

TAKEAWAY:

We don't give to earn God's grace; we give because we have received God's grace.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

Plan for 2-3 people to give a 2-5 minute testimony of how God saved them. (Consider asking ahead of time so they are prepared)

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read Ephesians 2:1-10

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- Before hearing this message, how would you have described your default understanding of giving? Did you tend to think of it as something you do to earn favor, or as a response to something already received?
- The sermon describes our condition before grace as dead, enslaved, and separated. How does honestly sitting with that reality change the way you feel about what God has done for you?
- Ephesians 2:10 describes believers as God's workmanship, created for good works. What does it mean to you personally that you were created with a purpose already in mind?
- **How does the order – grace first, then generosity – change the emotional posture with which you approach giving?**

APPLICATION:

- Is there an area of your life where you still find yourself trying to earn God's favor rather than responding to grace already given?
- This week, take fifteen minutes to write out, in your own words, what your life looked like before you received God's grace and what changed. Let that reflection be the foundation for how you approach generosity throughout this series. Consider sharing it with your group next week.

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts

that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

Grace based Christianity vs. Transactional based Religion: God's grace properly received and understood should inherently and inexorably evoke a life of good works:

- In what subtle ways do we secretly treat our relationship with God like a transaction (e.g., "If I read my Bible and serve, God owes me a smooth week")?
- Name an area of your life (your religious devotion, your finances, a difficult relationship, your volunteer service, the act of giving, etc.) that God recreated and made it grace based and grace fueled. Name an area where you sense God is inviting you to have that thing change from being anxiety filled and self-sustained to one that is grounded in and energized by God's grace. Let's pray about it!
- The apostle Peter characterized Jesus' life as one that "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Discuss your awareness of how other individuals and our church are a part of God's goodness, God's grace and mercy, shining to those in need? In what ways are you participating in these ways? What impact is this having on your life and those around you? How does viewing yourself and the life you live as God's beloved work of art change the way you approach the good works you do on a daily basis?

The Foreordination of Generosity: The text states that God "prepared beforehand" good works for believers. How does this doctrine of *foreordination* shift generosity from a reactive "burden" to a proactive, joyful discovery?

- How does the theological belief that God has already scripted and resourced opportunities for generosity alleviate the modern psychological phenomenon of "compassion fatigue" or "donor burnout"?
- What is the practical difference between anxiously trying to invent good works to prove one's faith, and resting in the Holy Spirit's guidance to walk into pre-ordained works?
- Can your group identify a specific historical or personal instance where a sudden financial need perfectly aligned with a resource they were uniquely positioned and prepared to provide?
- How can believers maintain a state of spiritual readiness, sensitivity, and margin (both time and money) to recognize the good works God has placed in their daily path?
- How does this specific doctrine influence long-term financial planning, ensuring that liquidity and resources are available when God's pre-ordained opportunities suddenly arise?

QUOTES:

- **Charles Spurgeon:** "No Christian in the world is a chance production of nature, or the outcome of evolution, or the result of special circumstances. 'By the grace of God I am what I am,' may be said by every man who is saved. To nothing can we ascribe the fact that we are in Christ except this—that we are God's workmanship."
- **Tim Keller:** "Religion says, 'I obey; therefore I am accepted.' Christianity says, 'I am accepted, therefore I obey.' ... The primary motivation for religion is fear; the primary motivation for the gospel is gratitude."
- **Karl Barth:** "Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning."
- **John Stott:** "Good works are indispensable to salvation—not as its ground or means, however, but as its consequence and evidence."
- **Dallas Willard:** "Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action."
- **N. T. Wright:** "We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works. The point of grace is to create a people who will act as God's reflecting mirrors, flashing his love and mercy out into the dark world."

GROUP PRAYER: Pray for God to shift your heart for generosity while having a heart of gratitude for what He has done for you through Christ Jesus.