

# The Church Commended to the Word of God's Grace

by William Gadsby

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on the word of God's grace, which is the Bible, to build up and give an inheritance among all who are sanctified.*

**Scripture:** Romans 15:4

**Topics:** "Gods Grace", "Trinity Salvation"

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## Description

William Gadsby preaches about commending the brotherhood to God and His grace, emphasizing the importance of the Trinity for salvation. He highlights the necessity of divine application of truths to the conscience by the Spirit, the power of God's grace to build believers up, and the inheritance among the sanctified. Gadsby urges believers to trust in God's promises, experience His pardoning mercy, and find justification through Christ's righteousness. He encourages faithful testimony, obedience in various roles, and reliance on God's grace for sanctification and eternal inheritance.

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## Transcript

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

The characters here addressed, are the brotherhood; and the apostle "commends them to God" - commits them to the care and safe keeping of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Lord has brought me to this point a great number of years ago, that if you take away the Trinity, or one Person in his Personal Godhead out of the Trinity, I really have no hope of salvation. If the doctrine of Three Distinct Persons in One Undivided Jehovah be not a truth, I believe I shall as surely be damned as the devil is damned. I have no hope, separate from that solemn doctrine. If not interested in the Father's election, and the blessings he has treasured up in his Son, which are called "all spiritual blessings," there is not what will supply my needs. If not interested in the atonement and righteousness of the God-man Mediator, I have no hope of pardon, nor of standing just before God; the blood of a mere man, however good a man he might be, will never touch the core of my infernal disease; nor can the righteousness of a mere man ever justify a wretch like me, and present me before God spotless and pure. An external knowledge of these truths, as revealed in the Word, may fill the judgment and furnish ground for speculation and conversation; but I feel before God that I must have a divine application of them to my conscience by the invincible

energy of God the Spirit, or they are of no real use to me. And thus I prove that without an interest in the distinct Personality and the Personal engagements of a Three-One God, and without an interest in this Three-One God in union in my salvation, I really have no salvation at all. I must sink, and sink forever. Then into the hands of this One Triune God, I wish to be enabled, in the fear of God, to commend you. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

I. In the first place, the brotherhood being "commended to the word of God's grace."

II. Which is able to build you up.

I. The brotherhood being commended to the word of God's grace.

Now to me it appears that the Bible, whether law or gospel, is published by the Lord, in the strictest sense, for the use of his own elect; and I believe, if God had not had an elect people, there would never have been the Bible in the world. I ground it upon such portions of the Bible as these: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" (Rom. 15:4) and again, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16,17) And so we find that this truth, in all the bearings of it, belongs to the man of God.

"Then," say you, "of what utility can the law be to the man of God?" It comes, in the hands of the Spirit, to cut up his false hopes, blast his legal prospects, tumble down the old fabric and lay it in ruins, and let them lie as a heap of lumber, as filthy as the devil can make it. For the law discovers sin and guilt; and what sin is, - "all manner of concupiscence." And so we find that when the Lord is speaking upon this subject he tells us: "From his right hand went a fiery law for his saints." (Deut. 33:2) Some people tell us that this law is the saints' rule of life; but then they try to quench the fire before they make it a rule of life; they say it is not "a fiery law," as a rule of life to them. But God says it is "a fiery law for his saints." And so it must be, to burn up the lumber and to bring them to ashes, as it were, before God; and then his blessed Majesty brings forth "the word of his grace," to be a blessing to them in every situation of life.

I consider, then, by "the word of his grace," unto which I wish in the fear of God to commend you, we are to understand his blessed gospel, in all the bearings of it. For I do not know a particle of the gospel which is not a word of grace. "Why," say you, "then you will not find a precept in it, or a command; that cannot be grace." Yes, it is. The command which exhorts God's people to love God and to love one another is a gracious command; the very precept which enjoins upon them obedience is a gracious precept; and the very rebuke which rebukes them for their disobedience is a gracious rebuke, to stop them from straying and to be the means of bringing them nearer home. And, therefore, every particle of the gospel of God, in all its bearings, is a gracious dispensation.

But, a few thoughts upon this "word of God's grace." You will find that the Holy Ghost tells us that this "word of grace" is the word of the oath. God hath solemnly issued it into the world, - aye, and into the consciences of his people, under the solemn sanction of his own oath. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." (Heb. 6:17) What a strange, mysterious thing is this! Here is a company of poor sinners, to whom God has made promises, - "exceeding great and precious promises," and such is the unbelief of their hearts, they do not believe the promises of God. "Why, then," says God, "will you believe my oath? If you cannot believe my word, I will give you my oath." And because there was no greater, He took an oath upon his

own holiness, his own justice, his own truth, - "he sware by himself, in which it was impossible for God to lie, that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Now, they must be houseless wretches who "flee for a refuge;" and for those houseless, homeless wretches, who are brought from necessity to flee to Christ for refuge, God hath sworn by an oath that he will be their God, and that he will never leave them nor forsake them. Is not this a matchless display of unparalleled grace? And may it not well be called "the word of God's grace?"

