

PROOF: Overcoming Grace

Ezekiel 36:26 ESV (Pg. 422) And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

- I. At the conclusion of today's message, we will be 4/5 of the way through our PROOF sermon series.
 - A. Several weeks ago, Pastor David told us of God's Planned Grace; meaning that before time began, God mapped out the plan of salvation from first to last, leaving nothing to chance, and adopted particular people for his own children.
 - B. The following week, I spoke to you about God's Resurrecting Grace. This is the truth that because we are born spiritually dead, none of us will ever choose him by the exercise of our will. Therefore God enables us to respond to his grace, giving us life through the resurrection of Christ.
 - C. Two weeks ago, I shared with you about God's Outrageous Grace; that is to say that God chose people to be saved only on the basis of his sovereign will. He didn't base this choice on anything we did or would do.
 - D. Today, we will add God's Overcoming Grace. Overcoming Grace is how God works in our lives to transform our rebellion against him into unconditional surrender so that we freely repent and recognize Christ as the risen King.
- II. The idea of Overcoming Grace is really a way to state the miracle of how God's Spirit comes to those who are spiritually dead, wanting absolutely nothing to do with Christ or his kingdom, and works in them to abandon our self-idolatry and worldly desires and to desire to be reconciled to God, longing for holiness and increasingly surrendering to Christ and his way.
 - A. The Holy Spirit does not accomplish this by running roughshod over our will, twisting our arms behind our back, and forcing us to say "uncle" to Christ's Lordship.
 1. He does it by enabling our spiritual senses to perceive the sweetness of grace and his merciful forgiveness. He gives us a foretaste of his glory and over time it destroys our appetite for anything else.
 2. God never violates our wills, but he powerfully and irresistibly allures us, woos us, entices us with his goodness. By his Spirit we are finally able to see past our bitterness and corruption to desire his sweetness.
 - B. Over the years, theologians have called this "Irresistible Grace". Like many theological terms, however, this one can be a little misleading. Why? Because people can (and often do) resist the grace of Jesus. Haven't you known someone who refused to repent and believe up to the end of their lives?
 1. It may be helpful to understand that there are two distinct calls of God. The first is what we call a "general outward call"; a call that goes out to everyone. It is Jesus saying throughout Judea **Mark 1:15b ESV** "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
 - a) To whom did he direct that call? To everyone who heard him then; not to mention those who read his words even today.

- b) But did everyone repent? Of course not! They still don't! Some of them would soon cry out, "Crucify Him!" in response! Did he fail in his call? If grace overcomes and is irresistible, why would they fail to respond?
2. I think we find a partial answer in David's prayer of repentance (after his dual sins of Adultery and Murder) in **Psalm 51:3 ESV** "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. **4** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, **so that** you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment."
- a) "So that"...one purpose served by our sin is to prove the holiness, justice and blamelessness of God in all his righteous judgements.
- b) When people reject God's general, outward call to repentance, they are building a case against themselves (and in favor of God) that they are truly rebels and criminals deserving of every just punishment that awaits them for their cosmic treason.
- C. The contrast between the "general outward call" and what we will call the "particular inward call" is best seen when Jesus says **Matthew 22:14 ESV** "For many are called, but few are chosen." "Many are called" speaks of the general call to repent and believe that goes out to the whole world; but "few are chosen" to the fact that a much smaller percentage will receive Christ's effectual, irresistible, particular call to salvation, and respond in saving faith.
1. Christ's clear statement of saving intent is unavoidable in this passage. He does not say "few choose"; placing ultimate power with those who receive grace. Rather it says, "few are chosen", indicating that saving power is in the hands of the Lord alone. This is clearly stated in **Psalms 3:8a ESV** "Salvation belongs to the Lord!"
2. Jesus is like the Royal Canadian Mounted Police: He "always gets his man - or woman, boy or girl"! He never fails to acquire what he chooses.
- D. One of the greatest examples of this Overcoming Grace is found in Acts 7 through 9. Let's take a look at it together...
1. **Acts 7:58 ESV (Pg 534)** Then they cast (Stephen) out of the city and stoned him. **And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59** And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **60** And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. **Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his execution. Acts 9:1 (Pg 535)** But **Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord**, went to the high priest **2** and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. **3** Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. **4** And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" **5** And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. **6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.**" **7** The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing

no one. **8** Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. **9** And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

