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Amazing Grace

1 CORINTHIANS 15:10

Introduction

1. When you and I think about God and what He is like, I am sure there are a number of characteristics which come to mind.

- a. Omnipotence — all powerful

“Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:13, NASB95)

- b. Omniscience — all knowing

“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.” (Proverbs 15:3, NASB95)

- c. Omnipresent — ever present

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.”

(Psalm 139:7–10, NASB95)

2. We might also speak of God’s love, His majesty and wisdom, a host of things.
3. There is one facet of God that I believe all of us would like to know more about: His grace.
4. One hymn that is a favorite of Christians everywhere is “Amazing Grace.”

5. It speaks of God reaching down to save us out of His “amazing grace.”
6. Twice in chapter 2 of Paul’s letter to the Christians in Ephesus, he speaks of our having been saved by grace (vv. 5, 8).
7. In between these two verses, in verse 7, Paul wrote of God’s desire “in the ages to come” to “show the surpassing riches of [God’s] grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

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8. In 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul described himself as “the least of the apostles,” and said that he was “not fit to be called an apostle, because [he] persecuted the church of God.”
9. He then came back in verse 10 and wrote of the one thing which made a difference:

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.” (1 Corinthians 15:10, NASB95)
10. Tonight, I would like for us to consider what the grace of God is and why it is so important in our lives.

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I. A Powerful Word

A. WE USE THE WORD GRACE IN SO MANY WAYS

1. We “say grace” before meals and acknowledge that our “daily bread” is a gift from God.
2. We are . . .
 - a. *Grateful* for someone’s kindness
 - b. *Gratified* by good news
 - c. *Congratulated* when we achieve some measure of success.
 - d. *Gracious* in hosting our friends.

- e. When a person has served us in some way, we leave a *gratituty*.
 - ❑ In each of these areas there is a hint of that which is undeserved.
- 3. In England, British subjects address royalty as "*Your grace.*"
- 4. Our president's pardoning of someone is considered "*an act of grace.*"
- 5. Many businesses extend to their customers an undeserved *grace period* in their billing cycle.

3a**B. THE OPPOSITE OF THIS WORD REVEALS SOMETHING AS WELL**

1. We insult a person which we point out their lack of grace.
 - a. "You *ingrate!*"
 - b. "You're a *disgrace!*"
2. A truly despicable person is said to have "no saving grace" about him or her.
3. A person who offends the U.S. government is officially declared to be a *persona non grata*, a "person without grace."

Slide 4**C. WHAT IS GRACE?**

1. Perhaps we have all heard grace described as "God's unmerited favor."
2. An familiar acrostic utilizing the letters which make up the word GRACE is **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense.
3. The word "grace" comes from the Greek word "charis".
 - a. It typically refers to that which gives joy, pleasure or delight.
 - 1) Originally, those in the synagogue at Nazareth described His words as "gracious" (Luke 4:22).
 - 2) Paul told the Christians in Colosse, "Let your speech always be with grace" (Colossians 4:6).
 - 3) He exhorted the believers in Ephesus to speak only those words which were "good for edification, according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians

4:29).

- b. Grace indicates good-will, lovingkindness, favor — this is what God demonstrates toward us.

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II. How Has God Displayed Grace?

A. "NOAH FOUND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD" (GENESIS 6:8)

1. By Noah's day, God's assessment of mankind was very bleak:
 - a. "The wickedness of man was great on the earth" (Genesis 6:5a).
 - b. "Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5b).
2. God decided to destroy His creation.
3. However, there was one man who found favor in His sight (Genesis 6:8).

"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8).
4. As a result, God displayed grace by saving Noah and His family.

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B. GOD'S TREATMENT OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS (NEHEMIAH 9:17)

"They refused to listen,
 And did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among
 them; So they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their
 slavery in Egypt. But You are a God of forgiveness,
 Gracious and compassionate,
 Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness;
 And You did not forsake them."

(Nehemiah 9:17, NASB95)

1. God provided for the Israelites throughout their journey from Egypt to the promised land.
2. However, they became stubborn and arrogant and did not remember all

that God did for them.

