



Meredith:

Well, hello friends! Thanks for tuning in to the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast, where we share biblical Truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host Meredith Brock. And I am here today with my friend and guest co-host Meghan Ryan. You guys have heard from her before, and I am just so happy to have her back here with me.

Meghan:

Hey Meredith, it's so great to be here with you today.

Meredith:

You guys, you are in for such a treat today. Meghan and I just finished a conversation with a new friend who's never been on the podcast before, Melissa Kruger. We talked all about grace. We talked about sloppy grace. We talked about how grace honestly is what has saved our souls. And I just want to pause right here and say, if you are not currently in a relationship with Jesus and you don't know about this grace that I am talking about, we want to point you to a resource. Just run on over to Proverbs31.org and scroll to the "Get Connected" tab and then click on "Do you know Jesus?". We want you to experience this grace that we are going to talk all about in this episode today. Meghan, why don't you tell us a little bit about our teacher today?

Meghan:

Sure. Melissa is a wife, mother and author of multiple books, including her most recent release, which is *His Grace is Enough: How God Makes It Right When We Got It Wrong*. How great is that subtitle? I love it so much. She's a gal after our own heart here at Proverbs 31, because she enjoys teaching women the Bible and serves as the Director of Women's Initiatives at The Gospel Coalition. So without waiting any longer, here is our conversation with Melissa.

Meredith:

We are so excited to have Melissa Kruger join us today on the podcast. Welcome friend.

Melissa:

It's good to be here.

Meredith:

Melissa, you are brand new to our podcast audience. So for those of you who don't know who she is, Melissa, we told our podcast friends a few facts about you in the intro. But I always like to add a little bit of color to our podcast guest. So they know that you're a human. So maybe answer this question for me: Tell us something we'd never know about you, unless we were one of your very best friends.

Melissa:

This is a little weird. I like every really random flavor of spicy thing. My family makes fun of me when they look in the pantry and see dill pickle, potato chips or spicy hot ranch Chex mix. And they're like, "Of course you bought this mom, because you buy all the weirdest flavors that probably only teenage boys like." Well, I like it. It's Buffalo flavored, whatever. I just like all the weird flavors. So something is wrong with my taste buds.

Meredith:

I like that. I don't think there's anything ... That's not wrong. That's so fun. So the question is, do you like those — because I have mixed reviews on the spicy — are they called [Takis 00:03:16]?

Melissa:

Oh, I love those. I burn my lips off eating those. It's weird, why do I keep eating when they actually hurt me and I just keep doing it?

Meredith:

Well, now we know. Everybody jot down, if you're ever going to create a care package for Melissa, get her all things spicy. I love it. I love it. Well, now that we know you a little bit better, I'm so excited to hear your teaching today. I know your message is about grace and what you've been learning recently. I think our audience ... and honestly, I need to hear, so why don't you take it away, Melissa!

Melissa:

Well, thanks so much for having me. I think the concept of grace is one of those really big concepts that we talk about a lot. And then sometimes when we try to explain it to a little person in our life, a little child, or maybe even a new believer or someone who's never heard about grace before, we start having a lot of questions and they start having a lot of questions. Does grace mean that what I did that was wrong doesn't matter? Does God ever run out of grace? Can I use up all my grace points? Does God's grace mean I can just do whatever I want? These are all questions that start to come up when we talk about the concept of grace. And Paul even asked this in Romans 6. He says, "*Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?*" (Romans 6:1, KJV) These are real questions people are having. Does my sin actually mean God's grace gets bigger and that's better?

Melissa:

And of course, the answer is "*by no means*". (Romans 6:1, NIV) That's not the answer for grace. But I think it's really helpful when we start to think about this concept, to think about how would I teach the concept of grace to a little child. And by that, when we use the word grace, we mean unmerited favor. We're giving something good to someone who hasn't earned it. So we might earn a wage, which means we'd be paid for it, which is a great thing. You actually work hard and you receive an income, but actually what the Bible tells us is that we've actually earned punishment by our actions. Our actions haven't earned us good things. They've earned us bad things. And what does it mean when we receive

grace? The person, each of us, we should actually in a sense be put in the prison, and instead we're brought into God's house and given all the good things that He has to offer us.

