

When you think of God's grace, what comes to mind? Forgiveness? Patience? Second Chances? Love? Kindness? ¿Christ & His Cross where our sin's punishment was absorbed? Yes! Praise God! All of those things. By His blood at Calvary, the Scripture teaches us that Jesus purchased for us the New Covenant. Here are a couple of verses, one you are no doubt familiar with: 1Co11.25: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." From Jr31.33-34:

*"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. **For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**"*

Through the blood of Christ—a payment, not that we made, but that *God* Himself made—God purchased for us forgiveness! In other words, He did not sweep our sin under the rug and pretend like we didn't do it. That would violate His character of justice. Sin must be judged as sinful. He called it what it was! He leveled His sentence against it. But only a perfect sacrifice would suffice to pay our penalty. Only a perfect sacrifice could adequately, could completely absorb His judgement & wrath against our sin. So He sent His Son, His perfect Son, who took on human form, to become one of us. Why? So that He could become our perfect sacrifice. 2Co5.12: *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* The Father sent the Son to absorb the wrath we deserved for our sin, so that man—which Christ became—could be justly absolved, could be forgiven by God, and thus perfectly restoring the relationship between the Father and His once rebellious children. Hallelujah! What a fantastic work of God's divine & sovereign grace. Amen? Amen!

But, Good News, Church. As gracious as it is, *forgiveness* is not all Jesus purchased for us by His blood on the cross. In fact, forgiveness better resembles God's *mercy* than God's *grace*. Mercy, you remember, means 'not getting what we deserve'. So, you get pulled over for speeding and the officer lets you go: that is a merciful thing, not a gracious thing. *Forgiveness* —NOT getting the wrath we deserve—is a gift of God's mercy. Grace, on the other hand, means 'getting something we could never deserve.' Again, *mercy* is not getting what we deserve (judgement for our sin); *grace* is getting something we could never deserve.

I'm not trying to split theological hairs this morning, but I am trying to make a point: Through His death & resurrection, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, purchased for us more than just mercy, more than just forgiveness, more than not getting what we deserve. Grace gives us what we could never deserve. So, what did God purchase for us, what do we get from God in the New Covenant: namely, Himself, His Holy Spirit. The Spirit of holiness alive within us. Listen again to Jeremiah 31.33, and then to Ezekiel 36.27:

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

And I will put my Spirit within you

Whose Spirit? God's Spirit, God's Holy Spirit! The Spirit of holiness is what God puts within those who put their faith, hope, trust & love in Jesus Christ the Son. If you are a follower of God's own Son this morning, it isn't just your own spirit that's alive in you, but God's own Spirit. Understanding this sheds so much helpful light on Scriptures like Ph2.12-13:

work out your own salvation with fear & trembling [which is something we do, something our spirit, mind & body are active in], for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure [which is the Holy Spirit at work within us].

Or how about that verse from 2Co5.21 that we looked at earlier: "*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, [Why?] so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" ¿In our sin state, outside of God's forgiveness & mercy, were we "*the righteousness of God*"? No! If we would have been, there would have been no need for Christ to become sin for us and suffer the judgement we deserved. So then why did He do it? ¿To bring us to neutral, to lukewarm? NO! *So that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.* O Church, what a gift of God's grace. Not just forgiveness, but God's gift of *holiness* to us, His own *Holy Spirit*: not abiding in sin that leads to death, but *power within* to break the bondage of sin, not the power of *our* spirit & strength, but the power of *God's own Spirit* & infinite strength. "I just can't do it, pastor paige. I just keep thinking this way," or "keep looking at those sites," or "keep disrespecting my parents," or "keep lying to my friends," or "keep judging others," or "keep... or keep... or keep sinning. I don't have the strength. I can't do it." AMEN! You're right. Absolutely right. You can't do it. You don't have the strength. But Church, you are no longer on your own. If you trust in the Lord with all your heart, then you no longer lean on your own understanding, you no longer lean on your own weak frame; you lean upon the frame of Christ, the Strong Tower, the Rock of Ages, the Power of God, the Spirit of Christ who lives within you. Confess your weakness to Him, over & over & over again. Just as Paul said he had to do in 2Co12.7-9:

