

# “Expanding Grace”

2 Corinthians 4:6-5:1

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**Prayer for Understanding** O God, inexhaustible source of all good things, we thank you for the gift of grace. Grant that we may hear your Word with a real desire to receive what it promises and to live its abundant life. Engrave your Word on our minds and hearts. Holy Spirit transforms us into the likeness of Jesus. Amen

Grace is expanding and will expand for eternity. Grace is often hidden, shrouded, in the messiness of life. The Apostle Paul urges us to perceive grace. Even in the midst of suffering and death, grace is there. Grace is expanding. The Apostle Paul wrote, **2 Corinthians 4:6-5:1 “For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. So, we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you. But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when they said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.” We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to God together with you. All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory. That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and will not last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So, we do not look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God and not by human hands.”**

As in life, it is helpful to pay attention for grace in this writing, to look and listen with your heart. The Little Prince says, “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

**2 Corinthians 4:6 “For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts”** Out of God’s infinite love God is giving you the light that began the cosmos and is ever expanding.

**2 Corinthians 4:13 “We continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when they said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.”** God is overflowing, ever-expanding love. The love flowing from each member of our Triune God overflowed and spoke, creating a good world of ever-expanding goodness. God’s grace spoke us into existence, in God’s image, to be people who create goodness and speak goodness.

**2 Corinthians 4:14 “We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus.”** No matter how we are broken, hurt, betrayed, fail, are crucified, die, God will raise us up to abundant eternal life. Every pure dream and hope will be resurrected and flourish for eternity. Absolutely nothing can separate us from God’s love. Every goodness will be resurrected.

**2 Corinthians 4:14 “Present us to God together with you.** God’s grace is reconciling all people. We will all unite, together in synergy.

**2 Corinthians 4:14 “All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.”** God’s grace will expand forever. God’s grace will make everyone whole. God’s grace will exponentially multiply glory.

Today we are celebrating grace. Observe with your heart and you will perceive grace all around you and in you. God is always surprising me with new facets of grace. Unfortunately, I do not know how to describe grace. Saint Augustine said, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are visible signs of God’s redeeming grace for all people.” A prayer I have for you is that you will leave in awe and wonder of the grace God is giving you.

Perceive grace in graduations. Family, teachers, friends, churches, communities have poured grace into graduates. They have received love, care, support, teaching, mentoring, encouragement and more. Graduates have failed. God gives endless do overs. People have encouraged them to learn from failures and try again. Graduates have persevered to grow in knowledge, wisdom, joy, peace, love, and grace. Graduates have discovered the passions God

has freely given them. Graduates have nurtured gifts God delights in giving. Graduates have graciously shared, befriended, and mentored. Graduates are embarking on the next season when they will continue to receive abundant grace and grow in their ability to share grace, to help, assist, teach, nurture, coach, inspire, and serve others.

Perceive grace in the ordination and installation of elders and deacons. Grace knocked an arrogant, self-righteous, certain, murdering Saul off his horse. Grace transformed Saul into the Apostle Paul who humbly wrote about God giving us righteousness, searching, growing questions and eternal, abundant life. Paul's writing is abundant with metaphors, run on sentences and circular thoughts that when you listen with the heart you can perceive the grace Paul is trying to convey, yet does not have the words to express. To my knowledge, none of our elders have changed their first name after being knocked off a horse by grace. However, I presume they have all been inspired by people who have shared God's grace with them. And I presume they have said yes to God's call to serve the church in hopes of growing in receiving grace and sharing grace. Some of them will reveal God's grace through their compassion, through cards, calls, conversations, food, and service. Some of them will reveal God's grace through their wise, servant leadership, through their ability to listen to God's will for this church and our lives and then to help us all to live God's will.

Perceive God's grace in all of us. We are freely blessed to freely bless all people. We gather to receive grace and share grace, to know Christ and show Christ. We gather to be made whole by God, to be united, to serve, to care for the entire cosmos, to create a worldwide society of fairness, equality, and freedom, so all have all their needs fulfilled and all are filled with wonder, peace, and grace.

Close your eyes. Observe with your heart a moment when you experienced grace. Perhaps a time when someone helped you, or an epiphany, an aha moment, a forgiveness, a shared joy, your acceptance of unconditional love, a fresh start, a delightful discovery or another moment of grace. In this minute of silence recall and savor a moment of grace.

God is graciously giving you the light that began the cosmos. God is graciously giving you words that are creating every goodness. God is graciously giving you the transforming, resurrecting power that rose Jesus from the dead and is honoring Jesus in the glory of heaven. God is graciously giving you the Holy Spirit that is uniting all people and all of the cosmos in harmony. God is expanding grace to expand glory. God is inspiring you to share grace. In this minute of silence resolve to reveal God's grace in a specific way.

All of this is for your benefit as God's grace expands forever. Amen