What’s So Amazing about Grace?

Romans 3:24 / 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

9/26/21

“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound; that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind, but now I see...”

Grace. This past Wednesday we had an excellent discussion about grace. But when I got home and tried to unplug from the day, the Lord laid on my heart some things about grace.

So, with said this morning, let’s dig into “What is so Amazing about God’s Grace.”

Grace means Courteous goodwill. In Christian terms, grace can be generally defined as “the free and unmerited favor of God

* Grace is different than mercy, as mercy is “not getting what you deserve”, where grace is “getting what you **don’t** deserve.” Grace goes beyond mercy.
	+ Mercy is the Governor giving a guilty man a pardon.
	+ Grace is the Governor giving the man a pardon and them taking him home to live with him.

During the 1700’s, a man by the name of John Newton wrote the original song we just sang called – Amazing Grace. Almost everyone knows it.

John Newton did not always consider God’s grace to be amazing. There was a time when Newton was a very hard and cruel man. As a sea captain, he carried slaves from Africa to England. Yet during a storm one night, John Newton was made to realize his need for God’s grace, and he cried out for salvation. God did save John Newton. And by His amazing grace, God gloriously changed him and from that point on Newton worshiped God for His amazing grace.

Someone else struggled with receiving God’s grace; a man named Saul of Tarsus who we know today as the Apostle Paul. Paul had been raised as a Pharisee and therefore all his life he had lived by a very strict religious standard. His struggle with receiving God’s grace is best summarized in something the Lord said to him in the NKJV on the day of his conversion – ***“It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”*** In other words – “You’re really struggling with humbling yourself and yielding to Me as your Lord and Savior.” Indeed, Paul was.

Yet, like John Newton and so many others, Paul was gloriously saved by God’s grace from that point on he wrote more about grace than any other person in the Bible. What did Paul learn about God’s grace?

**I. GOD’S AMAZING GRACE IS SUFFICIENT TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS**

A. We Can’t Earn Our Way to Heaven

Romans 3:20 says: *“For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands…*

* Paul first had to learn that he couldn’t earn his way to heaven. It was only by God’s amazing grace could he be justified and declared righteous in the sight of God. In that same passage Paul also wrote – *Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*

All of us have sinned. All of us have had things in our lives that were sinful and displeasing to God. Yet through it’s God’s amazing grace, there is way for us to be forgiven.

B. We are Justified Freely by God’s Grace

*Romans 3:24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight...*

* It is only by what Jesus accomplished on the cross that we can be forgiven and made acceptable in God’s sight.

Later in his letters, Paul wrote in *Philippians 3:7 - I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*

* Paul was saying – “All that I thought would get me to heaven, I now realize was useless. It was rubbish. I cast all of that aside and receive the righteousness which is of God by faith. I throw everything else away so that I might be completely dependent upon Christ.” Only through Christ can a man be saved.

C. Receiving God’s Grace

Here’s how you can receive Jesus Christ as your Savior today –

* *A – Admit that you are sinful and in need of forgiveness*
* *B – Believe that Jesus died for your sins*
* *C – Call upon His name and ask Him for His forgiveness*

The Bible says – ***‘****whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ (Romans 10:13)*If you would like to be saved, pray this in your heart –

* *“Dear God, I know that I have sinned. I know that I don’t deserve to go to heaven. I believe that Jesus died for my sins. I believe that He took my punishment and that He is able to give me complete forgiveness. Forgive me Lord. Forgive me of all my sin and make me a child of God. In Christ’s name I pray these things. Amen”*

\*If you prayed that prayer and really meant it, God has saved you. By His amazing grace He has forgiven all your sins and declared you to now be one of His children.

**II. GOD’S AMAZING GRACE IS SUFFICIENT TO STRENGTHEN US IN OUR STRUGGLES**

But God’s amazing grace does not end with our salvation. God continues to graciously be involved in our lives. In that same song John Newton also wrote: *Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come; ’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*

Without the grace of God, we are nothing. Jesus said in:

* *John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

Underline ‘for without me you can nothing’. That’s how much we can accomplish without the amazing grace of God. NOTHING! God did not save you and then turn you lose to try to live life on your own. God saved you by His grace and He will sustain you by His grace. ‘Abiding in Christ’ is the same thing as drawing upon His grace.