But such sinners are we, - at least I must say for myself, that I am such a polluted, unbelieving wretch that there are moments when I appear unable either to believe God's word or oath; and I am much mistaken if it be not the case with some of you. I can believe the doctrine as the doctrine of God, as the truth of God; but then vital religion consists in being at home in these truths, and these truths being at home in my heart, - being enabled to say with David, "I have hid thy word in my heart," and knowing the blessedness of that truth, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." "Why, how can that be? We cannot make the Lord God holy." No; but, under the divine energy of God the Spirit, there is a solemn feelingly and spiritually setting apart God and His gospel in the heart, the heart being solemnly set apart of God, and faith realizing the glorious mysteries of the gospel of God's grace; and when the blessed Spirit brings the conscience there, we know something of the vital realities of the mysteries of God's kingdom.

Now this "word of God's grace," under the solemn promise and oath of God, proclaims, carries in it, and reveals to the conscience of his people, by the power of the Spirit, a free pardon of all their sins. That must be grace, must it not, - a pardon of all their sins, past, present, and to come? And there are solemn moments, when this "word of grace" comes with such sweet, divine, glorious power that the soul feels that God has "cast all its sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19) - "blotted them out as a cloud, and as a thick cloud;" (Isa. 44:22) and that when they are sought for they shall not be found. (Jer. 50:20)

I "commend you," poor, broken-hearted, rooted-up sinners, to this "word of God's grace;" and may God commend it to your hearts, that you may feel the blessedness of the pardon which proceeds from the Father, through the blood of the Son, and is sealed upon the heart by the energy of the Holy Ghost, - that you may know what it is, indeed and in truth, to realize the pardon of your sins and to triumph in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps there is some sinner here who says he once enjoyed that, and yet now can trifle with every particle of vital godliness. "O!" says he, "I have enjoyed pardon; God told me I was pardoned, I believed it, and I believe it now; and what do I care about enjoying pardon now, or enjoying the presence of God now? I do not care about that. I know I am pardoned, and I shall go to heaven." And what do you want to go to heaven for? I cannot make out what such reptiles want to go to heaven for. If the presence of God, if the joy of the Lord is of such little moment, that while they are passing through such a desert as this and need so many props, they are careless about it, what do they want to go to heaven for? It is presumption; and if ever a child of God is left to tread such unconsecrated, presumptuous ground, I tell you, as God is God, by and bye you will be in some awful labyrinth. It is awful, awful trifling with God, awfully inviting sin and Satan to unite with you to insult God and trample upon the blood of Christ. May God have mercy upon you, and preserve you from such awful presumption, before it leads you into open disgrace. For unless the Lord stops you, it will. And perhaps in this company there may be some who are already there. You can drink, take your glass, and chatter about religion; sing joyfully, make yourself merry, and wantonly go into forbidden paths; commit fornication and adultery, and still be happy. Horror seize your souls, before God sends you to hell for your horrible blasphemy! It is awfully insulting God, and sporting with eternal truth. I hope the Lord will awe my mind and yours, brethren, against such dreadful presumption.

But "I commend you to the word of God's grace," in the rich, sweet display of his pardoning mercy. I know what that will do in some measure for a sinner in his conscience; it will humble him, it will melt him, it will shame him for his sins, and shame him out of his sins. He will know what the Lord means when he says, "Thou shalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." (Ezek. 16:63) Have you ever rejoiced with shame? Triumphed with shame? Been ashamed and confounded because of your vile nature and practice, and yet triumphed in the mysteries of the cross of Christ, and God's pardoning mercy in it? If you have, you have known a little of the blessedness of God's free pardon. I commend you to that blessed "word of grace."

But further. "I commend you to the word of grace" which brings justification to the ungodly. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." (Rom. 4:5) This seems a strange mystery, does it not? "Justify the ungodly." How in the world can a just and holy God holily "justify the ungodly?" Why, you know, in civil society we should think it a horrid crime for a judge to justify the ungodly; and yet our God proclaims this upon the housetop, and in the conscience of a sinner, that he "justifies the ungodly," and justifies him without works. How? Has he justified his sin - connived at that? No; to show his holy, righteous indignation against sin, he has punished it to the uttermost in the Person of his Son, and laid upon him that which mere man could never have borne. But he was the God-man; as Hart says,

"With strength enough, but none to spare."

