

Egypt & Exodus

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon 3: A New Old Gift

Exodus 19-24; 1 Peter 2:9-12

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- March 22, 2020

Well, good morning, Grace! Welcome back!

Why don't you turn in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 19? We have some wonderful things, life-changing things, to look at today, especially in the time that we're living in. What has the world become? It's an expression of contrast if nothing else. Here we are broadcasting our learning time all around the world. And then many of us are working from home now with ultrahigh-speed, multi-visual communication skills and devices, and yet we're still a victim to – and even the whole world is paralyzed by – a microscopic germ from a small market in China. And everything stops. What a time to live in.

And I would say this is a wonderful opportunity for the Church, because now the Church – I mean, we don't have to survive this – we should thrive in this. Because now the Church gets to be who she was meant to be where every believer is a minister. That's the way we were meant to work. I'm going to show you that today. But now we have to do it this way. And Grace Covenant Church has been talking about how the Church got started – every believer is a minister. And for thirty-five years we've been saying here, "I'm just the pastor, but you're the ..." – Jonathan? – "you're the ministers."

So, I feel like for such a time as this we were made to thrive. For such as a time as this – children in our living room, we can show to our parents and to God that our faith is real by the way we treat our sisters and maybe the way we treat our brother, the way we respect our parents. This is an unusual chance not to just survive, but to thrive. We get to show ourselves and we get to show God that we have no addictions, not physical, not emotional, not spiritual. We are free. And if we do have those addictions, that we can overcome those through the power of the Spirit of God, through connecting with other people, being supported by them. This is not a time to just survive; it's a time to thrive.

Think about this. For such a time as this – you can call your co-workers now and ask them how they are. How are they doing physically, emotionally, spiritually? That's thriving. In

such a time as this you can ask your neighbors or acquaintances, “How can I pray for you?” And they will look at that with hope and expectation that you would do that. You would consult God for them on their behalf. This is a great time to be alive, for such a time as this. We can thrive.

We don’t rise to the level of our expectations: we fall to the level of our training.

- Archilochus

I stumbled across this quote from an old Greek philosopher and poet. He says, “We do not rise to the level of our expectations: we fall to the level of our training.” We don’t rise to the level of our potential, but rather, we fall to the level that we practice. We don’t rise to our hopes; rather, we fall to what and how we discipline ourselves. And Grace has been disciplining herself, we have been practicing this for decades, that we believe that every believer is a minister. So Grace, let’s bless God by showing Him that we are His people here. This moment is ripe with potential, with the fullness of what could happen.

And what we’re going to do today is we’re going to look at a passage that will address the fears that we have and how to overcome those and how to have power and express this potential in the purpose that we live in. That’s what we’ll look at today. We’re going to look at potential.

Potential

And what is potential? *Wow ... that kid has potential.* Literally, the definition of potential means “the capacity to become; latent qualities or abilities.” The origin of the word “potential” is in the word “potent” – power, or powerful. And it’s waiting for something to happen. It is potential.

Potential is the gifts and the abilities God gives us. But we have to do something with them to give them back. We don’t rise to the level of our potential; rather, we fall to the level of our training. And you could ask any school teacher, music instructor, or athletic coach about what they think the word “potential” means. They would tell you it means heartache. It means disappointment. Because so many times these instructors of various disciplines have encountered a student and they realize this one could go very far. But all it takes sometimes is a single class in

the school of hard knocks and they're knocked down. And they don't want to try anymore. And their latent power is rendered useless.

And it seems like for some, maybe even many, the greater the potential they have, the less they work or practice. And because of that they don't experience what they were meant to be.

I think that happens because when a person is given a great amount of potential, they're not trying to become the best they were meant to be. Rather, they're just trying to be better than others, and it doesn't take much work. And so, they don't do the work. And they don't rise to the level of their potential. They'd rather fall to the level of their disciplines, and they don't those disciplines.

