

Living in God's Amazing Grace
Part 10 of Good News About Grace
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For the past ten weeks we've been looking at the Good News of God's amazing grace. We've looked at how we are **SAVED** by God's grace and how the only way anyone can get into heaven is by God's saving grace. You can't earn it, you can't work for it, and you can't buy it. Salvation is a gift. The Bible says, **"For by grace you are saved through faith and even that is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works so no one could boast."**—Ephesians 2:8-9. If we could work our way to heaven, could you imagine how boring heaven would be? Everybody would be bragging about how they got there.

Not only that, we are **FORGIVEN** by grace. The Bible tells us in Isaiah 43, **"I forgive your sins for My own sake."**—Isaiah 43:25. We don't deserve it, but God says, "I forgive you."

The Bible says we are **SUSTAINED** in our faith by God's grace. In Philippians 2:13 it says, **"God is always working in you to give you the will and the power to do what He's called you to do."** God will never ask you to do anything that He isn't going to give you the power and ability to do.

The Bible also says we are **HEALED** by God's grace. It says in Psalm 147:3, **"He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds."**

The Bible says we are **LIBERATED** by God's grace. We don't have to live under the crushing weight of rules and regulations. Jesus said, **"Come to Me if you're tired and wary and I will give you rest."**—Matthew 11:28. If your Christian life is not a life of resting in Christ, then you've moved back into legalism.

The Bible says we are all given certain **GIFTS** and talents by God's grace. It says, **"We have different gifts according to the grace that has been given us."**—Romans 12:6. God has given each of us the ability to do something well and we're to use it for Him. We are also told that God includes us in His saving work in the world. We are **USED** by God. The apostle Paul says, **"I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power."**—Ephesians 3:7. By His grace we participate in sharing Christ with the world.

We **PERSEVERE** in our faith because of God's grace. The Bible says that God **"is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy."**—Jude 1:24.

The Bible says we are **TRANSFORMED** by God's grace through the renewing of our hearts. (Romans 12:2) We also grow in our faith and mature as believers by God's grace. (2nd Peter 3:18)

The bottom line is this: **IT'S ALL BY GRACE.** Everything God does in you, for you, through you, He does by grace. Robert Louis Stephenson said, "**There's nothing but God's grace. We walk upon it. We breathe it. We live it and die by it. It makes the nails and axles of the universe.**" Everything is by God's grace. We wouldn't be here right now if it were not for God's grace.

Its one thing to know about God's amazing grace and it is another thing to receive it. It would be a tragedy to go through this series on grace and hear all these wonderful things about God's grace and yet fail to receive that grace, fail to open your heart up to receiving God's grace. How do we do that? How do we receive God's grace?

The Bible tells us that God's grace is ours through Jesus Christ, as we trust in Him. God made it so simple so that no one could say it was too hard to understand. We experience God's grace by trusting in Jesus Christ. It's not 23 steps and four pathways and eight guide roads and 32 rituals. **All we need to do is trust Him.** He will do the rest. The Bible says, "**The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**"—John 1:17. All of grace—all of what we've talked about for ten weeks is wrapped up in the person of Jesus Christ. It doesn't come through religion or by obeying a set of rules. It comes through a right relationship with God. That means a relationship that has been set right because of what Christ has done for us on the cross and our willingness to trust in it.

Grace comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "**Now we rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God, all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins making us friends of God.**"—Romans 5:11. That's what you call having friends in high places! Through Jesus Christ you become friends with God. By being in a relationship with Jesus Christ, you become friends with God.

Grace is offered freely to us, but it was not free for Jesus. It cost Him His life. He laid down His life so that we could receive God's amazing grace. This is something He never wants us to forget. He created a symbol of His sacrifice for us so we would never forget it. It's called Communion or the Lord's Supper. We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper today. It is the symbol of how Christ gave Himself for us on the cross. His body was given for us. His blood was shed for us, so that we could receive God's amazing grace.

There's a great deal of mystery involved in the Lord's Supper. Many here today come from different backgrounds, different places. But we come together as one to celebrate Christ's sacrifice for our sins. He died our death and paid our penalty. He set us free from the bondage of sin and death. When we come, we should leave our guilt behind for Jesus has already paid for all our wrong doing. When we come we should leave all sadness behind, for Jesus reigns on high in power for us. We should come filled with JOY and GRATITUDE for all that our Lord has accomplished for us. He paid our penalty. He died our death. It is finished.

