

Really Amazing Grace

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[0 : 00] Grace. Grace is kind of an interesting word. If you come from an unchurched background or you have no association with the Christian religion, chances are you've used grace as a personal name for someone more than in the context of the noun of grace.

The definition of grace from a secular point of view would mean elegance or beauty. We would use it to define a woman such as Donna has such natural grace and elegance. She has grace and poise. It's an older term. It also has the sense of being favored. The queen graced us with her presence. Or perhaps you would have heard it, let's just say grace for our food today.

But for us as Christians, grace is an exceptionally significant word. In fact, it's so significant to our Christian faith that we write songs about grace. 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. Or perhaps we've heard that song, come thou fount of every blessing. Tune my heart to sing thy grace. Or if you prefer a more modern lyric, this is amazing grace. This is unfailing love true grace. When we think of grace, we think of grace bestowed upon us, but it is an attribute of God.

It is a powerful attribute of God. And it's, I want to say an all-consuming attribute, but it is so powerful in that it describes so much. And today, I'm going to do my very best to unpack it beyond our understanding of grace that we sing about. If you're new to our series since COVID began, we made the decision to speak on the attributes of God. We wanted to preach God, whether in the sermon series that Dave did on the Trinity or the specific individual attributes of God. Our goal is that through this series, we would know God more. By knowing God more, we would know the glory of God more. And through the glory, we would inform our worship. Lord willing, would change our lives and grow us in Christ Jesus. The prophet Jeremiah writes to us in Jeremiah 9, 23, 24, let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might. Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him know who boasts is this, that he understands and knows me.

That I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. There's that word delight again.

[3 : 58] We delight God by knowing him, by knowing his character, by understanding his actions, and understanding his greater love for us. If there is an attribute that should cause us to bow down, an action that should break us, that should worship, break us down to worship him, and simply delight in God, is that God is gracious. As one theologian aptly says, grace is simply God being God.

So today, as I said, I just don't want to define the term. I want to explore the chief characteristics, and then I want to answer three questions that I hope will give us a greater depth of understanding of God's graciousness. So the three primary characteristics of grace that I'm going to talk about is that grace is free, grace is eternal, and grace is sovereign. So if you're taking notes, there's three characteristics that we're going to identify. That grace is free, grace is eternal, and grace is sovereign. And three questions that are going to go along with that is we're going to look at what is the scope of grace to what expanse does grace include. We're going to look at how do we receive grace? What is the process? What does it mean to receive grace? And the third one, what is the absolute power and effect of grace? When you usually answer the question or get asked the question, what is grace, what is grace? We usually say unmerited favor. It means it's a favor that was undeserving.

We did not do anything to deserve that favor. Theological definition, if you'll bear with me, it's a little bit of a wordy, but it says divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God.

It is unmerited. It is unmerited.

Unattracted. It is unsought. It is unsought. And it's unattracted. When I say unattracted, and this gets to the core of it, there is no attraction in the object who receives grace.

[7 : 29] Grace cannot be bought. Grace cannot be earned. Grace cannot be won. If it could be acquired in any other way, it would simply no longer be grace.

Grace cannot be earned. Grace cannot be earned. It cannot be earned. It cannot be earned. It can only be received. You see, grace is not for the deserving. Grace is not for those who earn it. Romans 3, 23, 24 simply says, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We get that. And are justified by his grace. How is it received? It talks about grace, or let's first take a look at the term. What does justified mean?

The term justified is a legal term, which means to be declared innocent, to be declared guiltless. It's not to be declared cleaned up. It's not meaning to be declared you have paid enough of the penalty.

[9 : 25] In the legal term, it's when you're before a judge and he declares you innocent. It means the penalty has been paid in full. It's like you never did it.

That's the power of salvation. In that Jesus Christ fully gives us his life to us.

Free. Without cost. It's unmerited. It's not done to us as a favor for something we will do later or something we did in the past.

Ephesians tells it it's because of his great love. So when we are looked at, it's not like there was faulty evidence. It's not like there was a wrong judicial process and we're set free.