Melissa:

And so I think it's really helpful for us to think about this concept of grace, whether we're sharing with a little child and trying to teach them — what does grace actually mean? Or maybe we're teaching a neighbor down the street who has questions about Christianity. Maybe it's a student in our classroom, a grandchild, a teenager, your own child or a younger believer in your life. I think it's helpful for us to just really explore the concept of grace.

Melissa:

And so I want to look at it in four ways: God's grace in creation; God's grace in the fall, and I'll talk about what I mean by that; looking at God's grace in redemption; and then God's grace in restoration. So those are four things we'll look at really quickly, but I think they'll help us see how big God's grace is for us.

Melissa:

So the first one is God's grace in creation. I think we often look at the concept of grace and think about it when we messed up. OK, God's grace is enough for whatever mistakes we may have made, but the reality is God was gracious to create this world. When He spoke the world into existence, He wasn't doing it because He was lonely, or sad or wanted a new buddy. We are told that God is a Trinity. He's one God in three persons. And they were in perfect harmony and communion before the world was created. So God didn't create us because He needed to, but because He delighted to. And I think that's a great place to start. When we think about the cons of grace with children, that all the good things we see in this world are because of God's grace. So when we see the ocean, when we see the beautiful mountains, when we see the sunset during the day, this is all God's grace to us because He made every living thing; every beautiful thing comes from His hand. And that includes you and me.

Melissa:

And so when we talk to our children, I think the best place to begin isn't you're a sinner in need of grace, but it's God made you. What a glorious thing. God made you. And He made us in His image. We as humans are special to God in that He put His image in men and women alike. And so when we talk to a child, when we talk to our neighbor, we get to say to them, "God made you with worth and dignity because He made you in His image." And that's a beautiful place to begin — that God was gracious to make us. And so we start there with creation.

Melissa:

And then secondly — we can tell other people, whether it's a little child or a neighbor — a lot of people are walking around with a lot of guilt. They know they've made mistakes. They know that they have failed. And sometimes they feel like I'm not good enough for God. I've got to get myself all cleaned up before I could walk in a church. And this is when we see kids actually hide a lot. You walk into a room and you see someone's colored on a wall and it's pretty obvious who did it. And they'll look at you and say, "No, I didn't do that. I didn't do that."

Melissa:

And this is what we all do. It's not just children who try to hide that they've done something wrong. I think we all hide that we've done something wrong. It's our natural instinct and that's exactly what

Adam and Eve did in the garden. We know that they saw the tree, that they wanted it. They desired it. They took it and they ate it. And then what did they do? They hid. They tried to hide from God and they tried to hide from one another in the garden. And I think this is our natural response. When we can see that we've made a mistake, when we've done something wrong, we want to hide. And so the beauty of God's grace — when we've sinned — in the fall, when this happens is even in that moment, yes, Adam and Eve did have consequences for their behavior, but grace was in the garden. And I think this is actually the whole start of the whole Bible is in Genesis 3. And we have this story where God comes and He sees that they've done wrong.

Melissa:

And the reality of it is that God is true to His Word. He said, *"If you eat of the tree, you will surely die."* (Genesis 2:17) And Adam and Eve eventually do die. But there's also a promise given, that an offspring would come who would crush the serpent's head. And basically, the whole Bible is the story of when will that offspring come? When will He come? And when will He defeat death? And that's what we're waiting for in this whole storyline of scripture. So every story in the Old Testament is this big question of: When is the offspring going to come? When is God going to save us from the reality of death? When is He going to make all things new? And that's this big question that's happening all through the Bible.

