiance of" human demerit. Therefore, grace is not treating a person either better than or worse than he deserves. It is God treating a person solely according to His own infinite goodness and sovereign purpose. We could say it this way: You and I cannot make God love us more by being "good" or love us less by being "bad". God loves us for His own reasons and for those reasons, He freely gives His grace to us. And that's very Good News!