No, the judge makes a declaration that we are innocent. And get this, we are declared justified by trusting in Jesus.

[10 : 39] By trusting in Jesus. That we place our faith in Jesus Christ. Now get this, grace isn't a reward for the righteous.

It is a gift for the guilty. If you were to think that you earned it, that you gave enough money or you did enough works, and you declared yourself righteous, you would disqualify yourself from grace. You would disqualify yourself from being declared innocent. From being declared guiltless.

Because the fact of the matter is, Jesus already told us why he came.

He came for those who were sick, who needed a doctor. And if I might tell you something about your condition this morning, we are all sick.

We are all broken. We all need the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Romans 6.11 writes, For if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works.

[12 : 05] Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. You see, the fact of the matter is, grace stands opposite to works. It's like oil and water.

They cannot mix. And just like I said, if we could earn it or merit it in some way, it would no longer be grace. Ephesians 2.8.9, Paul writes, For by grace, and I know sometimes we just read these verses, we're familiar with these verses, but I want you to really get the power that is beyond and how encompassing this word is.

So for by grace you have been saved through faith. That's simply putting your faith in Jesus Christ. And this is not of your own doing. We take no credit for this.

It is the gift of God, not a result of work so that no one may boast. Paul is clearly articulating the point that grace is for the undeserving.

Grace is for the sinners. It is for the lost. It is for the ruined. And Jesus Christ offers us this grace if we would simply trust him alone for our salvation.

[13 : 34] So the first characteristic of grace is that it is free. The second characteristic that I want us to address is that grace is eternal.

Grace is eternal. Now when I say that word eternal, now this is where our minds are going to get disjointed. Some of our beliefs might even fight this.

But the grace that justifies and that's eternal doesn't mean eternity going forward.

It does, but it also means eternal going backwards. Alright? So when we say grace is eternal, grace was powered back then and it's powered from now on.

You see, the Bible teaches that our salvation was planned before time even began. Before the foundation of this world, God planned for us to receive his grace.

[14 : 53] At no point was there a plan that we would receive grace because of our intelligence or what we do here on earth or because of our family background. Nothing. You see, God's grace began.

And I'm talking about the personal grace that saves us began before we became into existence. Alright? Let's take a look at 2 Timothy 2.9.

Paul is talking, who saved us and called us to a holy calling. Not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, get this, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. The grace that was given to us was given to us before we were even born. Before Canada existed. Before North America was even known to the people in Europe or Asia. Before even the time of Christ. And I know this teaching is hard to get our heads around.

[16:15] But this is the plain teaching of Scripture. And as we go in, and I'm hoping you'll stay with me on this, not only is it freeing, but it's powerful, some of the truth and the results of this truth in our life.

But more importantly, it is meant to humble us. That our salvation didn't even have anything to do with me being born into the right family, doing the right things, saying the right things, doing the right things.

That somehow, somewhere before time began, God chose to love me and to place love on me before I even became lovable.

Before I could even do loving works. God chose before time that His grace was going to put on me. That's powerful to understand.

You who are a luck, that God chose us to set His past upon us in eternity past. That grace was extended to you and me before the foundation of the world.

[17:41] This tells us that we were not chosen because of our good works. We weren't chosen because we had the right attitude. But it was simply because He chose to pour His love and grace on us.

And I know for some people, they start to talk about Calvinism or Herminism or is this a free will issue? I don't really see a conflict in here when you truly understand God's grace.

For even in the selection of God by choosing Him by your own will, there's some people would say that there's an act that they can take credit for. I'm not saying everyone in that position does.

But Scripture is quite clear that this began even before we got here. We knew we had a will or a decision to make. Now I want us to look at the third characteristic.

So the first characteristic of grace, it is free. Second, it is eternal. And the third characteristic of God's grace is that God is sovereign in His grace.

[18:53] All right? It is God's grace. Because it's God's grace, He can bestow it upon anybody He chooses.

The reality is God didn't have to be gracious to anyone. And if He didn't, He would still be the same loving, graceful, good God that we know today.

