



What's So Amazing About Grace?"
Ephesians 2:1-10
Westport Christian Church
November 15, 2009

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (NASU)

Grace has often been described as God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace is something that none of us deserve, but praise God we have it! Even though it is available to every person who comes to God through Jesus Christ, it is often misunderstood. As an example we use the word grace to describe a fine tuned athlete or a dancer. Grace is what a person says at the table before they eat. We sometimes say that someone

has grace if they are well mannered and considerate of others. Someone's speech is graceful if they use beautiful, well chosen words. If someone shows expressions of kindness and mercy to someone we say they have grace. But is that truly grace.

To me, a great example of grace is found in John chapter 8. In this chapter we find the account of the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. A group of Pharisees drag her in front of Jesus and ask what they should do. Now, according to the law, she was to be stoned to death. While they were making their case, Jesus was bent over and with His finger was writing something in the sand. They continued until Jesus said, which ever one of you don't have any sin in your life, let him throw the first stone, then He continued to write. No one threw a stone because they knew each of them was guilty. After they had all left, Jesus ask the woman where they were? Did none of them condemned you? After she answered no, Jesus said, "neither do I. Go and sin no more."

This lady had broken the law and according to the law deserved the punishment for her actions, yet Jesus showed her grace. Grace is a gift!

In looking back at my life, I know there was a time when I was guilty. When I could have been drugged out to Jesus for committing all kinds of sin. What about you?

You and me in our sin stupor life deserved death, but God bestows upon us His mercy, His free gift of grace.

Mt. Whitney is 14,494 ft. above sea level. It is the highest point in the 48 continental states. Only 80 miles away is Death Valley. It is 208 ft. below sea level. From Mt. Whitney you could say you are on top of the world. From Death Valley you could say there is no place to go but up. (Source unknown)

That is what Paul is saying about grace. God's gift of grace is amazing!

I. Without Grace We Are As Far Away From God As We Can Get.

Paul describes us as being dead. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." You were caught up in the things of this world. You were in the rat race of life without any thought of anyone else including God. As a matter of fact, you ran with the devil. Disobedient, living in lust and children of wrath. That describes how I lived before I came to Christ. I didn't really care about anything or anyone but me. As long as I was getting what I wanted, doing the things that I wanted to do, whenever I wanted to don them, everything was okay. How about you?

Paul said we are dead. We are hopeless. We are lost and condemned to hell. One of the crazy things about dead people, they don't respond to anything. Ask Mike Gasper next time you see him.

In the lost and found section of the newspaper it read, "Lost dog, \$50.00 reward. Black and tan, poodle and German shepherd mix. Flea bitten, left hind leg missing, no hair on his rump, recently neutered. Answers to the name of Lucky." Some of us are a lot like Lucky. Not much to look at, and in pretty bad shape!

We are indeed fortunate enough to have a Master who cares enough about us to look for us, to pursue us, desires us back and is willing to pay the price to get us back. When in reality, we should be taken outback and shot! Grace salvages, rather than destroys. God's grace is truly amazing.

In our lowest point we can discover . . .

II. God's mercy.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. But it is were. We are no longer what we were! Now we have been "made ... alive" in Christ. His grace has been poured out on us and we were "raised ... up with Christ," recipients not of a reward but of a gift. Who are we now? "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

God knows who we were: it is up to you and me to take Him at His word about who we now are! We can no longer think of ourselves in the old way, or burden ourselves down with past guilts. In Jesus we are renewed: we are His own fresh creations, shaped by the divine hand for the good works He calls us to do.

Phillip Yancy calls grace God's new math! He writes, Instead of earning wages, God dispenses gifts. It's not according to merit or fairness, because if that were the case, we would all end up in hell.

Grace is not about finishing first or last, or totaling up all our good and bad. Grace is not about uncertain accounting before God, but our unconditional acceptance in Christ.

Jesus teaches that the 99 sheep are not the issue, but the one lost sheep that counts to God!

I read this week about a man who started an orphanage, filled with children who had no parents, but very special children. Not those who were cute and adorable, but those who were disfigured, mangled, or crippled, the kids no one else wanted.

One day he heard about a little girl in his city whose parents had died in a fire. She had survived the fire, but was horribly disfigured and scarred. He went to see her and asked if she'd like to live in his orphanage. She said, You don't want me. I'm ugly. Nobody wants me. He picked her up, and kissed her, and said, you are exactly the little girl that I want to be a part of my family!

That is what grace does! When we were crippled and scarred, Grace seeks us out and says, You are the kind of person I want to pour my love and favor on!

And raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (NASU)

Grace seeks us out when we are broken and impoverished!

You see, it all boils down that . . .

III. God's Grace is truly AMAZING!

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ! This bring life. We started with the understanding we were dead. Dead people walking around, living in our sins. Following the ways that leads to death, but God has bestowed upon His precious gift of grace.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 NASU)

God's grace is free to everyone who will accept it. You can't work for it--You it can't buy it--You can't earn it. It is absolutely free! This free gift doesn't cost you anything, but it cost Jesus everything.

Grace--God's Riches At Christ Expense. A gift from God that bring eternal rewards.

Where would you be today without it? John Newton was so excited and confident about living life with Christ forever that he wrote a song called Faith's Review And Expectation (Amazing Grace). I love one of the less known verses that we sing,

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine

But God, who called me here below
Will be forever mine.

What would happen if we all came to the same understanding that John Newton had? What would happen if we truly grasped that one day, we will live with Christ forever? What would happen if we truly understood God's amazing grace?

I will tell you one thing that would happen. This community would be absolutely transformed!

Our being saved by God's amazing grace makes us grateful for our free gift of salvation.

God loved us so much that He was willing to go to amazing depths to bring us His amazing grace. God's love for us has a height without a top—A depth without a bottom—A length without an end—and a breadth without a limit.

Amen