Melissa:

And I think when we understand that, it puts all the story of the Bible together, and this is really helpful for kids. This is really helpful for adults to start to understand that, oh, while the Bible has many small stories in it, it's actually really one big story about God being gracious, that He made us. And then when we rebelled against Him in the garden, He still pursued us. He didn't give up on us. He kept going after us. And so that's what the whole storyline of scripture is actually about, that God is bringing together a people for Himself that He wants to save and bring into His kingdom. And so that's where we see God's grace at the fall. What we see there is yes, there are consequences — and kids are going to face consequences. We're going to face consequences in life, but God's grace is that He's going to still make a way to be in relationship with us. And so that's how we see God's grace at the fall, this promise of this offspring.

Melissa:

And so that leads us into God's grace in redemption; how He saves us from the penalty of what we've done. And this is hope of all of humanity. This is the hope of Easter. This is the hope that we look forward to is God's grace and redemption. That while the Bible tells us we were far off, He has brought us near. And this is such good news. And this is what we can tell our children. This is what we can, can tell our neighbors. This is what we can tell our friends — is that while we think we may be too bad for God, we may think we have done something that is so awful that God could never forgive us, or that His grace can't reach us, this is the good news of the message of the gospel is that we get to share that what happened on the cross was that Jesus took all the punishment we deserved. The cross is an awful spectacle. It really is. It's this awful moment in human history when Jesus — who had done nothing wrong — is bearing the full weight of everything that's been done wrong.

Melissa:

And so at that cross, I like to say that the cross acts like a sponge and it takes away all the bad things we've done. It's all been paid for. And so now we can go free. And this is what Roman 6:23 says. It says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."* (NIV) And so

this is the good news. All we have to do is receive the gift. We have to know that we need it. And so that's always really important. We have to actually know that our actions are deserving of right punishment from God. But here's the good news: While we've earned the wages of sin is death — well, that's what we've earned — the free gift of God is eternal life.

Melissa:

And He asks us, will you come to me? And this is the best news on the planet. I'm embarrassed to admit, sometimes I'm more willing to share about, "Hey, there's this really good sale at the mall," than I am to say, "Hey, that burden that you're carrying around each day, that weight that is on you, that you think God could never love you? Let me tell you the Good News. Jesus died for all of that. And He loves you. And all you have to do is receive it. The free gift of God is eternal life." And so that's the good news that we get to share with our children, with our neighbors, with our friends, is that God's grace and redemption it saves us from the penalty of sin. We're no longer under that.

Melissa:

And in a lot of ways, the news gets even better because not only does God redeem us by His grace, He restores us by His grace. So God's grace and redemption saves us from sin's penalty, meaning we're no longer in debt in a sense, but God's grace and restoration frees us from sin's power. So now God gives us actually a new heart and a new spirit. And He causes us to have a new love for His ways. And so it's not just that God redeems us and says, "Your sins no longer count against you." God actually changes our heart. And so we are both redeemed and we're restored. He's making us new. We're given a new heart with new desires. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

Melissa:

So I know a lot of us feel burdened by past mistakes, by past things we've done. And this is the beauty of grace. Not only does it free us from penalty, but it actually changes us. It makes us a new creation. And this is what Ephesians tells us, that we've been saved through faith. And it's told that it's a gift of God, not by works, not by what we've done so that no one can boast. But then this is what it says. So we're saved fully by grace, but then it tells us how His grace changes us. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:10) So we're not saved by our works, but we're saved for good works. And this is actually His grace to us. It's not meant to be a burden to us, because when God gives of us His Word, it's not meant to be a burden that we can't carry. It's actually meant to show us what true life looks like.

Melissa:

So the reality of it is that all of Scripture is God's grace to us, teaching us how to live. I know it's so tempting for all of us to turn to self-help books and all these different things to figure out what's the best way to live my life. And the good news is that God gives us His Word and what He shows us in the Word is, "Hey, I made you, I created you. I love you. And I'm going to teach you the best way to live because I actually know you best."

