

"You are saved by grace, through faith." Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8

In coming to faith in Christ and in the continuing Christian journey of faith, one thing we must come to appreciate and understand, probably above all other things, is grace.

Grace is a word that describes God's attitude of love towards us. God's love for us does not depend in any way on any loveable quality we may or may not have in our behaviour, merit or performance. It depends entirely on God's infinite capacity for love. His love for us was demonstrated in the death of his son Jesus for us, while we were still sinners, as a sacrifice in payment for our sins. It continues to be demonstrated to us and to the physical and spiritual worlds in his kindness to us in Jesus, as he works in us and for us in all things for our best good.

Grace can be understood as God's kindness towards us who are not deserving his kindness because of our rejection of his rightful authority over our lives, our violation of his holiness and our falling short of his righteousness.

The only way that we can respond to the grace of God shown to us in Christ is to receive it in faith, turning from our own way and accepting the forgiveness for sin that Jesus won for us on the cross and being reconciled to relationship with God through him.

If we do not fully understand the implications of God's grace in our lives then we will always be prone to attempting to make our lives more acceptable to him through imposing standards of belief, religious practice, behaviour and performance on ourselves and others. Our faith and that of others will be hampered by guilt and shame where we feel that we have failed to live up to those standards and pride and judgmentalism where we feel that we have succeeded.

We will find freedom in our lives to the degree that we understand and believe that our acceptance in God's sight has nothing to do with any standard by which we measure success or failure. God's attitude to us remains one of undeserved love, kindness and acceptance, regardless of our effort, achievement or merit.

We can rejoice in the grace that God has lavished on us in Jesus, but we cannot truly accept it without it changing us and, by implication, changing the ways in which we relate to others. Just as God gives us grace so, by definition, the way in which we treat other people will increasingly reflect his grace to us. We are going to spend some time exploring what that looks like in our lives.

Prayer.

Father, I cannot be grateful enough for the grace you have shown me in Jesus Christ. Thank you that he lives in me. Please work in me by your Holy Spirit so that my life comes to reflect your grace in the way I live and the way I treat others. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.