AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GRACE OF GOD
Ephesians 2: 8-9

INTRODUCTION:
1. Read Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:6; Romans 3:10, 23.
3. “Though men differ greatly in the nature & extent of their sinfulness, there is absolutely no difference between the best and worst of men, in the fact that all have sinned.” (David Brown).
4. “The grace of God is meaningless to anyone who fails to see both the fact and the enormity of man's sins.” (James Tolle)
5. As a matter of fact, on our own, we stand condemned before God.
   A. Song: “I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned unclean.”
   B. In a simple matter of justice, without Christ we deserve separation from God for all eternity.
6. Simply put, if you really want to understand the grace of God, you must understand the penalty there would be without it.

BODY:
1. THE GRACE OF GOD DEFINED
   A. The background of the word “charis”, which is translated grace, has many aspects which help us to appreciate its significance.
      1. James Tolle gives us some interesting background information.
         A. For example, in ancient Greek classical writings, it referred to “that which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight or causes favorable regard.”
      2. It was also used in regard to speech to that which was edifying or uplifting.
         A. For example note Paul's words in Ephesians 4:29.
      3. Elsewhere the Greek word which translates grace meant, “the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, loving kindness, good will generally” - Luke 2:52.
      4. It also meant the gratitude that one would feel for favors that he would receive.
      5. If you will note, all of the definitions are in a favorable light - grace being something wonderful, particularly to the recipient.
   B. In a spiritual context in reference to the grace of God, grace refers to the “unmerited, undeserved favor of God.”
      1. In Romans 6:23 the phrase “free gift” is from the Greek word “charisma” from which we get “charismatic” - literally meaning a “grace gift” or “unmerited gift.”
      2. Note Titus 3:5.
      3. The abundant grace and mercy bestowed upon us is because “God is love” -1 John 4:8.
         A. “We love him, because he first loved us” - 1 John 4:19.

2. THE DECISION OF GOD
   A. It is difficult to understand the depth of God's love, grace, and mercy - Ephesians
B. In the depth of God's love, the decision to send the Christ was even before the foundation of the world - Ephesians 1:4.
1. In the beauty of God’s love He determined to send His only begotten Son - John 3:16, 17.
C. We are mindful also in the grace of God, of the decision of the Christ - John 1:1, 2; John 17:5; Philippians 2:6, 7.
1. The KJV doesn't really capture the importance of Paul's statement.
2. The statement: “but made himself of no reputation” is translated also that “He divested himself”, or as the Greek points out, He “emptied Himself.”

3. THE GRACE OF GOD MANIFESTED
A. When God's Son came into the world He was offered on the cross as the propitiation for our sins - 1 John 2:1, 2.
1. Propitiation - “atonement, or expiation; which means to make amends, reparation, or compensation.”
2. The word refers to the idea of turning away wrath.
3. God's justice demands that there be payment for sin; which Jesus paid for us.
B. We learned at the onset of this lesson that our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:1, 2); as a result we are at odds with God; we are in dispute.
1. What is needed is reconciliation.
   A. Reconciliation - “to reestablish a close relation.”
   B. Jesus offered Himself as a substitution offering - 2 Corinthians 5:21.
   C. In that same context of 2 Corinthians 5, Paul tells us that we have been given the “ministry of reconciliation,” which provides the knowledge necessary to receive the merits of God's grace - 1 Corinthians 5:18.
C. Christ in His tremendous sacrifice also affords us redemption.
1. Thayer, in his Greek-English Lexicon defines redemption - “A releasing affected by payment of a ransom.”
2. Without Christ we are “slaves of sin” (Romans 6:17), we are “sold under sin” - Romans 7:14.
3. See also Matthew 20:28.
4. As Paul also stated in his writings to Titus, Jesus “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity” - Titus 2:14.
D. The key in God's grace that affords redemption, and brings reconciliation is the blood of Christ.
1. Peter says we are “redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” - 1 Peter 1:18, 19.
2. There are some things which truly can be redeemed with silver and gold, but only the blood of Christ can redeem man from sin.
3. Paul conveyed this to the church at Ephesus when he told them that without Christ at one time they “were dead in trespasses and sins” - Ephesians 2:1; cf 2:12, 13.

4. THE GRACE OF GOD EXTENDED AND ACCESSED
A. Titus 2:11.
1. Even though Christ offered Himself as atonement for all men's sins, it does not mean that everyone will be saved.
2. The idea of bringing salvation in the Greek stresses a possibility and not an actuality.
3. “If the medicine stands on the shelf, in the bottle with the stopper in, the sick man will not be cured. That is not the fault of the medicine; it is a panacea, but no remedy can work where it is not applied. Thus the universality of the gift, the universal potency of the gift, is not the slightest degree affected by the fact that, where it is not taken, its benefits are not realized.” (Hastings)

B. It is true that God wants all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9); but in the infinite wisdom of God, God's creation was such that man was given a choice.
   1. I have heard it illustrated this way: “Picture God with arms extended holding out a very precious gift; this is not a gift which you deserve, but is offered freely to you.
   2. Even though it is offered freely, and you in no way merit it, it is extended to you, made available to you, with conditions.”

C. Consider these conditions.
   1. You have to choose whether or not you want the gift.
   2. God makes it clear that the merits of His grace are available to those who obey His will - Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8, 9.
   3. Even though it is a gift which we do not merit, we cannot be saved unless we meet God's conditions (mention plan of salvation).

CONCLUSION:
1. God is extending His grace to you at this very moment: the choice is yours - Matthew 6:24.