to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

And there is my reminder, again this morning, brothers & sisters. In your struggle, your battle, your fight against temptation to sin—when your weak spirit would rather take a shortcut to some temporal pleasure, or when you’d rather avoid some difficulty you may have to endure for doing something right rather than cheating or doing something wrong—as you lean upon the power of Christ within you, the gift of God’s grace, the gift of His HOLY Spirit, when you lean on Him you are tested, you are tried, you are tempered, you are being refined by God, purified, sanctified, made holy. You lean in hard, you confess your weakness, confess your wrong desires, confess your need for help & strength that you don’t have. And, when you do, when—instead of giving in to the temptation to sin—you lean upon His strength & not your own, you find out for yourself that, indeed, His “grace is sufficient for you, for His power [that’s His grace!] is made perfect in your weakness.” It is in our weakness that we depend upon One stronger, not when we’re strong. When we’re strong enough to handle it ourselves we don’t get the joy of personally experiencing the staying, keeping power of God’s *grace*. It is in *our* weakness that we get to experience *His* gracious strength. And, so, as Paul said, “*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*” He won’t just boast, but boast all the more gladly! Trials, battles, sin-struggles are sanctified. No longer do they destroy us, they become opportunities of joy for us, when we turn to Christ in the midst of them and discover the wonder & majesty of His all sufficient gracious power within us. Abiding in the Spirit of Christ, when we have come through a temptation to sin without sinning... that’s when we discover the wonderful truth that: we are real, we are really His, we made it through the sin battle victorious, He kept us. He really is faithful & I really am His. Therein is gladness!

So, yes, we praise God for His forgiveness for sin, but, hallelujah! for His the gracious gift of His Holy Spirit within that salvages our lives out of sin, that snaps its power over us, the grace that, as the song says, is sin’s *double cure*: forgiveness & power over it. This is the grace the Bible speaks of: God’s own indwelling Spirit of holiness causing us to be careful to obey His righteous commands, causing love to arise in us for His Holy Word. This is what it means to be a Christian, to, literally, have *the character of Christ within* us, the Spirit of Christ the Lord.

And with that, we are back to chapter 24: to the *persecution & trials, and therefore to temptations to sin* that Jesus promised would come upon sinners & saints alike in the final days, days we are most certainly in. Last week we saw where He said that in those days the love of churchgoers would grow cold. Do you remember why? Not because of holiness, but because of lawlessness, because of disobedience, because—instead of trusting in Him for help & power—they leaned upon themselves, upon their own strength. Is that you, brother? Is that you, sister? Is your heart growing cold because of sin. May God grant us ears to hear, eyes to see, a heart to behold the trustworthiness of this man Jesus Christ: His wisdom & understanding, His love & care, His provision & strength, the Word of His power that can & will keep any who depend on Him for their hope & salvation.

15 “So [or accordingly] when you see this... flee.” Remember last week we noted that one of the difficulties in understanding chapter 24 is in trying to figure out the timing of the various events referenced in this chapter. Jesus intertwines so much here. If we’re not careful, we’ll go beyond what is actually here. When He describes the trials & tribulations of chapter 24, we know that He cannot only be talking to the 12 because, as we saw last week, He describes those times of persecution & resistance as coming from *the whole world*, wherever the Gospel is preached, not just in Jerusalem or Judea.

Having said that though, there are—again, interwoven throughout these chapters—things that Jesus predicts that did have particular application to the 12, to their specific day & time, and I believe that v15 is one of those. Recall from a couple of weeks ago, in chapter 23 verse 28, where Jesus said “See, *your* house is left to you...” what? “desolate.” And now here, in 24.15, He says “*when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the holy place...*”. In *their* house, which was once *the holy place*, God’s temple, there would soon be standing *the abomination of desolation*. Well friends, today there is no holy place, there is no temple today for *the abomination of desolation* to stand in because it was destroyed in 70AD, when the abomination of desolation stood in it. Jesus referenced the prophet Daniel who foretold of these events hundreds of years before. In fact, Daniel mentioned *the abomination of desolation* four times. Here’s probably the most applicable one from 11.31:

Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

If you were a Jew in earshot of Jesus’ citation of Daniel’s prophecy, it would have certainly gotten your attention. But, just in case, Jesus included the parenthetical “let the reader

understand”. Now what’s that all about? He’s saying, “do some thinking here: I’m saying to you that what Daniel spoke of is what I am speaking of. It’s coming, very soon.”

In Luke’s account—and keep in mind, while Matthew wrote to the Jews, Luke wrote to ignorant Gentiles, where he says—in 21.20, “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its *desolation* has come near.” Luke warns of what Jesus referenced from Daniel: *the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place*. In other words, very soon would come an attack from a pagan army. And, indeed, that’s exactly what was happening in 68AD, before the temple was completely destroyed in 70AD. During that two year siege, Christians abandoned the city of Jerusalem, as *the abomination of desolation* took its stance in the temple.

16-19 In light of v15, Jesus instructed His followers in such a specific way that it simply must be connected to that day & age, to the time of the destruction of the temple, to *the Jewish War*. Jesus told them that they should flee to the mountains. When they got the news of the coming destruction, if they were on the rooftop, they shouldn’t waste time going down into the home, but should make a break, make a run for it: from housetop to housetop. In those days, roofs weren’t pitched & angled like they are today. They were flat, and homes were built right next to each other. Housetops were pleasant places to hang out, outdoors, during the cool of the day. To get your neighbor’s house, you didn’t have to go back inside and out the door, you could just walk across the housetops. Think of chase scenes in movies that you might watch today: big city buildings built close together, bad guys being chased from rooftop to rooftop. Sorta like that, but buildings lots, lots smaller. In haste, Jesus said, they should not go down to get their stuff, but run across the rooftops to escape. Get out of there as fast as you can! People out in the fields shouldn’t take time to go home and pack up either. Such conditions would be especially difficult for pregnant or nursing mothers.