But for some reason, God did. But God did choose to bestow His grace. How gracious is God?

Why is God gracious to everyone? Exodus 33, 19, God simply says, speaking to Moses, He says, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

God is simply gracious to us because He chooses to. No one and no time and no place can make a claim for God's grace.

[20:08] nobody can say, hey God, I deserve it. Hey God, didn't I do this for you? Don't you owe me?

You see, the fact of the matter is we struggle with this because then this thought comes into our head. Well, that's not fair of God that He should put His grace on some and choose to withhold His grace on others.

And sometimes we're at a point we think it's unfair. Well, they never got a chance. So that can be good. But the reality is we don't want fair because we understand that if God were fair, none of us would receive grace.

We would receive the due penalty that is due us because of our sin. He wouldn't have a choice if He were fair and just.

But God is beyond those things. He understands that God, that eternal life is a gift.

[21:28] And the fact of the matter is who here on earth or anywhere else has the right to say that God is fair or not fair? Seriously, to even beg the question is a sign of intense arrogance.

Who has the right to tell God who He should give His gift to and who He shouldn't give His gift to. Now, this is what really catches people up or trips them up.

The fact of the matter is the Bible teaches that God never refuses the gift of salvation to anyone who seeks it wholeheartedly.

Do you understand that? God never refuses. So when we say, well, what about my parents? What happens if He doesn't elect them? If they seek Him, God will save them.

And this is the tension that sometimes bothers us. The Bible teaches that God never refuses anybody who comes to Him empty-handed in the way the Bible tells us.

[22 : 41] I offer you nothing, Lord. God does not turn those people away. And when people ask the question, what right does God have?

Well, first, He is the Creator. But the reality is, and this is what people don't consider, God does not force His gift of grace on those who do not value it.

So when we think they didn't have an opportunity for it, the reality is they never wanted that grace.

You see, God is not compelled to save those who are compelled to go their own way.

one of the things that sometimes in our more to help us understanding, God sometimes allows us to have our sin because sin is the just penalty for our actions.

Sometimes we ask, why doesn't God stop? Or people say, well, why, I did something wrong, I'm going to curse, I'm going to get cursed, or God's going to come after me. God doesn't work that way.

[24 : 01] The fact of the matter is God just lets you have your way. When you really want your way, when you want your free will to act in the way that you want, God lets you.

He doesn't impose Himself on you. You want it, you want your sin, He gives it to you. And the tragedy of all is that sin is the judgment against you.

God created us, He knows us, He knows what keeps us healthy, what keeps us strong, which keeps us loving Him.

When people fight against this point, they believe at some part of their heart that they want to be consulted in the matter of whether they choose God's grace.

They want their choice to matter over what God did before the foundation of the world. The fact that God is sovereign over all things is truly a tough one for us to really grasp, but the implications for salvation for salvation, and what we see in God's teaching on the attribute of grace and how it is achieved in our lives answers so much.

[25 : 33] To be honest with you, my eyes have been seeing things far more clear just even doing this study of God's attributes and then considering how they all fit together.

even for some of you who might say, well, I'm no theologian, I can't talk about these things, but as you learn these attributes of God, you're going to begin to answer some questions.

And you can answer them authoritatively because of what you know simply about God. You see, God's grace has to be sovereign in salvation.

otherwise, we'd be outside of God's grace and salvation only comes through the grace of God.

Check out Romans 11 verses 5 and 6. Paul writes, so too at the present time there was a remnant chosen by grace.

[26 : 41] For if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. The fact of the matter is, God has always worked this way.

Abraham was called out of the land of Ur because God chose him. God enacted his grace upon him.

God called him out of his land to be God's people. See, I want you to pay attention to Ephesians 1-4.

We've been preaching this for the last year and a bit. 1-6, Paul says, even as God chose us in him before the foundation of the world, and if he chose us, redeems us, it is by the power of grace that we should be holy and blameless before him.

We're only holy and blameless if God has redeemed us. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will.