He passed by his people, gathered all their sins together, their sins of omission and commission, against light and against knowledge, in principle and in practice; and placed them all to the account of his Son. He drew his divine sword, and demanded full satisfaction; and if an iota had been left unatoned for, justice must have damned the whole elect. But the blessed Redeemer fully cancelled every demand; he bore the penal wrath, atoned for all sin, and "put it away by the sacrifice of himself." And he wrought out a righteousness which he did not want for his own use; he wrought out one to give away, - to give to them who had none. And God takes this righteousness, claps it upon the ungodly, and says, "Thou art just in this righteousness." And thus "he justifies the ungodly" in the perfect obedience of his Son. It is on this ground, therefore, that the Holy Ghost says, when speaking of Christ, "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21) And there is such a glory in this righteousness, in this "word of God's grace," that even an inspired Paul, when he had been "caught up into the third heaven," and "whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell," when he heard unspeakable language of immortal glory, - after that ravishing visit, his soul was bent upon this, - "to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. 3:9) This is such a glorious righteousness, so immortally excellent that, as good Berridge says, with that you may shame an angel: for there is not an angel in heaven which has one half so good, or half so glorious as this. For the angels in heaven appear in a creature holiness, and a creature righteousness, in which they were created; but here is the holiness, here is the righteousness of God in our nature, placed to our account; and when God the Spirit reveals it to the conscience and clothes us manifestly therein, we are brought in solemn pleasure to rejoice in the gospel of God's grace. "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace." "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Poor child of God, try to wear him in your approaches to God, in your reading his Word, in your attendance upon hearing, in your entering into his house, in your entering upon the ordinances of his house, in the approaches of death, in the very arms of death. Having the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith and in feeling, under the unction of God the Spirit, will make the arms of death a pleasant couch, and there you

will sweetly fall and go to sleep in Jesus. "I commend you to the word of his grace;" and may this "word of grace" enrich you in your souls, and may you find a blessedness in it, living and dying.

"I commend you to the word of" the promise of his grace. Troubles, trials, temptations, and difficulties you must have in this world. God tells us that they that "are not in trouble as other men, neither are plagued like other men," are the ungodly; and I would rather believe what God says than what all the parsons in the world say, put them all together. He says, these are the ungodly. But as for God's people, they are "plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning." Their plague is a daily plague. Solomon knew something of it when he dedicated the temple, and said, "What prayer and supplication soever be made by thy people, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place;" for he never expected any really and truly to turn there who did not know something of the plague of their own hearts, and I am sure nobody knows that if it does not plague them, if they do not find it a plague. But in all your troubles, the promises of God in Christ Jesus are "in him Yea, and in him Amen." (1 Cor. 1:20) What a sweet word of grace is that: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God!" "But," says unbelief, "Lord, there is a deep 'water of affliction' there, and I dare not attempt to go in." When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee. "But there is a hot fire, Lord; it is already kindled, and it seems to burn furiously, and I am expecting it to be more furious still." "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." In your troubles, your trials, temptations, scorching fires and chilling waters, I commend you to this "word of God's grace." May God support your minds, lead you sweetly and blessedly into its contents, and let you know the truth of his declaration that he is "a very present help in trouble," and will never leave you nor forsake you.

"But," says one child of God, "my enemies are numerous; they are both crafty and powerful, and come like a flood; and as to my self, I feel myself nothing but vanity. I have no more strength than a feather, and a flood would sweep me away in a moment; I have no power, no life, no help." I can tell you this, poor child of God, the less help you have in self the better, and the longer you cling to it the worse plight you are in. I have proved this. The sooner we are brought to give it up, and have no power, no help, no might, so much the better. Hear what the Lord says: "When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isa. 59:19) Not the web of your own sincerity and your own goodness; that is not to be Standard-bearer; the Spirit of God is to be Standard-bearer. And the Standard that he lifts up is the cross of Christ, - the blessed Redeemer in his blood and righteousness, and that is a Standard against all the floods of hell. Now, what a precious "word of grace" that is to a poor child of God! "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace."

You will perceive, we might go on as long as God would give us time and strength; but my strength tells me I must endeavour to come towards a conclusion.

Are you in a wilderness world, as witnesses for God? Be concerned to bear a faithful testimony. Let truth be a matter of moment and importance with you. Do not trifle with it, do not sport with it, neither in promise, doctrine, precept, ordinance, or any branch of it. It is God's truth, and "the word of God's grace." A blessing runs through the whole. Remember it is God's truth, and we are to be witnesses for God, not to consult our own ease, our own pleasure, our own profit; but the honour of God, the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls.

