**Amazing Grace**

The Meaning Of Grace

What comes to mind when you think of grace? Many of us understand grace to be ‘undeserved favour’. It’s when we receive something that we don’t deserve, such as forgiveness or mercy. Whilst this is true, grace is more than just undeserved favour or mercy; grace is a person, and His name is Jesus.

It’s easy to dismiss God’s grace as just another Christian concept, but when we really stop to think about what it means, what had to happen for grace to be possible, it is achingly beautiful. Because for grace to be possible, there had to be heartache, pain and death. And not for your or me.…but for Jesus.

Jesus gave up His life so that you and I can have eternal life. He was temporarily separated from His heavenly Father so that we could be united with our heavenly Father. He hung on a cross knowing many would reject Him, but loving them enough to do it anyway. Jesus knew how fallible we all are. He knew we would blame Him for things and would ignore Him. Jesus knew all this. He knew the state of our hearts even then. Yet, He still chose to do it out of love for the Father and for us. That is grace.

God’s grace is a reflection and an extension of His love for us. We can’t earn it and we don’t deserve it. It is a gift. God knows who we are. He knows what we’re capable of. And yet, no matter what mistakes we’ve made, or will make, it won’t cancel out His grace. Because like His love, His grace is endless and beautiful and it is the heart of Jesus. And know that His grace is more than sufficient for you in any situation or season of life.

Written by LEILA ARMSTRONG

Rom. 5:8

Generous Grace

I have two typical children. I can count on them for rumbles and cuddles and mess and lots of laughs. I can also count on them to find new opportunities to learn what it means to ‘love others like they love themselves’ (Mark 12:30–31). Have you ever asked a child to share chocolates between a group? I have. At first they contemplate whether they’ll give themselves more – then there’s the struggle to be fair. And, at the end there’s the horror of what to do with the leftovers – when there’s not enough for everyone.

It’s a psychological development stage every living being goes through. The instinct to be selfish and the opportunity to be generous.

If you look, every day there’s evidence of God’s generosity. You could note some or all of the amazing things God has given you today. Life, food, clothing, shelter, people, a job, access to transport. It may look different for each of us – but all of us have been given so much by our generous God. And all of it is evidence of God’s grace! He blesses us beyond what we ask or deserve. Surely the greatest gift that He’s given to us freely and generously is the gift of a relationship with Him.

There are no barriers left between us and God – Jesus has dealt with our sin. Now we can freely come to our Father. And now, what was hidden is revealed – we KNOW who has given us every good and perfect gift. We know who to thank for His amazing, generous grace.

Written by KATIE SMITH

Eph. 3:20-21; Mark 12:30-31

The Direction Home

A quick trip to the shops, and it seems everyone has the same idea. The first parking spot I found was a hike and a cut lunch away from where I needed to go. The thought ‘I’ll only be five minutes’, flies out the window. I trekked in, got my shopping done, and headed for the car. Um, where did I park again? Have you ever done that? I confess it happens to me more as I get older; I’m more and more geographically challenged. I’m sure I need an app on my phone to guide me back to where I parked.

Being completely lost is a horrible feeling, isn’t it? But it’s not just about feeling physically lost. That sense of being adrift spiritually is so much worse.

God doesn’t want us to feel that way! His grace came to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He brought us the forgiveness we so desperately need so that we never experience the feeling of being lost ever again. He has forgiven us so we can return home. He walked us back to where we parked. He bought us the bus ticket home. He gave us freedom from ‘every lawless deed’ and purified ‘for Himself a people who are His very own, passionate to do what is beautiful in His eyes’ (Titus 2:14 TPT).

Why? For no other reason than He loves us. That’s amazing grace.

Written by CHRIS PARFOOT

Titus 2:11; 2:14

Grace Under Fire

There were days when newspapers would send journalists to transcribe the Sunday sermons of the great preachers for publication. The two great preachers of the day were Joseph Parker and Charles Spurgeon: Spurgeon a deep thinker and theologian; Parker a great orator who rarely preached from notes.

For a time, Spurgeon invested much of his income into an orphanage for boys. One day Parker remarked on the shocking poverty of some of the boys taken in by Spurgeon’s orphanage. Troublemakers reported back to Spurgeon that his orphanage’s conditions (not the condition of the boys) had been criticised by Parker. The following Sunday, Spurgeon took aim at Parker from the pulpit and the journalists dutifully printed the tirade in the paper. The following Sunday, Parker’s church was full as the expectant crowd waited for Parker’s return volley.

Silence fell over the pews as Parker stood to speak. ‘Brother Spurgeon is sick today and cannot preach. This is the day when he takes up an offering for his orphans. May I suggest that we take up that offering for him in our church, for he’s doing a great work, and I know all of us would like to have a part in it.’ So generous was the offering that day, the plates were emptied three times.

Spurgeon visited Parker’s study a few days later. In part he said: ‘You know, Parker, you have practiced grace on me. You have given me not what I deserved; you have given me what I needed.’ God’s grace changes lives for eternity and resources us to practice grace to those who need it. Now THAT is amazing grace.

Written by DWAYNE JEFFRIES

Rom. 5:8

Grace Story

My uncle could tell the most dramatic stories that would have me hanging on every word. A good storyteller engages the senses, includes unexpected plot twists, reveals a hero, and fosters a feel-good conclusion. The Israelites told stories. It was a tradition they passed down from generation to generation. King David wrote ‘Generation after generation stands in awe of your work; each one tells stories of your mighty acts’ (Psalm 145:4 MSG). For Israel, stories reminded them of their identity, worth, future hope, and, most importantly, their creator God. Bible commentators have noted that when they remembered their stories they prospered; when they quit telling their stories, they forgot who they were and invited disaster.

The Bible is full of proclamations from cover to cover. Statements like ‘God is love’, ‘God is powerful’, ‘The resurrected Christ’, and many others. Imagine such proclamations without the context of the story. They can be true, but to be meaningful to us, they must have a story!

Have you forgotten your God story? When was the last time you passed on to others what God has done for you? Paul was a man saved and transformed by God’s love. He later revealed to his disciple Timothy the central theme of every God story – grace! Let me encourage you today that God is writing an unpredictable grace story with your life! What will He do next with your life if you surrender and receive again His amazing grace?

Written by SAM FAGAN

2 Tim. 1:9-10; Psalm 145:4

Conclusion

Let’s always remember the meaning of grace, that our Lord and Savior gave His life for all mankind so that we may the hope of eternal life in heaven with our Father if we are obedient to Him.

We should strive to have the same generous grace towards others that our Father in heaven has given to us.

God is always there to help us so that we will not be lost and He will help us to have a home with Him in heaven.

When others may say or do things to hurt us or are unkind to us, let us not retaliate towards them but to show them grace as God does to us.

It’s so important for us to remember our grace story or our story about what brought us to God. Let us always share our story with others so that they will want to be obedient to God and then start their story.