And sometimes you'll see somebody with A-level potential that is surpassed by someone with a C-level potential because the person with C-level potential is able to make decisions and train and discipline themselves and filter out what they do with their bodies and how they practice their sleeping patterns and even choose who they associate with, because they want to make the most out of everything that they've been given, even if their potential is lower.

And the hardest part of the word "potential" and what that can amount to is the end of life when the choices have run out. And then the person with potential – and all of us have that – the unrealized potential comes to haunt us. We could have done more but we chose not to. We could have given more but we chose to be greedy. We could have influenced more but we didn't train for that.

So that's what we're looking at today – potential. This idea that we rise to this level of potential – we don't do that. We fall to the level of our training. And this opportunity before us that we are living with right now is full of potential for the Church.

A Promise of Potential for Israel

When we look at the passage today I want you to see what that what we're looking at is the potential of the nation of Israel. So when we look at chapters 19-24 of Exodus, we're going to look at a country, a nation, that has potential like no other nation has ever been given. It is found in an agreement, a contract, what we call a covenant. This passage particularly is called the Mosaic covenant. It is a covenant or an agreement between God and Israel to propose to her

the fullness of what God’s potential role for her to play in the story of redemption in human history.

Exodus 19: 3-6

Then Moses went up to God, and YHWH called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ⁴‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.

Here’s how it starts. In chapter 19, verse 1, it says this: “In the third month after leaving Egypt – on that very day – they find themselves in the Desert of Sinai.” And here’s what it says, verse 3, chapter 19: “And then Moses when up to God, and YHWH called him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did in Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.’”

Now when you read that passage, you can see first of all that this is not a salvation-type covenant. A salvation covenant is when you believe in what God has promised to give you. This is a bilateral covenant where both parties are giving and receiving and both parties are negotiating. *If, Israel, you obey all of these commandments, then, Israel, I will give you these places, this status.* This is about potential. And look at the potential that Israel has. Look at the descriptions that YHWH gives them.

The Potential to Be: God's Treasured Possession

First is that you have the potential of being God's treasured possession. That means that you have the richness of God and all that He owns. And He says, *No, no, but you're that special thing.*

If we were from a family of great wealth, for example ... in our family, anyway, we didn't come from great wealth, but we have a treasured possession, and that is the diamond that my father gave to his wife, my mother, as an engagement ring. And that diamond now belongs to my youngest sister, and she's probably going to give it to her son, and he'll use that stone to propose to his future wife. That's a prized possession. Amongst all my wealth there's this one thing, this sentimental thing, that I'm attached to. Israel has that.

The Potential to Be: A Kingdom of Priests

He says they have a potential to become a kingdom of priests. "Although all creation is mine, you will be my priests." And that kingdom of priests – what that means is that the whole world will go to Israel to have relationship with God. Israel will be the means that other people will have towards an intimacy with God. Israel will be a place where they get to proclaim the truth of God. Israel will be a place where sacrifices are given, and so appeasement is made there. Israel will intercede and pray for the world. A kingdom of priests ...

The Potential to Be: A Holy Nation

The next one is a holy nation – a holy nation, set apart, free from all the sludge of life, free to become all that God made anyone to be, and certainly a nation to be. And so, God proposes that "if you obey all my commandments, then I will make you these things" – this potential.

Meeting God

And Israel comes back – in the story Moses goes back to the elders and to all the people and they hear this promise from God, and they say, *Oh, we will do everything that God says. We want to be part of this. We want this. We want to wear God's jerseys. We're on His team, we're part of His team. That's what they want.*

So, they all sign on to this. And then Moses goes back and tells God they're in. And then God shows up to sign this contract. YHWH appears at Mount Sinai. And here's what it must have been like. Here's the passage itself and here are some slides to help you with that.

Exodus 19:16-19

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, ¹⁹ and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.