[27 : 55] And notice what he concludes in verse 6. He simply says, to the praise of his glorious grace. to the praise of his perfectly unmerited favor on people who show no ability to earn it on their own, with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

My friends, we should be humbled beyond humility. at this. One theologian writes, election is so that there will be a great praise given to God for his gracious choice of undeserving sinners.

The defiled, the enemies of God, the rebels, the prisoners, the lost, grace. When they are saved, all praise goes to God.

Not 99% praise, 1% praise for us. All praise has to go to God. It is all grace which is all praise to God.

This is why we sing amazing grace. grace. And that is why grace is free, grace is eternal, and grace is sovereign.

[29 : 36] So those are the three characteristics of grace. Now I want to answer three questions that might help you because I'm supposing many of you have some questions in regards to this.

So one of the questions is what is the scope of grace? Right? What is the scope of grace?

How far reaching is grace? All right, Titus 2.11 helps us here. It says, for the grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all people.

Now when we think of that grace which brings salvation to all people, some people get hung up on the word all, thinking that all means every people.

That's not what Paul is communicating there. If so, that would mean there's universalism that everybody everywhere at all times, but we know scripture doesn't teach that.

[30 : 44] But we need to understand what the reference to all people. And to think of it, it's to think of all types of people is what that means.

There's Jews that are saved, there's Gentiles that are saved, rich people, poor people, men, women. At the time there were slaves that were saved, there was free people that were saved, educated, uneducated, people of all languages, people of all cultures were saved by the grace of God.

Remember before in the Old Testament, the salvation existed in the tribe of Judah, Israel. And yes, outside nations could be saved through their trust in God.

But what Paul is talking about here is there is no distinction in salvation. That means people in Squamish, people in Whistler, Vancouver, Beijing, Toronto, Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, all peoples can be saved.

Cape Town, doesn't matter. Salvation is meant for all. And we see this in the context of this passage.

[32 : 02] He's both speaking to older men, older women, slaves, husbands, children. So salvation we see quite clearly. is meant for all types of people.

So that is the scope of salvation. Not everyone, but all people. And we see when people kind of fight back about this word all, we also see this used, this type of all types used in 1 Timothy.

We see it Romans in 1. And it's also a type of speech. I'll give you an example out of Luke 3.15. It says, as the people were in expectation on all were questioning in their hearts concerning John the Baptist, whether he might be the Christ.

That all is specifically talking to people were in that situation. So we see that usage of all, not meaning everyone. So that's answering the question.

It is all encompassing. Grace is all encompassing. The second question is, how do we get grace? How do we get grace?

[33 : 19] The first truth we need to understand, and we sometimes question this, is that there's not one drop of saving grace outside the mediation of Jesus Christ.

without Jesus, there is no salvation. Sometimes we get caught up in ideas of people who were really good somewhere who never heard.

The reality is, if they call upon the name of Jesus, he will mediate them. John 1, 17 says, for the law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Now, there's this power that Jesus has. And there was only one person who could mediate. And you guys are familiar with the mediator, somewhat like a lawyer.

He's brought before two warring parties to bring peace. Sometimes we see this in marriages, sometimes we see this in countries where an independent country will come to mediate to bring peace in times of war.

[34 : 27] Catholic church would say Mary is the mediator. We go through Mary to get to God. But there's a problem with Mary. One, she is not God. Two, she is not without sin.

But there is one person who walked on this earth who did not sin and is God. And that is Jesus Christ.

So this is why it's important for us to understand that God is both, or Jesus is 100% God, so he can represent God, and he's 100% man, so he represents man, perfectly fully in the middle.

1 Timothy 2.5 says, For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. What that's teaching us, that there is no grace outside of Jesus Christ. Mary did not have enough grace to bring salvation. There is no saint, no other person, nothing. 1 John 5.12 says, Whoever has the Son has life.

[35 : 46] Whoever does not have the Son does not have life. love. You see, there is no spiritual saving life outside the grace of God.

There's no other way of works, there's no other way of giving outside of Jesus, no other religion that can make things right with God.