- a) The story goes on to tell us that when Saul gets to Damascus, God sends a believer named Ananias to pray for him to receive his sight. When Ananias hesitates, God says, ““Go, for he is a **chosen instrument** of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15)
 - b) After Ananias prays, Saul is filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized, and “immediately” goes into the synagogue, where he “proclaimed Jesus... saying, ‘He is the Son of God.’”(v. 20). Later we read that he was in the same synagogue where he originally intended to round up, arrest and persecute the believers. What was he doing? “proving that Jesus was the Christ.” (v 22). Talk about a change of heart!
 - c) Some time after that, this man named Saul was added to the number of the Apostles, and started to be known as “Paul”. He took three missionary journeys, planting churches and raising up leaders everywhere he went. In his spare time, he wrote most of the New Testament! The trajectory of his life dramatically changed!
- E. Now aren’t you glad that Christ gently tapped Saul on the shoulder and asked him if he would like to invite him into his heart? Isn’t that what happened? No! Of course not! You read it yourself! Jesus literally knocked him down, and demanded to know why Saul’s persecution was directed at him (not his church, but HIM!). Next Jesus told him what to do, and the persecutor obeyed!
1. My story is similar. I was a 16 year old pain-in-the-neck who wanted nothing to do with God. I had a completely different agenda, and I saw God and his commands as an obstacle to my superior plans for my life.
 2. But one night, at a Christian concert that I didn’t even want to be at, God completely arrested me! He didn’t have the courtesy to ask for my permission, and I was powerless to decline when he said, “You’re mine!”
 - a) That night the One that was previously so repulsive to me became infinitely sweet! As he filled me with his Spirit, I didn’t want to leave without him. In fact, I didn’t want to be without him ever again.
 - b) And I never have been! Through ups and down, success and failure, victory and defeat, he has never left my side. He has never stopped progressively capturing my heart! I truly love him more each day!
- F. And that’s the beauty of Overcoming Grace! It’s flow doesn’t stop once we get in the door of salvation. As believers, we are all in an ongoing process of being made to desire his ways and his truth more and more through the continuing outpouring of his Overcoming Grace which is called “sanctification”.
1. The longer I walk with him, the more pleasing he becomes and the more I see my sin as rancid, polluted and poisonous by comparison. This isn’t because I am smart enough to figure this out, but because of the way he surrounds me with his goodness and supports me with his love.

2. Psalm 68:19 ESV Blessed be the Lord, who **daily bears us up** (KJV - “who **daily loadeth us with benefits**”); God is our salvation. This is the very definition of Overcoming Grace!
- III. Many of you saw the viral video of Deanne Carson¹, the “sexuality expert” in Australia who suggested that you should obtain consent before you change your infant’s nasty diaper, so as not to make them feel violated. Like all of you did, I’m sure I laughed so hard I could barely breathe when I saw this foolishness paraded as sound parenting advice!
- A. But when I picked myself up off the floor it occurred to me that this is exactly how most of us were taught to come to Christ! In the most popular version of the Gospel, Jesus finds us rolling around in our own filth, and gently asks us if we’d like his help.
 1. Does he have our consent to change our nasty, stinky, fully-loaded diaper of sin and moral depravity? And the Jesus we’ve been presented sits there patiently humming a hymn awaiting our permission to clean up our mess.
 2. Can I tell you a life-changing secret? Jesus doesn’t need your permission! He **leaves** the 99 sheep to **save** the one! He chose the disciples he **wants** according to Mark 3:13! Paul calls us Christ’s **captives** in 2 Corinthians 2, yet uses us to “spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere”.
 - B. If you are a believer today, it is not because you consented and came to Jesus! It is because Jesus Christ destroyed your natural resistance by his love and changed your desires so that you would love and choose life instead of continuing in the sin and degradation that had destroyed you.
 1. Everything we are in him, is **because** of him and his Overcoming Grace! We brought nothing to the table.
 2. **2 Peter 1:3 ESV (Pg. 590)** His divine power has **granted to us** all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who **called us** to his own glory and excellence, **4** by which he has **granted to us** his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may **become partakers** of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world **because of sinful desire**.
 - a) Look closely at the 4 highlighted phrases. You don’t have anything that pertains to life and godliness. It has been **granted to you** (Overcoming Grace)
 - b) You have have these things, not because you came to his own glory and excellence, but because **he called you there**. (Overcoming Grace)
 - c) You didn’t earn precious and very great promises by any merit of your own. They were **granted to you!** (Overcoming Grace)
 - d) You don’t have an inherently divine nature. His promises have **made you to become a partaker in his** divine nature! (Overcoming Grace)
 - C. So what you are, you are because of Christ! Because he planned to save you in particular by his grace. He resurrected you when you were dead in your trespasses and sins by his grace. He displayed the outrageous abundance of

¹ <https://youtu.be/iaCS-QErpT8>

his grace when he saved you even though you were still a sinner. And now we see that his grace overcomes even our most stubborn resistance.

1. So now as he is sanctifying us by grace; and as we see ourselves looking more like him with each passing day, we realize that **even our good works** that are the result of all of this grace poured out on us so liberally.
2. **Ephesians 2:10 ESV** For we are **his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which **God prepared beforehand**, that we should walk in them.

IV. As we do every week, we are about to make our way to the Lord's table:

A. We do this for 6 distinct reasons...

1. For the perpetual memory of his dying for our sins, and his pledge of undying love for us...
2. As a bond of unity with him and each other as members of his mystical body...
3. As a seal of his promises to us and a renewal of our obedience to him...
4. For the blessed assurance of his presence with us who are gather here in his name...
5. As an opportunity for those of us who love the Savior to feed Spiritually on him who is the Bread of Life...
6. As a pledge of his coming again...

B. As you come come with thankfulness in your hearts for his Overcoming Grace. If you can't say confidently that his grace has overcome you yet; for your own sake, don't come.

1. What is a feast to those of us who believe will mean nothing more to you just than a snack of bread and grape juice. The scripture warns us that those who take it unworthily do so to their own judgement.
2. However, if you'd like to place all of your trust in Christ as your salvation, come and talk to one of the elders who will be standing around the tables at the end of service. Nothing would delight us more than to pry with you!

C. 1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

V. Announcements:

- A. Margaret Castle Memorial at 3pm today
- B. Potluck, Praise and Prayer June 3rd at 5:30PM
- C. Outreach with North Ridge Elementary at 5:30pm on 6/7 at High Plains Apartments, 15th and Iola.