

## Grace Abounds

May 19, 2021 Scott Gunn

*And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. — Acts 20:32*

Paul is giving vital, last-minute instructions as he prepares to leave behind the community in Ephesus as he heads to Jerusalem to face an uncertain fate. He has warned the Christians about threats they will face. It's sobering reading. And then he tells the Ephesians what — or who — will sustain them.

Paul commends the church to God's care, and he especially highlights the message of God's grace.

Grace.

We can't talk about grace too much. Paul was right to remind those early followers of Jesus that their hope is in the extravagant, free gift of God's love. We do well to remember this for ourselves. Our hope, like the Ephesians, is in the gratuitous gift of God's love for us.

If we began to grasp the magnitude of God's grace, we might discover new urgency to share the Good News of God in Christ. Without a focus on grace, church can become a voluntary association, a group of nice people. Seen through the lens of grace, the church is a place where we hear the liberating message of the Gospel, realize that Jesus Christ has redeemed us from our sins, and rejoice in the freeing grace of God. It's a gift too good to keep to ourselves.

When we learn that we are beloved by God, we will want to respond in thanksgiving to the love that God first had for us. That's how gratitude works. When our hearts are overflowing with gratitude, we almost can't help ourselves but to thank the giver and to become more generous ourselves.

Amazing grace, indeed.

Of course, grace only makes sense if we're honest about the ways we've fallen short. It's not that God loves us because we're so fantastic, but rather that God loves us despite our shortcomings. That kind of merciful love is what we're meant to show forth in our love of others. We need not to expect those around us to be worthy of our love; rather, we are meant to love all our neighbors and even our enemies. Our love for others echoes God's love for us. In other words, grace abounds.

Paul was on to something when he told those Ephesians to cling to the message of God's grace. Clinging to grace is good for us, too.