* It’s like being hooked up to an I.V. called Grace and receiving God’s strength and nourishment one drop at a time.

As maybe some of us, Paul had a difficult time learning this lesson as well. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul shares a lot about himself. He opens up more in this letter than anywhere else. He talks a lot about his struggles and his journey as a Christian. In the 12th chapter Paul shares a lesson with us that is very important.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10*:* ***“****even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

Many have said that Paul was one of, if not the greatest Christian who ever lived. Paul seemed to have a commitment to Christ that few ever have, and God used him in a very powerful way. What made Paul such a dynamic Christian?

* **Was it his education and intellect?**
	+ Paul was raised in a Roman city called Tarsus. In Tarsus was one of the known universities of that day. Being raised in Tarsus, Paul became a very intelligent man, and his extensive knowledge is seen in many of his sermons and writings where he often referred to many of the great intellects of his day. Paul was a very intelligent man, yet it was not his intellect that made him a great Christian.
* **Was it his religious zeal and passion?**
	+ Paul was not only a Roman citizen; he was a Jew by birth. Before he became a Christian, he was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were among the most intense in their religious fervor of any of the Jewish people of that day. Being a Pharisee, Paul was intensely opposed to Christianity. He believed that the followers of Christ were evil, and he did everything he could to destroy them and their gatherings. He was passionate about it. The Bible describes him as someone who **‘***breathed out threatening’s and slaughter.”*(Acts 9:1) He was consumed with killing Christians. But after his salvation, Paul demonstrated this same kind of passion as a Christian. *Philippians 3:13 … forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* Whatever Paul did, he did it 110%. Yet it was not his religious zeal or passion that made him a great Christian.
* **Perhaps it was the opportunities presented to him.**
	+ Paul wrote ½ of the New Testament and much of the book of Acts is about his ministry. Some estimate that during his time as a Christian, he traveled over 14,000 miles going to various cities and preaching the gospel. Yet it was not his golden opportunities that made him a great Christian. Truth is much of his ministry occurred from a prison cell.

What was it then that made the apostle Paul one of the greatest Christians who ever lived?

Paul’s greatness came from the grace of God.

* Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians *12:9 “Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.”*

The thing that made Paul such a dynamic Christian was his dependence upon God’s amazing grace. God’s grace is not only sufficient to save us from our sins; it is also sufficient to strengthen us in our struggles.

As Paul did, we should refer to the Christian life as a journey, a pilgrimage. We are saved instantaneously the moment we receive Christ as our Savior, yet it often takes us many years to grow and develop as a believer. Spiritual maturity is a process. Often it is a slow and difficult process. Paul had a difficult time understanding that God’s grace was sufficient to strengthen him in his struggles.

As a matter of fact, before God could build Paul, God had to break Paul.

**1. The Abundance of Revelations**

* At one point in his life, Paul was caught up into heaven. While in heaven, Paul received revelations that were too magnificent to put into human words. As the result of this experience, there was the temptation for Paul to become prideful. Apparently, pride was an area of weakness for Paul. Being so intelligent and gifted and having been raised in a religious system that petted men’s pride, Paul was prone to become prideful. Therefore, the Lord had to break him. God had to get a hold of Paul’s pride and God did so through what Paul described as a ‘thorn in the flesh.’

**2. The Thorn in the Flesh**

Many have tried to guess what Paul’s thorn was.

* Some have said that it was certain individuals who followed him around and continually harassed him in his ministry, following him from town to town to oppose him and to make his life miserable. Indeed, they were a thorn in his side, but we’re not for sure that they were his thorn in the flesh.
* Others have supposed that it was some type of physical ailment. It appears from his letter to the Galatians that Paul suffered from some type of infirmity in his eyes. Maybe his thorn was his eyesight. Maybe it was something else. We’re not told for sure and that’s good because what the thorn was is not as important as why the Lord allowed Paul to suffer from it. \*God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh to cause Paul to depend completely upon God’s amazing grace.