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That’s what happens when God shows up to fulfill His covenant promise. *I’ll sign now.*

This is when – Exodus chapters 19 through 24 – chapter 20, that’s when the Ten Commandments are given. That’s part of this covenant with them, this Mosaic covenant. He’s giving it to them -- this is the means, these ten commands and other commands that follow – *this is how you’re going to be molded into these things of potential. These are the practices. These are the disciplines that you will fall to. Do these things and you’ll become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*

The People's Response: Fear

And the people's response from God's showing up here, from His attendance to this? You can imagine when the people saw the thunder and the lightning and they heard the trumpets and the mountain was covered in smoke, they feared and trembled.

Exodus 20:20

Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

And then Moses says this, Exodus 20:20, a great passage of insight: "Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you and keep you from sinning.'"

Do not be afraid. Fear God. And this passage helps us deal with the fear that maybe we're living with this very moment in the context of the circumstances that we're in. The Mosaic Covenant was terrifying. And in that terror, Moses is saying, *Don't be afraid of the mountains shaking and the fire billowing and the smoke and those sorts of things. Don't be afraid; fear God.*

This is how you live with fear. Because if you fear God, you fear nothing else. That's what Moses is saying. If you're looking at all these other things around you, you've taken your eyes off the glory of God, and that's why you're afraid. Peter steps out on the boat and then he looks around at the wind and the waves and then he starts to sink.

One person said, "If you fear God, you'll fear nothing else." Still another person said, "If you don't fear God, you haven't met Him."

All around these men and women is the presence of God. The presence of God casts out all fear. That's the secret here. "Refuge from God is found in God," Tozer said. Refuge from God is found in God. Our fears of the world all around us are satisfied in our fear of God. A real encounter with God quenches so many of these other fears in our life.

So, as the story goes, the contract is signed (in our vocabulary) – it would be a covenant is ratified. And so, Moses goes to the people – this in chapter 24 now – he repeats all the commands and all the expectations, and the people say, "We agree to fulfill all of these promises that have been put before us."

Exodus 24:8

Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

And then in chapter 24, verse 8, it says, “Then Moses took the blood” – he had slaughtered these calves and put the blood in these bowls, and Moses throws the blood on the people that are saying that they’ll fulfill their part of the promise, the covenant, and then “Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that YHWH has made with you in accordance with all these words.’” Stem word for covenant is “testament” in Hebrew. When we talk about Old Testament, we’re talking about this passage right here. This is the Old Testament, talking about the old covenant. When Jesus says, “This is the blood of the new covenant,” that’s why we call it the New Testament. That’s where it’s found, right here.

This section of Scripture here and its duplication that’s found in Deuteronomy is the constitution for Israel, and will serve, because it’s bilateral, it’s two-way --- if you, then I will --- this is the story of Israel. You don’t rise to the level of expectations; you fall to the level of your training. And so, the story of Israel is this: when they did these things, they experienced the potential that God had for them. And so, after the first five books of the Bible, they go into the Book of Joshua. If you’re reading through the Bible with us at Grace – join us, by all means – you see that after this covenant is made, they go into the Book of Joshua where they practice all these acts of righteousness, and all things go well. Yay, Israel! You’re fulfilling the potential that God has for you!

And then, you’re reading right now in the Book of Judges and you’re wondering, *What’s happening?* What’s happening is you don’t rise to the level of potential or expectation; you fall to the level of your training. And they’re not doing the training. They’re not doing the disciplines. They’re not obeying the Lord. And so, Judges is what happens when they don’t do that. They fall to the level of their disciplines, and they don’t have them.

In the Kingdom period it gets really high again with David and his son Solomon. All is well. Great things are going on. They’re participating in the sovereign plan of redemption for all of mankind. And after that it descends and continues to descend to the point where God says,

“Okay, A-team, first string, Israel – you’re not doing what you were meant to do. I’m going to bench you.”

The Church Takes on the Potential

And the Church takes on the potential of Israel – the Church – that’s us. That’s me, that’s you.