3. Though He punished them, He did not destroy them.
4. He gave them grace.

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C. GOD WAS GRACIOUS TOWARD NINEVEH (JONAH 4:1-2)

“But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, “Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.” (Jonah 4:1–2, NASB95)

1. You may remember that God had decided to destroy the ancient city of Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian Empire.
2. Before doing so, however, He commanded Jonah to go preach to the people of the city.
3. Jonah refused and fled in the opposite direction — west across the Mediterranean Sea.
4. He later repented and went to preach to the Ninevites.
5. As a result of his preaching, the people of the city of Nineveh repented, in sackcloth and ashes.
6. Jonah became angry at God for not destroying the Ninevites.

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D. THROUGH HIS SON (JOHN 1:14)

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14, NASB95)

1. When God finally entered the world in the form of Jesus of Nazareth, John describes Him as “the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14b, NASB95).
2. Three verses later, John 1:17, the apostle added, “the Law was given

through Moses, grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

3. Many years later, the apostle Paul, in his letter to the believers in Rome, told them that though they “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” they were “being justified as a gift by [God’s] grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24).
4. Because of this precious gift, Paul began many of his letters with these words: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2).

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III. God’s Desire Is That We Manifest That Grace Through Our Lives

A. HIS GRACE IS TO BE A GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR OUR CONDUCT AS WE LIVE IN THE WORLD

1. In his introduction to the book of Acts, Luke implied that what “Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1), the Holy Spirit continued to do through the church (Acts 1:2ff).
2. In Acts 4:33, informs us that “abundant grace was upon them all” (the apostles).
3. We see that grace displayed in the generosity of the saints toward the financial needs of those around them.
4. One example, Barnabas, sold a tract of land and gave the money to the apostles (Acts 4:36-37).
5. We have been privileged to see God’s grace displayed here in our own community over the last sixteen months in the way people have used the financial and material resources God has given to them.

6. In an effort to encourage the saints in Corinth to give to the needy in Jerusalem, Paul reminded them of the generosity of the Macedonians, who willingly gave out of their poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1ff.).
 - a. Three times in verses 1-7, Paul referred to their giving, first, as “the grace of God” (v. 1) and then as “this gracious work” (vv. 6, 7).

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- b. Paul informed them that their giving would demonstrate the grace of God to the needy and ultimately result in praise to God (2 Corinthians 9:13-14).

“Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.” (2 Corinthians 9:13–14, NASB95)

Slide 11**B. IT IS TO BE HEARD IN THE WORDS WE SPEAK**

1. Our words have tremendous power to heal or to hurt, to encourage or to exasperate (cf. Ephesians 4:29).

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” (Ephesians 4:29, NASB95)

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2. Paul spoke to the Christians at Colosse about the need for grace in our speech (cf. Colossians 4:5-6)

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” (Colossians 4:5–6, NASB95)

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C. GOD'S GRACE IS SEEN IN THE FORGIVENESS WE DEMONSTRATE TOWARD THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US

1. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of the standard by which many of His listeners lived their lives (Matthew 5:43).

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” (Matthew 5:43, NASB95)

2. The world says we are to love our friends and hate our enemies, but Jesus said such a standard is too low (Matthew 5:44).

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44-45a, NASB95)

3. If we are to be like our heavenly Father, Jesus said, we must demonstrate grace to those who sin against us.
4. He pointed to God's provision of sunshine and rain as a demonstration of such grace (Matthew 5:45b).

“for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45b, NASB95).

- a. God gives to the good and evil alike.
 - b. If we are to be like God, we must be kind to our enemies as well as our friends.
5. If we are to show grace to others, the only opportunity we have to do so is when they sin against us.

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6. In Romans 12, Paul identifies such grace. It begins where many of us may want to stop.

“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. “But if your

enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:17–21, NASB95)

7. Grace is never overcome by sin.
8. In Romans 5:20, Paul wrote, “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”
9. When others sin against us, grace should abound in us.

Conclusion

1. In 1758, at 22 years of age, Robert Robinson composed a hymn which most all of us have sung at one time or another — **Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.**

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2. Its lyrics are believed to be autobiographical because in his earlier years he had lived a less than stellar lifestyle:

**O to grace how great a debtor
 daily I'm constrained to be!
 Let that grace now, like a fetter,
 bind my wandering heart to thee.
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
 prone to leave the God I love;
 here's my heart; O take and seal it;
 seal it for thy courts above.**

3. Does God's grace in your life as a Christian encourage you to do good to others?
4. Are you a person who would you like to be a recipient of God's greatest gift of grace — the salvation which He makes possible through His Son, Jesus.
5. If so, will you come to Him tonight?