Some believe that Christians should never suffer. They believe that all suffering was done away with at the cross. Yet that is not what scripture teaches. A number of believers found in the Bible suffered for a variety of reasons.

Though it seemed like God was hurting Paul, in reality God was helping him. To keep Paul from becoming proud and self-sufficient, the Lord had to keep Paul humble and dependent.

The Bible teaches us that the primary thing that keeps us from experiencing God’s grace is pride.

* **J***ames 4:6 - God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.*
* 1 Peter 5:5 - *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*

He withdraws and withholds His favor from the prideful. But to the humble God gives grace and even more grace. God lavishes His grace upon those who are broken and in need of Him. The weakest believer, who is drawing upon the strength of God’s grace, is stronger than the strongest saint who is trusting only in himself.

Maybe Paul’s thorn in the flesh was a combination of all these problems.

* Maybe it was a life that was never free of difficulty.
* Maybe one day it was an unpleasant individual, the next day an unpleasant incident and the next day an unpleasant illness.

Almost every day you and I fight some kind of a battle with Satan. Almost every day it seems that life is trying to pound us down. We long for the day when we will be free of all of this; but that day is not today and until that day comes, we must focus on our relationship with the Lord. We must continuously pray to Him and ask Him for His help and strength. We need the sufficiency of God’s amazing grace just as much in our struggles as we do in our salvation. Without Him we are nothing and can do nothing. Yet with Him, we can do all things.

So, what is so amazing about God’s grace that we should take home today?

**God’s Grace is enough for me in all things.**

We have defined grace as God’s Unmerited Favor. It is God’s favor towards us, something which we have neither earned nor deserve. It is God’s kind and merciful involvement in our lives. A great definition of grace is: *“God’s provision for our every need when we need it.”*

When Jesus said, “My grace is sufficient for thee”, in reality He was telling Paul –

*“The strength I will provide you will be more than enough for whatever you need. There will never be a shortage of My grace. It will never be insufficient for your needs. Through Me, God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory. You can endure all things through My grace which will give strength.”*

**God’s Grace is strong in my weakness**

2 Corinthians 12: 9 Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness....”

What did Christ mean when He said – ‘My strength is made perfect in weakness?’ The word ‘strength’ means power or ability. Christ’s power and ability is perfect.

How then is His strength made perfect in weakness? The word ‘perfect’ as it is used here comes with the thought of bringing something to completion, fulfillment.

* Christ possesses a perfect strength, yet His perfect strength cannot be fully realized unless there is a need. Christ allows needs in our lives that are beyond our ability to handle, so that He might demonstrate the glory of His power and strength and grace.

**Conclusion:**

**As we grow in Christ, we need to learn to lean daily upon the “Sufficiency of God’s Grace”**

Understanding the sufficiency of God’s grace is not always an easy lesson to learn. It’s difficult because it’s “not normal”. It’s not how things work among ourselves.

But God’s grace requires us to decrease while He increases. It requires a putting to death parts of self so that Christ might live in and through us. Paul learned this lesson and that is what made him a great man of God. That is what empowered his intellect, passion, and opportunities. Paul said – *“Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal 2:20)*

Note Paul’s words once he learned this-

*2 Corinthians 12:8-10 - Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away (his cause for weakness).****9****Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.****10****That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

“For when I am weak – then I am strong.” It seems like a strange paradox, but we need to remember, and even remind the devil that we are strongest during our weakest moments. How?

1. Admit & accept your weakness

2. Believe that God is with you in your weakness

3. Let go of the control over your life and yield to the will of Christ

4. Seek to draw upon His strength: through prayer, the Word of God, by quiet meditation

5. Apply what He reveals to you

6. Trust that He loves you and that He can and will help you

Let us begin today receiving our strength, our life, and everything we need from the Amazing Grace of Christ!