That’s what’s exciting about this passage here, is that Israel did not fulfill their potential, and so parenthetically, like just right now, just for a period of time, just temporarily, God’s first-string team over here has been put on the bench. They didn’t fulfill their potential, and so He’s turning that over to us.

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a prized possession to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

And He’s going to look at us and say to the Church – watch how Peter uses the same exact vocabulary. Listen to the audacity of Peter using the exact same vocabulary that’s found in our Exodus passage, in 1 Peter. 1 Peter 2 says this: “But you” – that’s us, you and me – “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a prized possession to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of the darkness and into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Not a people – “Once you were not a people” – I love that – “But now you are a people.” Once you were not part of this holy nation thing. You were not part of God’s team. So metaphorically, Israel is His first choice. And if you’re from Russia or Europe or Italy or Asia or Africa, these are nations, but these are not God’s holy nations. We are not a nation that’s part of the salvation story so much.

And now He's come to us and we're not even second string. We're not JV, we're not minor league. This is like the ultimate Aggie 12th Man. Did you hear that? – Aggie 12th Man – no whoop. There are some good sides to this whole virus, right? We didn't have to hear the whoop.

Anyway, this is God going into the bleachers and saying, *Look, I know, you guys weren't nations, but I'm going to use you. I'll do this new thing called the Church.* And so, He's asking us, *You want to play? You want to be part of salvation history? You want to be part of something bigger than eternity itself? You want to play?*

Do you want to be used by God? Do you want to have the potential, all the potential, that Israel had? Do you want to be part of that? Do you want to be part of His Church? Yeah. I do.

Power and Purpose in Our New Identity

And so, where do we get the power to do that? The power is found in a new identity. We have a new identity, and in that identity, we find power and purpose for our lives. The new identity gives us power and purpose. Look again at the audacity that Peter is going back using the exact same vocabulary that was used in the Book of Exodus, chapter 19, where he said, "Israel, look, I carried you out of Egypt on eagles' wings." And when Peter is saying that, he's saying, *That was their salvation story – out of Egypt, across the Red Sea – that's what made them special.* And Peter's saying this: *You and me, when we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we have that same eagles' wings experience. Jesus carried us on His eagles' wings, across our death and His resurrection. And now we get from Him forgiveness and honor and power.* And Peter says, *Yeah. All that means that you get to be part of God's team. You get His team jersey now.* We get to be a part of that. Once we're not a nation, and now we are. We get to be part of that – our salvation experience qualifies us for this special new identity. This special new identity gives us power; that's what gives us purpose.

And we have to remember that new identity. That whole chosen people --- in the older covenant, in the older Testament, the value, the method or the model was that Israel was going to be here separate from everyone. And everyone would be holy and different and distinct. They'd do the practices and the disciplines, and God would bless them, and other countries would come to Israel so that they could meet God.

Now, in this model, we go to the Church, and God says, *Great. You be my holy nation, but I want you to go out to the people. Now I want you to go to them -- in your friendships and*

into your neighborhoods, to your colleagues, all the things, all the people that I'm going to bring into your life. I'm going to bring you to them. That's how you're going to be a priesthood of all believers.

This new identity is powerful. It gives us so much power and purpose. Look at the four descriptive words that we get. Look at the potential we now have.

1. Chosen People

God's chosen people – it doesn't say "choice people" – that's like pick of the litter, that might even be Israel. This says "chosen people". This is more like when you choose a rescue dog. Why? Why did you choose that one? No answer. It's just a choice. That's how we act towards God. We're God's chosen people. Why? Because He chose us, that's all. I'm just holding onto that because I feel very fortunate.