"I commend you" to the revelation that God has made of his love, his grace, his kingly authority, his priestly authority, and all he is and has, as revealed to his church, to regulate your consciences, to

regulate your conduct, and all your deportment in the world. Are you husbands? Love your wives; do not be brutes to them. Some people act as if they thought a wife was to be nothing in the world but a slave at their feet, and they were to be "my lord." Are there any here of this description? May God mow you down, lay you level as poor sinners, and let you know that "he that loveth his wife loveth himself," and "no man ever yet hated his own flesh." Are you wives? Be obedient to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Are you parents? Love and cherish your children and bring them up, as far as you are able, in the admonition and fear of God. Do not sport with truth and say, "O! Because I believe in election I will let my sons or my daughters go where they will; if they are elected, they will be saved." That is hell's use of God's truth; it is sporting with the honour of God, and bidding defiance to the glory of his name. Be concerned to set a good example before your children, to act as in the fear of God, under the teachings of his grace. Are you children? Love your parents, and obey them in the Lord; but not if they want you to disobey the Lord. Are you ministers? Perhaps there may be some here. Give demonstrative proof that it is the honour and glory of God and the welfare of souls which lie upon your hearts; that you are concerned to be faithful witnesses for God, and not to keep back or conceal any branch of his divine will. Are you hearers or members of a church? Do not be the means of leading a minister astray, do not be the means of clapping a cordial to your own minds, when you can go astray yourselves. God help you to act in the fear of the Lord, in the love of the Lord, with God's eye sensibly upon you, and God's fear in you! Whatever station you fill, in the world, the family, or the church, you will find in "the word of God's grace" something to suit your circumstances, to suit your case and condition. And to this word, this blessed word, in union with the God of the word, I commend you. "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace."

But we come -

II. Lastly, to consider, but for a few moments, what the apostle says of this word: "Which is able to build you up."

God's law, as the effect of our sin, has laid us in ruins; brought down the whole fabric, and made it all appear a heap of filthy ruin, a mass of dirt and devilism; the whole of us, in nature or of nature. And yet it is the intention of God to take that sinner and have his mind, his soul, transformed into the image of God, and God to dwell there; and it is the intention of God to take the body of that sinner and make it the temple of the Holy Ghost, and eventually to change and "fashion it like unto the glorious body of his Son;" and soul and body shall be like the soul and body of Christ. But who can raise such a building as this, think you, out of such a heap of lumber? When the Lord has slaughtered us and laid us low, and we find in self and of self nothing but ashes and lumber and filth, who can raise such an edifice? The Lord, and the word of his grace; plucking the brand out of the fire, creating the man anew in Christ Jesus, and eventually conforming him, both in body and soul, to the image of his Son. That is "able to build us up," and to erect a building, as God says, "for a habitation of God, through the Spirit;" to build it together in Jesus, in union to him, and every part of the building to be under the special care and divine management of God and the word of his grace. "Upon this Rock," says Christ, "will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18) Is it possible, then, to commend you to better hands than those which can accomplish such mighty wonders for such detestable sinners? Why, this will be the wonder of heaven, and in measure the confusion of hell, - that God has raised out of such ruins a glorious edifice, which he calls "the house of his glory;" thus honouring the whole church, as one immortal mansion for his eternal residence, where the eternal Trinity will dwell for ever and ever. He is "able to build you up." And he is "able to build you up," for edifying in faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and peace, and stability, and tenderness of conscience, and a regard to God and truth here. The Lord is able to do it; and "the word of

his grace" in his hands can accomplish it.

But he is able "to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." There is such a mystery in the gospel of God's grace that it has sweetly constrained me many a time to stand in awe of God and filled me with wonder and amazement. When God is speaking of his people, he says, "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." (Deut. 32:9) And a pretty inheritance he has, has not he? None but God would ever have fixed upon such an inheritance as that, I am sure, - such a portion as that. But it was "the Lord's doing." "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." (Deut. 32:10) And then, in the riches of his grace, he brings him to say feelingly, "The Lord is my portion," "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance." So that God has so managed it as to make himself his people's portion and them his portion. And really, to tell you the truth, neither God nor they will be fully manifested in Jehovah's declarative glory till portion gets to portion and they enjoy each other; for God has said, that they who are gone to heaven before us cannot be perfect without us, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself is gone to heaven, "from henceforth expecting," awaiting at the throne of glory, "until his enemies be made his footstool," and the whole church are brought together to be glorified in him and with him.

Now "I commend you to God, who is able to give you" this inheritance, and to give you a sweet manifestation of it in this world, - a hint of it in the court of your conscience,

May the Lord bless you with it; for it is an inheritance possessed by none but God's "sanctified" ones; and they are truly sanctified. We might notice (but really my strength will not allow me to proceed) that they are sanctified by the Father, by the Son, and by the blessed Spirit; and when they are brought home, so gloriously sanctified that angels wait upon them, and go forth, as it were, with, a solemn blessing: "The Lamb's wife is coming and made ready for her husband." Indeed the holy angels think it an honour to wait upon us while here; and what will it be when we arise in the ineffable glory of the Lord the Lamb, to fully possess that inheritance which God has provided for us?

Into the hands of this God, and to the word of his grace, I commend you. Lord! Take us all into thy care, for the Redeemer's sake.

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