God. That's why Jesus Christ says, I am the way to the Father. So, the first question is, it's all encompassing to all people.

But all people have to come to receive grace through Jesus Christ, who is the one mediator between God and man.

And what is the effect of this grace? what is the power of this grace? Romans 3, 23, 24, which we've read, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

[37 : 07] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, by the means of making harmony between God and man was through his blood to be received by faith.

It's a gift. God gives it. We take it. We don't pay him back. We don't give him a gift in return.

We know some of us feel that way. We get a gift from someone, we feel we've got to give a gift. I remember I got a really wonderful gift from someone and I wanted to write a thank you card and put a gift back, but that would have undone the gift.

The person actually returned the gift card to me. And they said, no, this is my gift to you. You do not have to pay me back. You see, the power of God's grace is saving grace.

The fact of the matter is, when we say this idea of saved, we're saved from something to something. Usually we are saved from great danger, we're saved from being lost, we're saved from peril, and we're moved to a place of safety.

[38 : 25] The danger for mankind is that God is not saving us from loneliness. God is not saving us because I don't have kids, or I don't have a wife, or I don't have a husband, or I don't have a job, or I don't have a purpose.

God's not even saving me because of my brokenness, he's not saving me because of my foolishness, and he's not saving me because of my unfulfilled life. He doesn't save me from those. God's mind is beyond our concerns. God cares about our eternal soul. And what he saves us from is the just penalty of our sin.

And the just penalty of our sin is actually God's wrath. That's the power of the gospel. God's grace saves us from his rightful wrath to us, where he takes us by grace, puts us over here, and we're now innocent and guiltless.

We're free. We're his. That's salvation, and that happens by his grace.

[39 : 57] His grace that is free, his grace that is eternal, and his grace that is sovereign. And he saves us from himself.

You see, we are saved from the one who has the power to destroy our soul. and there's only one being in the universe who has that power, and it is God.

You see, we are saved from God's righteous wrath for our rebellious sins, and we are simply saved by the grace of Jesus.

How much power is the grace of God? It is the only power that can save us from the wrath of God. Not an unrighteous wrath, not an unholy wrath, not an undeserved wrath, but it's a holy wrath, a just wrath, a right wrath.

[41 : 17] wrath, and grace is the power that saves us from God's wrath.

love. Titus 3, 7, we are justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Ephesians 1, 7, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

You know what? Some of you might now say, BK, I got sin. Man, I've got so much rebellion going on, I got a mountain of sin, a mountain of iniquity, a mountain of horrible actions that I have done on the people I said I loved and I hated others.

Well, I've got good news for you. You may have a mountain of sin, but Jesus Christ has an infinite supply of grace. Infinity trumps the mountain every time.

[42 : 45] If grace can turn around God's wrath, it can deal with your sin. Romans 5.20, Paul reminds us, where sin increase, grace abounded all the more.

He's not talking about you can keep sinning so we get more grace. That's not what he's talking about. What he's talking about is all the sin that you have, it doesn't matter, there's more grace. You see, grace was formed in eternity and is infinite.

grace. And the beauty about grace is it's not just powerful enough to save us, it also has the power to transform us, to make us more like Jesus.

It gives us the power to change. We talked about God's immutability, his unchangeableness last week. 2 Corinthians 3.18, says, and we all with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. You see, the power of Jesus Christ, when we are saved from death unto life, we are inhibited by the Holy Spirit.

[44 : 19] And the Holy Spirit begins his transformation process. He is the one who brings that change. So not only are we saved by grace, but we continue to live by grace.

grace. This is why we call it amazing grace.

I'm going to pray, and then we're going to sing a song together. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, there's a lot in this sermon.

it's the type of tough meat that tires out our jaw. It's the kind of information in our mind that we need to go sit down and think about it, consider it, ponder it.

But Father, the teaching of your scripture is crystal clear. These verses are not ambiguous. Lord, thank you for grace.

[45 : 30] Thank you for saving me from your wrath. Thank you for being gracious.

In your name, amen.