2. Royal Priesthood

It says we're a royal priesthood. This is radical, especially in the New Testament time, that we get to play this part. In the New Testament time, Christianity, the Church, was often accused of being atheist, believe it or not. And the reason they were atheist is because all the other religions that everyone had experienced in some context, whether firsthand or secondhand, had priests, had temples, and they had ways to sacrifice. And so, they looked at the Christian church and they had none of those. Because the Christian church says this: every one of us is a priest. Every believer is a royal priest. As for a temple, our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Sacrifice – well, Jesus Christ was the ultimate sacrifice, so we don't have to do that anymore. Or we would say that our life is a sacrifice. So, there was not a religious institution, so this was radical for them to hear back then. Look, God called us out of the darkness that we were living in and now into His incredible light as a royal, kingly – we're the King's priests. We get to do that.

3. Holy Nation

The third thing it says is that we're a holy nation. Again, this feeling of being separate, set apart for a very special purpose, that we might have a nationality. Once we were not a nation and now we are a nation. So, we have nationalistic tendencies, but that's not our identity.

Here's a way to look at it. Before I was considered an Irish Catholic. I never really liked that. It might have been appropriate, Irish and then Catholic. And some people are that way. They have their nationality or whatever, ethnicity, and then they add their beliefs. But I'm not Irish Christian now. I'm Christian Irish. I'm Christian first and I've got these Irish things that are for good or for bad. And that's what he's saying here. *Yeah, you'll still have those flavors, but your identity is in who you belong to.*

4. Prize Possession

And the last one, it says prize possession. We are His prize possession, we, the Church now. We're the family heirloom. God owns the galaxies, the mountains, the oceans. But when He talks about what He's proud of, He says, "My church." It's a sentimental fondness for this one thing, prize possession – that's us now.

And this new identity has power. Jonathan Edwards, the famous American scholar and pastor of the early church here in America, said, "Unless you understand this, the power of this new identity, as being a precious belonging of God, you will never be able to serve anyone or anything but yourself." Jonathan Edwards said that until you believe that you are treasured and valued and you are a delight to God, even when you help others you're probably just trying to prove to yourself that you're a good person. But if you do grasp this, how much you're loved and enjoyed and how precious you are to God, how He's made you and I a holy nation, how He's made us the King's priests, then we can live with our inside moving out, with all of this power and purpose.

How We Can Live Up to Our Potential

Look at all of this potential. But how can we become, how can we be the potential? You fall to your level of practice. So, Peter just goes on and says, *Here's your training. Here's how to become a royal priesthood, a royal nation.*

1 Peter 2:11

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world ...

The next verse here, chapter 2, verse 11, says, “Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world ...”

Aliens and strangers – fundamentally, his value system is this: we don’t fit in here. The Church is always counterculture no matter the culture, because we’re not from here; we’re not for here. We are souls with bodies. And our souls are eternal, we understand there are two realms, we understand there’s a physical and a spiritual world, and we live our physical world in light of the values of the spiritual world. And so, we’re not like the culture that’s always collecting and grabbing, that’s always exalting themselves or living for comfort and peace. That’s not like us. That’s not who we are. So, we’re always going to be foreign here, it says, aliens here, strangers here.

1 Peter 2:11-12

... to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

And then he goes on. How do we live? What do we fall to, these levels of discipline? He says, “... to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day that He visits us.”

The sinful desires of the flesh that have a war on our souls, and we say, *No, no, we’re going to obey the King. We’re going to live our lives spiritually. We’re going to live for heaven, not for earth.*

And here’s why I feel like this passage is especially helpful for us. In the times that we’re in right now --- what did we talk about, rising to potential, but really, we fall to the level of our training? This is where our training comes in. We buffet our bodies.

A friend was circulating his list, knowing that he’s going into this quarantine and into a time that could be very undisciplined. He sent this around. He sent around his schedule and his

rules. And his schedule included, *I'm going to walk every day, I'm going to do cardiovascular exercise every day, I'm going to make sure I have certain blocks of time for studying things that I have to – for his ambitions – and then studying for fun.* And then he writes, *I'm going to play the right music in my house. I'm going to make sure my discipline of sleep is being submitted to.*

Wow. There's a person that has potential, but he knows what it takes to live that potential. And then he made a list of rules that he sent around. *I'm not going to have any alcohol during this time*, because he feels like this is the time when he feels like he's going to need that. So, he's not going to do that. He's going to abstain from sweets and desserts except for limited or premeasured amounts. He said he's going to abstain from news except for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening. Boy, that sounds like he's a smart person, doesn't it?