Melissa:

And so not only does God's grace free us from all that we've done. It actually frees us to live the best life, the life that we are intended to. Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."* (John 10:10, NIV) So the good news of God's grace is that He actually teaches us how to live in the

way we're created to live. And sometimes I think we can look at God's Word and think of it as burdensome or it's keeping us from all the fun, but what we can actually teach our children and we can teach those in our lives is that no, God's Word is showing us how we are made to be and how we are made to live. And so that's the good news.

Melissa:

And the last part of this is that one day God, by God's grace, He will return. And so while He has freed us from sin's power, and He has freed us from sin's penalty, one day He will actually free us from sin's presence. And so that's the best news for us. One day there will no longer be any mourning or crying or pain. All of our sighing will be gone. There'll be no more skinned knees, broken bones or broken hearts. So what God began at creation with grace, one day will come to its culmination when He returns. And that's what we can encourage people to look forward to, that yes, it's not all right here. We still deal with the presence of sin in our life. But one day by God, God's grace, He's going to take us home.

Melissa:

And so whoever we have in our life who needs to know this message, we can teach them that God's grace began at creation. It followed us, even when we made mistakes. God's grace redeems us. God's grace restores us. And one day God's grace will bring us home. And so that's the message that we want to say, God's grace is enough. It's so big and so free. God's grace is enough, both for you and for me. And that's the message we want to share with others.

Meredith:

Melissa. I love that. What a hope we have in knowing that as believers, we get to go home, and that the tension of living in this broken world is not forever.

Melissa:

Amen.

Meredith:

I'm so grateful for that. There are days when that's the only thing that keeps me going and keeps me waking up and doing what we do. And I do have a question for you as you were teaching. You don't know much of my backstory, but I became a believer. I didn't grow up in a Christian home. I became a believer my senior year in high school, and I had a lot of unlearning to do, if you will, and a lot of trying to understand what the gospel really is and what grace is. And I remember I had quite a few conversations as a new believer where the phrase sloppy grace was thrown around. And they would say, "Well, that's sloppy grace." And that was a very confusing term for me. And I think what they were trying to get at is excusing sin, because you knew God's grace would cover it, would cover your behavior, would cover your choices that you maybe knew were not the best or in alignment with Scripture.

Meredith:

Talk to me a little bit about how you think about that idea and how maybe our podcast listeners, maybe they're living in this tension of, I know what the right choice is to do here, but it's so hard. I don't know that I can follow through with it. And I know God's going to forgive me on the other side, if I don't make the right choice here. How do we think about that properly according to what Scripture really says about the idea of grace?

Melissa:

That's a great question. I love the verse Galatians 5:1. It says this, *"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."* And so what I try to keep in my head when I think about what God calls me to that may feel really hard in the moment, whether it's just being nice to someone who's being mean to me, being kind and being patient, and being loving. This can be happening when I'm driving down the road and someone cuts me off. OK, it's right to be kind to this person or whatever, is to remember that all sin is corrosive to my soul and it's that God is actually saving me from that corrosion. So when I can picture it that way, that sin isn't just what separates me from God, but it's what harms me. So keeping that in my head and saying, "Oh, God's grace has actually freed me from the have to do the wrong thing. So I actually now have a choice."

Melissa:

And in a lot of ways, I love that image of the Israelites in the Old Testament. When they've just escaped from slavery, they're sitting in the wilderness and they don't have much to eat or drink. And they say, "Oh, remember when we were in Egypt, how good it was." And I think sometimes we can look on our sin and think, "Oh, sin's where all the fun is," but they forgot that it was slavery. Their children were being killed. They were being oppressed mightily and they forgot all that. And that's what sin tends to do. It tends to blind us and it makes us think, "Oh, that's where all the fun is." But I think it's just remembering God always wants good things for us.

