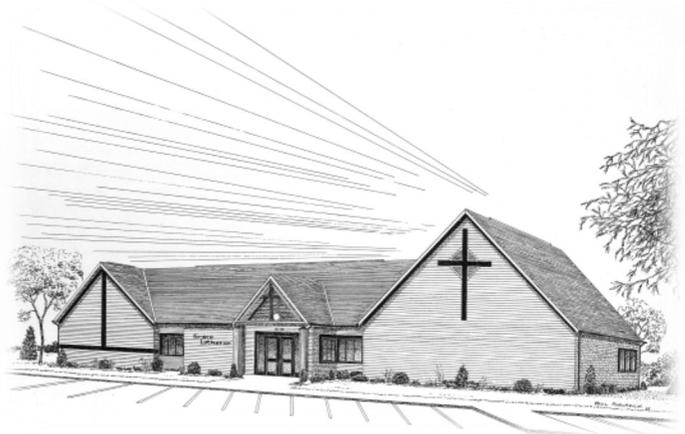




The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost  
Vacation Bible School Sunday  
August 3, 2014  
Pastor Daniel Naumann  
Ephesians 2:4-10  
**GOD'S AMAZING GRACE**



Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace. That's what we got to talk about all week during Vacation Bible School: grace! You brought your kids here to Grace to talk about grace. They saw the grace, or the love, that God shows to all people in Jesus by forgiving sins. It's the same grace that Paul talks

about in Ephesians 2 in our text for this morning, the theme verse for our VBS this past week. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Grace. It's all about grace.

Well, with all this talk about grace we better make sure we understand what grace really is. Because you see there are a lot of different views about grace and what it is and what it means.

We use the term in every day speech, don't we? We talk about "being in someone's good graces." That means that you have earned their favor, right? For some reason or another the person likes you, whether that's a boss or a family member or a friend, it's something earned. Well, that can't be the grace that Paul is talking about in Ephesians 2 because he says that this grace isn't a work.

Well, there are others who talk about grace who say that grace is something that God gives to you so that you can live a life that is pleasing to him. That's grace, they'll say, the ability to earn salvation, to earn heaven. But look again at what Paul says. This is not from yourselves it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. That kind of grace can't be the grace that Paul is talking about in Ephesians 2 either because that kind of grace is also earned.

Well, perhaps our problem and temptation is to forget about grace altogether. Perhaps the simple truth

is that we would like to be able to earn something from God. In fact, that's how we think naturally. If you ask someone at random if they think they're going to heaven or not, most will answer that they think they're a pretty good person. They've tried their best so God can't ask much more. But the truth is God did ask much more than our best. He demanded perfection. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) God demanded nothing less than absolute perfection in thought, word, and deed all of the time, and anything less deserves eternal death in hell. This is why Paul speaks so strongly at the beginning of Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:1 says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins." Our sinful state meant we were spiritually dead in sin and never had a chance to please God by nature. Far from earning anything good from God, by nature we have earned only damnation.

This is where real grace comes in. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." You see while we can earn nothing at all before God on our own, God sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to take our place and to be our Savior to offer us real grace. What is grace? Grace is nothing more than love—simple, true, free, no-strings-attached love. Unlike our love that gets something in return, God's love only gives. When we love someone, whether it's love for a mother or father, for a son or daughter, for a brother or sister, for a spouse, for a friend, for anyone or anything, we love them because of them. We love them because they love us back, or because they provide for us, or because we really like them and they make us happy, but it's always because of them. But why does God love us? I don't deserve to be loved by God. I'm spiritually dead by nature. But God loves me anyway because he's God. That's simply who he is. That's grace. It's a love that is undeserved, that is unearned, that is unasked, that is unforced, and that is unequalled. It is a love that can

only come from God. And this is how deep that love goes.

God sent his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to become one of us, to take our place under God's demand for perfection because we couldn't fulfill it. And how did Jesus do while trying to be perfect? He never sinned once. He was everything that God the Father demanded. This is the perfection that he gives to us freely, and then he freely takes our sin on himself, and he willingly went to the cross to pay that punishment for it—eternal death on that cross. This is how much God loves us. This is grace. And this grace is absolutely amazing. And it's all yours for nothing at all.

That's right, grace is free, truly free. No strings are attached to these promises of God, promises that your sins are forgiven and that he sees you as perfect now because of Christ. That's the grace that Paul is talking about. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." You're free because of grace and that's simply amazing.

It's this grace that we've been privileged to talk all about this week at VBS. It was our pleasure to talk about it and learn about it and sing about it and share it with others. God's grace, now that's amazing! Amen.