He's doing that so that he can live to his potential. I would suggest that we do those things so that we can show ourselves living to the potential of being the royal priesthood.

And in the passage, it says that when the Lord returns, other people that don't even like us, that don't believe in what we believe in, would say, *You know what? Their good works --- they must have been one of yours. They were wearing your jersey. They didn't look like a first-string player, but boy, they were part of your team, weren't they?* Glorifying God in the works that we show them. Man, for such a time as this. Or, seize the day – not the day, this day --- seize this day. For such a time as this, let's thrive.

Application

Here's why I love this passage of Scripture or even the culture and the circumstances that we're living in, is because the Church gets to be who she's supposed to be, who's she's always meant to be.

Michael Green wrote a book and it's called *The Evangelism of the Early Church*. And he looks at why the early church in the first two- or three-hundred years grew so dramatically. As a matter of fact, the Church grew then more consistently and deeper – not just broad, but also deeper than it ever has before. It starts off with a couple of thousand people and then in 250 years it has saturated the Roman Empire. How did that take place? Was it because they exposed people to great preachers and brought people into big churches? That's what you hear today – it's all about getting people to hear great preachers and see how big the churches can get. No, they couldn't do that. It was never really the plan, but they couldn't do it because of the persecution of

the Church. If you brought somebody to some big assembly, they would round everyone up and kill them. So, if just inviting people to church and listening to the favorite preacher of the month wasn't the answer, what was? Michael Green said this: that forty to fifty percent growth that took place in those first two- or three-hundred years was because of this: every believer was a minister. Every believer was a minister and they knew it. They realized they were a treasured possession, each person realized they were a treasured possession of God and they were part of a royal priesthood. Michael Green said these two things. He said they lived holy lives and open mouths. And that's what separated them. That's what made them a holy nation, separate for a purpose, for a cause. That's what helped them realize to the level of their potential, because they practiced these things.

Six things that he lists in the book, six things he says they had. Uncharacteristic of the culture, they were famously foreigners in their **integrity**. They told the truth no matter how much it cost them. They were famous in their **generosity**. As employees they were generous, as employers they were generous, and to strangers. The early church was famous for their generosity.

Hospitality – they would invite anyone into their homes for as long as they needed to be there. They had **sympathy** towards people that no one else in the culture cared for. The slaves the babies sometimes, maybe the women were put off to the side -- they had sympathy for all of those.

Chastity – there was no sex outside of marriage or before marriage, and that was counterculture. And they showed themselves to be holy in that way. And foremost, their **ability to endure adversity**. The Church said, "We understand that we're just bodies that have souls. We are souls with bodies." And when they felt persecution or hardship on their physical bodies, they rose to the level of their discipline, of their practice, and they showed themselves contrary to the rest of the culture.

The Church, holy lives. That's how they did it. That's how they attracted other people to themselves, just like today. Every believer is a minister. I'm just a pastor. Look how many people came to church today! I'm just the pastor but you guys are the ministers and you get to show that everywhere. Holy lives, open mouths. When they saw someone who needed a kind word, they brought in their personal relationship with God into the conversation. They weren't shy about it. They were strategic about it. But they weren't shy about it.

For such a time as this, as to thrive. And why is that? Because it says --- like eagles' wings – it is for grace that we've been saved through faith, not of ourselves. It's not good works, but it's the gift of God. That's our eagles' wings experience. That's our salvation experience.

And then he says this, verse 10. That was Ephesians 2: 8, 9, and here's 10: "Therefore we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." That we should practice in them. That we should discipline and train in these good works in Christ. Come on, Grace! Let's be who Grace was meant to be and who we've been training to be all these years, God's chosen people, His royal priesthood, His holy nation, God's precious possessions. Let's do that. This is a great time to be alive, friends. It really is. Not to survive, but to thrive in such a time as this.