20 Having experience 40-below-windchills in Minnesota week before last, I have a much better understanding of how difficult winter can make running! On the Sabbath, the city was especially full, which made travel a lot more difficult. If you needed help getting your cart rolling, who would dare help you? After all, they wouldn’t want to be caught *working* on the Sabbath, right? Not to mention all the Jewish laws restraining travel on the Sabbath.

So, when was this *abomination of desolation* that Jesus predicted? Well, think about it. He speaks of it happening during a time when & a place where *strict Sabbath laws* were in effect. That’s no longer the case today, and, therefore, that’s another reason I think He’s referring to

the destruction of the Temple, when the city of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD, just 35 or so years after He said as much.

21 The word “For” explains, supports, gives reason for what He had just said before: *flee, in haste, take flight, pray that you are able!* Why? *For* or because that will be a time of unprecedented destruction, persecution, pain & suffering, unlike any that has come before, or would come after. How great & horrific was that slaughter; a time of terrible disease & starvation. Even mothers had to eat, right? In the earshot of our little ones this morning, I won’t mention what they turned upon & ate. I’ll leave it to your knowledge of the horrid scenes described elsewhere in Scripture. Can you even imagine? Do you even want to try? Savagery such as had not been from the beginning nor would be again. “Well what about the holocaust?” some might say. “Six million Jews died in those Nazi death camps.” Indeed, and I nor Jesus is taking anything away from that horrible experience, not to mention the millions more under Stalin. But, to quote DA Carson, “never so high a percentage of a great city’s population so thoroughly and painfully exterminated and enslaved as during the Fall of Jerusalem.”

That’s what Jesus was warning His followers to *flee*. And in those days, when many saw the armies mounting against Jerusalem, when they saw *the abomination of desolation* in the temple, that’s exactly what many did. They fled. They obeyed the command of their Christ.

Now I know that many Christians, perhaps even some of you, are waiting for “the great Tribulation” to take place just before the new Millennium kingdom comes, just before the new heaven & new earth is inaugurated, at *the end of the age*. But will that hold up here? Does that fit the picture Jesus is painting in this chapter? If such “great tribulation” will never again equal what happened in Jerusalem back then, that implies that such “great tribulation” cannot refer to another “great Tribulation” that we’re supposedly waiting for at “the end of the age”. And what about the Millennium Kingdom? If the “great tribulation” that Jesus is referring to is *the destruction of Jerusalem*—such a “great tribulation” that will *never* be again—then shouldn’t the Millennium Kingdom have followed right behind it? But that’s not the Kingdom we’re living in *now*. This isn’t the *new heaven & new earth* that’s supposed to come after “the Great Tribulation”, right? No. Definitely not. See, if by “the abomination of desolation... standing in the holy place” Jesus meant “the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem” which occurred in 70AD, then the idea that there’s *another* great tribulation coming just doesn’t jive with Matthew 24.

And this is why I said last week, “Some of us may think we have a very clear understanding of how things will be when Christ returns. [But] this chapter may just surprise you. Are you willing

to change?” I want to be. And I want you to be as well, church family. In many ways my own understanding of ‘the end times’ —of eschatology—is being shaped right now, as we study this passage together. And, therefore, I don’t have all the answers. As I mentioned last week, good & godly men have disagreed on these things. And so, as we proceed, may God grant us the faith, grace, humility, patience, and love for one another that we’re gonna need as we pay careful attention to these prophetic words, preparing for our Lord’s soon return.

PRAYER

SONG: *Amazing Grace*

COMMUNION

SONG: *Doxology*

BENEDICTION: *Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. —Hb13.20-21*

God Hears Hannah's Prayers

Questions

How does God answer Hannah's prayers?

What is Hannah doing in the picture?

What is the name of her son?

Sermon

Elkanah & wives Hannah & Peninnah annual trip to Shiloh to offer sacrifices.

P had kids, but H was barren. P would make fun of H, who wanted kids too.

During their trip, H went to temple to pray.

Cried out, 'Lord, if You give me a son, I'll give him right back to You, for Your service.'

Priest Eli saw her praying, lips moving, told drunk woman to get lost.

She explained to him, he still swished her away saying, "God will give you what you want. Now go."

She believed, the Lord kept His promise to her. She had a baby boy: Samuel

When he was old enough, she took him back, presented him to Priest Eli.

The son God promised! **She sang her song of joy for God's blessing!**

Mary's song of promised blessing!

Craft

Coloring

SONG TESTIMONY *Pastor Dhan*