Meredith:

I love that, Melissa. So I think it's so easy sometimes too, when we think about sin or at least it is for me, I'll put this on myself. I want to categorize it as things that I do, maybe not internal life. So for instance, let me give you an example. It's really easy for me to not steal. I'm not tempted to steal. I'm not going to walk into the Walmart and snatch up a piece of candy and put it in my bag. And that's so clearly sin that if I were to steal that piece of candy, but what's harder is the state of my heart sometimes. When it comes to where I know the Lord's asking me to forgive of someone and I'm just not ready. And I want to keep stewing on the awful things that they did to me.

Meredith:

And so, I have the choice there too. No, He's not going to force me to forgive him. And He will extend grace to me and He will forgive me in my unforgiveness, so I can hold on to that unforgiveness. Or what you're saying is, gosh, don't use grace as a way to hold onto things that are going to hurt you in the end. Because when I do extend forgiveness to this person, I will be free from the torment of holding onto that bitterness. So, so good. Meghan, I know you had a question too for Melissa. So why don't you jump in here?

Meghan:

Yeah. Melissa, I would just love to hear, thinking about the gal on the other side of maybe her headphones or she's in her car, who's listening to this going, "Yes, that sounds so great and so good, but you don't know what I've done. That sounds way too impossible for God to extend grace for what I've done." What is something that you would encourage her with or a practical step you would give her today towards receiving God's grace?

Melissa:

What I like to picture when I think about this, because I actually feel this. I have been walking with the Lord since I was 14. And sometimes I think I'm the slowest Christian out there, and how could God still be gracious with me? Because I keep making the same mistakes. I keep doing the same things wrong. And the image I like to keep in my mind is that because Jesus is eternal, meaning He never ends, whereas I'm finite, I'm going to die one day. I'm not eternal. I was created, but because Jesus goes on forever, His grace can go on forever, because He is the fullness of graciousness. And so I like to keep that picture in my mind, because essentially when I'm saying my sin is too big, I'm saying Jesus isn't big enough. And when I can remember that, no, no, no, Jesus is so much bigger than me, then I know it's OK. I can keep running to Him. Hebrews tells us boldly approach the throne of grace and receive mercy in your time of need. (Hebrews 4:6) He's got store houses of grace that I can't even imagine how big they are. And that's what keeps me hopeful.

Meghan:

That's so good. I love the analogy you gave of the cross being like a sponge. I think I'm going to think about that a lot after our conversation today of just that constant soaking it back up from us. And so that's just such good news that I need to hear as someone who's walked with the Lord for a long time. But also I need to share with my friends who maybe don't know the Lord, and this has just given me such handles of how to practically share with those friends what exactly is God's grace and what does that mean for your life today.

Meredith:

Yes. Thank you so much for joining us today, Melissa. I think this message is so needed. It's never a bad idea to remind ourselves of the Truth of God's grace for us. And so I'm so grateful you joined us. I want to make sure our podcast friends can get connected with you. So first things first, Melissa has released a book. It's called *His Grace is Enough: How God Makes It Right When We've Got It Wrong*. It just released and it's available now. It's an incredible resource to purchase, to walk your children through the understanding of grace, maybe a new believer through the understanding of grace. You can grab a copy at the link in our show notes, but also if you're just looking for some daily encouragement, I encourage you to go check out Melissa on Instagram. Her handle is @MelissaBryan, and that's B-R-Y-A-N Kruger. You can find her there.

Meghan:

And before we go, we want to give you one more tool. If you don't know about our Mama's Facebook group, it's a place where moms have a place to connect and gain encouragement. And we know whether you're a new mom or you're a seasoned mom, that is worth its weight and goal. So we've created that space for you to connect and just receive encouragement from other moms. And if you go to our Facebook, Proverbs 31 Ministries Facebook, click on groups, and then you can ask to join our Mama's group.

Meredith:

Well, that's it for today, friends. Thank you so much for tuning in at Proverbs 31 Ministries, we believe that when you know the truth and you live the truth, it really will change everything.