Near the city of San Juan Compos in Brazil there is a remarkable facility. It's a prison. Twenty some years ago the Brazilian government turned it over to a band of Christians. They were given the freedom to run the prison on Christian principles. So they cleaned up the prison and renamed it Humanita. With the exception of two full time staff members, all the work there is done by the inmates. Families on the outside of the prison adopt inmates to work with during and after their terms are served. Chuck Colson, the founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, went to visit this prison. He said, **"When I visited Humanita I found the inmates smiling, particularly the murderer who held the keys, opened the gate and let me in. When I walked in, I saw men who were at peace with themselves and with God. I saw clean living spaces. I saw people working industriously. The walls were decorated with Biblical sayings from the Psalms and Proverbs. My guide escorted me to the notorious prison cell that was once used for torture. Today, he told me that block houses only a single inmate. As we reached the end of a long concrete corridor and he put the key in the lock he paused and said, 'Are you sure you want to go in?' 'Of course,' I replied impatiently. 'I've been in isolation cells all over the world.' Slowly he swung the massive door open and I saw the prisoner in that punishment chamber. It was a beautifully carved crucifix by the Humanita inmates. My guide softly said, 'Here is the prisoner Jesus hanging on the cross. He's doing time for the rest of us.'"**

When we take communion, this is what we are celebrating: that Jesus Christ paid our penalty. He served our time. He died our death. When we take communion we remember that Jesus took the punishment that we should have taken. The Bible says in 2nd Corinthians 8:9, ***"You are familiar with the generosity of Jesus Christ. Rich as He was, He gave it all away for us—in one stroke He became poor that we might become rich."***

GRACE is spelled **G-R-A-C-E** and it stands for: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense.** God's amazing, outrageous, inconceivable grace of God demands our response? The apostle Paul pleads with us. Hear the urgency in his voice. He says, ***"So we beg you, do not let the grace you receive from God be for nothing."***—2nd Corinthians 6:1.

What will that mean? How are we to respond appropriately to God's amazing grace?

FIRST, WE ARE TO RESPOND BY MAKING OUR LIVES COUNT. 1st Corinthians 6:20 says, ***"Don't you see that you can't keep on living however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? Let people see God in and through your life!"*** We can't let our lives be wasted once we receive God's grace. We can't let our witness be wasted once we receive God's grace. We can't let our time, our talent and our wealth be wasted on things that don't matter once we understand God's amazing grace. We have got to make our lives count.

1st Peter 4:10 says, *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."* The abilities and the talents and the opportunities and the education and experience, the freedom and the relationships and all the things you have that bless your life were not given to you so that you could squander them away. They were given to you for a purpose and God expects you to use those things for His purpose. Do not waste your life. Jesus Christ died for it. Make your life count.

SECOND, WE ARE TO RESPOND TO GOD'S AMAZING GRACE BY BECOMING GENEROUS PEOPLE. If you want to measure how much you understand grace, if you want to measure how much you're living in God's grace, if you want to measure how much you are grateful for God's grace, look at your giving. The Bible says, *"Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*—2nd Corinthians 9:7-8. That's the promise of God to the generous person. You can never out give God. He promises to cover your expenses when you give from your heart as an act of faith and gratitude. The Christian life is not complicated. It's a matter of loving as Christ loved, serving as Christ served and giving as Christ gave. God promises us the grace so we can abound in good work.

All that we have and all that we are has been given to us by God. It's on loan to us. We don't really own anything. God loans it to us for 60, 70, 80, maybe even 90 years, but then we have to leave it behind.

Do you trust God for your salvation? Do you trust God to take you home when your time comes? Then trust Him with your finances in this life. The Bible says, *"Since God loved us enough to give us His own son, won't He love us enough to take care of every one of our other needs?"*—Romans 8:32. The answer is YES. You cannot out give God.

God wants us to become generous like Him. We can say we believe, we can say we trust God. We can say we have faith in God, but our check books don't lie. Either they demonstrate our faith by our giving or they don't. We are to be generous people.

THE THIRD WAY WE ARE TO RESPOND TO GOD'S AMAZING GRACE IN BY SHARING THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT GRACE WITH OTHERS. The apostle Paul said, *"The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work that the Lord Jesus gave me—to tell people the Good News about God's grace."*—Acts 20:24. God has given each believer the same mission—to share the good news about grace with others. Paul doesn't say that the most important thing in life is to get married, fund your retirement, so you can travel a lot and have a lot of fun or to become famous or even to live in a house that is completely paid

off. The most important thing in life is to fulfill the mission God has given to each and every person who has come to know His grace.

Part of that mission, just part of it, not all of it, is to tell others about the good news of God's amazing grace. God put you on earth for a reason. God put you on earth for a purpose. He has a mission for you to fulfill. One important part of that mission, that purpose, is to tell others the good news about grace. Once you experience God's grace, you got to share it with others! Think about it—if you know Christ as your Lord and Savior it is because someone took the time to tell you about Him and to demonstrate His love to you. And it may not have been just one person, but many people who taught you about Jesus Christ and loved you into the kingdom of God. Who are you going to tell?

If someone died for you, wouldn't you want to know about it? That should be the motivation behind everything you do and say to lead another person to Jesus Christ. You should want them to know the good news of God's grace. There are so many people who are living their lives totally unaware that Jesus Christ died for them and that God's grace is available to them. The Bible tells us in 2nd Peter 3:9 that ***"God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*** God wants everybody in His family. Who are you going to tell?