Join me in a word of prayer.

Lord, I'd ask that You would give us Your presence in this time; that You would give us an experience of Your presence so that we might fear You and then fear nothing else; that we would be captivated in Your holy, awesome, divine nature, and we would rest in that.

Lord, I'd ask that You would help us appreciate the stewardship of reaching our full God-given potential; that we would not be victims of sin, that we would not be slaves to our flesh, but rather, that we would realize our potential by practicing the basic disciplines; that we would find ourselves in daily prayer, a moment-by-moment dependence on You and the power of the Spirit in our lives.

Lord, I pray the prayer that You prayed for Joshua, that nothing would stand against us in these days, in this season, in this experience. And that the way You were with Moses and the way You were with Joshua during those blessing years, that You will be with us too, that You would never leave us or forsake us. We hear You, Lord, and we praise You, that we are to be strong and courageous, because You have led us to a place like this. You are telling us to be very strong and very courageous so that we might obey all the law that You have given us; that we wouldn't turn to the right or to the left, that we would be successful in all that we do because we are being raised to our potential by practicing these disciplines; that the law would be on our lips, meditating on it day and night, so that we would be careful to do all those things written in it. Then we'll find our prosperity and success. Then we'll find our place in the world, our purpose and power in this identity.

Lord, I'd ask that we would understand that You have commanded, that we would not be timid or shy, but that we would be strong and courageous; not afraid, not discouraged, because YHWH is with us. Lord, make Your presence known to us so that we might fear You, enjoy You, and fear nothing else and enjoy nothing else. I pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Thank you again for tuning in this week, Grace. Hey, as we're scattered throughout the city, it's going to be very important that we stay in communication with each other. And I wanted to let you know about two primary ways that we're going to be communicating with you. It is through our account called Realm and it's the website.

On the website we're going to start offering more and more opportunities and resources that you could use for ministry, but also for your encouragement. Brad, our children's minister, is going to provide a video that's going to go along with the sermon today for you to help family discipleship with your little ones. Also, there are already discussion questions written for teenagers and above to have conversations about today's talk. That's available as well on the web -- and other worship opportunities. So, keep going back to the website to see what resources are available.

And then Realm. Realm is our connection app that we have. If you're not a part of our Realm connection group, could you start that process and get involved with us so we can contact you? If you're part of Realm, could you just make it a point sometime this week to make sure everything's up to date? We're hearing more and more about people not getting our material and finding out that we have an antiquated phone number or possibly an out-of-date e-mail address. So, go on there and clear out all the bad stuff and then prioritize how we can contact you.

Because here's one of the things we're trying to do since we are kind of disconnected. We're going to start care groups that are based on neighborhood. Neighborhood care groups are going to be initiated this week through our Realm address system. So, we'll putting people together based on location. And we'll need that location to be accurate so we can contact you in that way. And if someone calls you from the church this week, it might look like a foreign number. Will you please answer, because we are trying to get these neighborhood care groups set up.

So, update your Realm, keep going back to the website so we can keep letting you know about some resources available. And then finally, the last thing I'd like to acknowledge is that we

anticipate a great need for Grace as a church to be generous towards our community and towards our members. There are a number of people that are going to have difficulties making some payments that are necessary – they’ve lost their job or are without resources to do that. So, we’d love to be able to provide as much as possible. So those of us who can afford to give generously during this time, it will be well used. We have a great system to make sure this is being invested in the right places. So those of you that can give and give generously, please do that. There are four different ways to give. It’s right there on the website. Continue to do that and keep that in mind. Thank you again, and again, we’ll stay in touch through e-mail, through Realm, and keep going to our website where we’ll be updating information. We’ll see you – or you’ll see me -- next week. Bye.

