

Identity is the fact of being who and what we are

- It forms the way that we **think** and **feel** and so **act** toward **ourselves** and **others**
- Last week we talked about how forming our identity on anything other than God is unstable
 - It is also wrong
 - We were made by God and made to be identified with Him
 - Jesus does this for us
- New identity as “**God’s holy people**” Cf. **Saints**
 - This changes the way that we think and feel and act
 - Though we may perceive ourselves as dirty, Christ has made us **holy/set apart/special** by cleansing us (in position)
 - Now we actually want to begin to live that way (**holy/set apart/special**)
 - “**Incongruent living is exhausting**”¹
- A new way to live as “**faithful followers of Christ Jesus**”

Through Jesus Christ we experience the love of God

- **This experienced love of God actually changes us**

The movie *Despicable Me*

- The **undeserved love** of the girls changed Gru

This is why in verse 2 Paul is wishing us “**grace and peace**” (read)

Grace is **the underserved action and kindness of God** in our lives

- That brings us the peace

Growing up Gru had this **deep sense of unworthiness**

- He experienced the **opposite of grace**
 - Criticism, judgment, disapproval
- That actually made him ripe to receive the **undeserved love** of the girls

The experience of **grace** actually requires a sense of unworthiness

- In the same way that forgiveness requires failure
- Otherwise, you don’t need it

“**God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble**” (James 4:6)

It is not a **sense of unworthiness** before others that we ought to have, but **before God**

¹ Brene Brown, Ph.D., L.M.S.W., *The Gifts of Imperfection* (Center City, Minn.: Hazledon, 2010), 28.

What the **truth** of God does is **humbles** us

- Jesus came to save sinners
- And only those who see themselves as unworthy sinners can be saved

Luke 18:9-13

- Jesus did not say that the claims of the Pharisee were untrue...
- But rather that he had removed himself from the grace of God
- The one who saw himself as unworthy went home “**right with God**” (**justified**)

What the sinner in this story knew was that he **deserved not** the kindness of God, but the **wrath** of God

- That is why he cried for **mercy**

We often feel **unworthy before others** (parents, spouses, bosses, peers, competitors)

- And so we spend life trying to **compensate**
 - Trying to **justify our existence**
- The folly here is the only one we are actually unworthy before is God
 - We become like some of the people spoken of in John 12:43 who, “**loved human praise more than the praise of God.**”

The truth is we deserve the wrath of God

- The Cross teaches us this!
- The God of the OT is the same God of the NT
 - He sees us as worthy of His wrath
 - **Romans 3:10-18**
- God is mad
- His wrath (for us) poured out on Christ

When once we see ourselves as **deserving of wrath** and **unworthy of kindness**, then we are ready for **grace**

- “**God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God.**” (Ephesians 2:10)

When we have received **grace**, we have **peace**

“**Since we have been made right in God’s sight (justified) by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege (grace) where we now stand...**” (Romans 5:1-2)

As believers, we already have this grace (gift of justification) and peace (with God)

- So what is Paul wishing us (his audience are believers) specifically?

Grace is not only the means by which we are saved, it is the means by which we live!

Grace forms our identity

- **But by the grace of God I am what I am** (1 Corinthians 15:10)
 - = **Freedom from justifying our existence (I am what I am...)**

Grace gives us strength

- “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor 12:9)
- “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness” (NLT)
 - = Freedom to be weak

Grace fuels us in mission

- “But by the **grace of God** I am what I am, and **His grace** toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but **the grace of God** with me.”
 - = Freedom from self-reliance (yet not I...)

Grace frees us from perfectionism

- “By grace you have been saved... not of yourself” (Ephesians 2:10)
- There is a scene in *Despicable Me*
 - Where Gru says to his minions when he has heard about the pyramid, “We have had a pretty good year ourselves.”
 - **Justification** (Justifying our existence)
 - “But now, we will do the biggest job ever... steal the moon!”
 - **Perfectionism** (I’ll do better, I’ll be the best)
 - Perfectionism is **not** merely trying our best
 - It is an **other-focused obsession** with “what will they think of me”
 - “Am I worthy?”

This way of living may make you “best in class”, but it will never bring you “**peace** that lasts”

What does it mean that Paul wishes us **peace** here?

We have inherited the **Greek idea of peace**, which is basically the idea of the absence of conflict (negative... we DO NOT have war)

- But, life will never be free of conflict

But Paul has in mind the **Hebrew concept of Shalom**, which is not the absence of something but the presence of something wonderful: **The blessing of God in all its fullness** (positive... we HAVE something)

- **Wholeness**
- A settled sense of knowing that I am not good enough, never was and never will be
- But I am radically loved by God despite me

What the **prodigal son** experienced was **peace/wholeness**

- “I am no longer worthy”

What the prodigal’s **older brother** experienced was the **absence of peace**

- “I am deserving”

Remember, our identity in Christ is that we are the “**holy people of God**” / “**saints**”

- Which, Biblically speaking” means we are unworthy!



- A saint in the catholic church/popular culture is one who's "worthiness" has been proved
- A saint in Christ is one who's **unworthiness has been proved** (through repentance) and is declared "holy" apart from human merit

This brings joy!

The fundamental idea of grace is "that which causes joy"

- Grace = Charis and joy = chara
 - It is a very joyful thing when we escape the wrath of God at no cost to us!
 - And then are empowered to live differently
 - Emphasize gift (give you)

They are from God so they do not have the limitations of human strength and effort

Being the recipients of grace and peace we become **purveyors** of these things

- Peace makers
- Grace givers