

Sermons on Grace

Grace 3

“Preserving Grace”

Introduction

Born in 1725 he first went to sea with his father on his eleventh birthday. He was later press-ganged into a man-of-war and eventually became a man-servant of a slave trader off the coast of Africa. It was the early part of the 18th century and the slave trade was considered to be an acceptable way of life. He later wrote that when engaged in the slave trade he never once considered it to be degrading business and had no scruples. He stated, *“it was indeed counted a genteel employment, usually very profitable...I considered myself as a sort of jailor...”*. He continued in this business, in which he eagerly took part, for ten years believing it to be a respectable way of life. Becoming committed to the slave trade he was employed navigating ships between Africa and London carrying their awful human cargo of slaves

However, he suffered many privations including being lost in an African jungle and shipwrecked, and on several occasions missed death by a whisker. When describing his own character he considered himself to be a vile, wretched and evil person.

However, on 10 March 1748 he was converted having read parts of the bible and *“The Imitation of Christ”* by Thomas A Kempis, and later came under the influence of George Whitfield. He later studied for the ministry and became the vicar of the Church of England in Olney Northamptonshire.

His name was John Newton. In addition to preaching and pastoral work, Newton was a hymn writer and his most famous hymn, which depicts his rise from sin to sainthood, is portrayed in these words,

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

*‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved:
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
‘Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

Newton’s epitaph which was inscribed at his own request read, *“John Newton. Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the gospel he had long laboured to destroy”*

Newton shows that salvation is by grace but that this grace does not stop there. The final line of this famous hymn reads, *“And grace will lead me home”*.

Having now dealt with Common Grace and Saving Grace, we now come to Preserving Grace. God's great Grace does not stop at salvation. It continues on throughout the whole of the Christian life. It is through grace that we are able to live the Christian life; deal with the enemy; resist temptation and continue in the faith. It will be because of grace that we will finally arrive in glory

Let us remind ourselves of the definition of *grace*. It is the favour of God, which is given to us totally undeserved. God favours us in so many ways.

1. Salvation - An Introduction to more Grace: Romans 5

1:1 Romans 5:1-2 reads, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand"*.

1:2 This is Paul's way of showing the start of the benefits that come to us as a result of justification through faith. Notice his wording, *"...we have gained access by faith into this grace..."*. The term "access" is in the Greek προσαγωγήν (prosagogen) meaning, *"to lead or conduct into the presence of, procure an access, to bring near"*. Some years ago when *plastic money* first came into fashion I recall a credit card being advertised under the title of the *"access card"*. It was called *"Your Flexible Friend"*. The point that Paul is making here is that whilst salvation leading to justification is through grace (see Romans 3:24) it is, in fact, an access, or an introduction to a world of grace made available to the Christian. As Christians we do not manage the Christian life alone, God has made a wealth of grace, an abundance of grace available to us.

1:3 This is the beginning of our consideration. But I want you to realise that a door has been opened up to you which leads into more grace, we are given access to grace, we have been brought near to more and more divine grace. Our trouble is that we do not utilise this grace, we do not apply for this grace, and we do not enter into this grace.

1:4 I want to expound the nature of this grace even more from the contents of Romans 5:12-21. This is a very important passage for it highlights for us the full glory of the nature of the grace that God has available to us. In this chapter there are two individuals – Adam (from Genesis 1-3), and Christ. They are sometimes given names, at other times they are referred to by the phrase, *"one man"*.

1:5 First, Paul explains that it was through the actions of this *"one man"* Adam that led to the Fall and the introduction of sin and, ultimately death, into the world vs 12-14, *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned"*.

1:6 Next, it is his purpose to show that all the blessings and privileges that Adam lost are not to be compared with the glory of the Grace that is ours in the second *man*, Jesus. This he explains in verses 15-19. *"But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's **grace** and the gift that came by the **grace** of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again,*

the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

- 1:7 Then comes his final summing up in verses 20-21, *"The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord".* What is he saying here? Grace is so much greater than the loss suffered by Adam, indeed, where sin "increased", grace "increased all the more".
- 1:8 This is summed up still further in Romans 6:14 *"...you are not under law, but under grace".* This means that instead of being dominated by the Law, we are dominated by Grace. We are not living under the weight and fear of the Law; rather we have the freedom and enjoyment of Grace. The Law is that means by which a man has to work to contribute something of worth to God, he has to labour and earn something. But under Grace it is the other way around. We are not working for God to win His divine approval, in Christ we are receiving from Him. Being under Grace means that we are on the receiving end and God is giving to us. He is loading us with His Divine favours.
- 1:9 The word "*under*" is interesting. The significance to me is that it means we live, move and have our being under Grace. We are under the umbrella of His Grace, we are surrounded by His Grace. Grace leads, guides and controls us. If a man is under "*Law*" he is controlled and ordered by that law. The Law governs and masters his whole life. As citizens we are under the law of the country. Everyday we experience that law, it governs our entire existence in everything we do from driving, to earning, working, marriage, child care etc. Similarly, being "*under*" grace means that we are controlled, mastered and governed by this grace in everything we do. We cannot move without this grace.
- 1:10 This is the grace into which we have access through our justification. But what is this grace like in practice?

2. The Practical side of Grace

- 2:1 First, a brief survey of the activity of Grace seen in the early Church. In the midst of narrative details about the existence and growth of the Church the element of Grace receives significant emphasis. When reading Acts you cannot but come to realise that the Church developed only because of the Grace of God that was upon it.

- 2:2 Listen to these passages, Acts 4:33 *“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all”*; Acts 11:23, *“When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts”*; Acts 13:43 *“When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God”*; Acts 14:26 *“From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed”*; Acts 15:40, *“Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord”*; Acts 20:32 *“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”*.
- 2:3 This was the language of those early Christians, this is how they thought and spoke. Grace was to them such a significant element of their Christian lives. They realised that they were *“under grace”* in very way.
- 2:4 But let us sum this up in a statement that we know very well. It comes from Hebrews 4:16, *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”*. Prayer is such an important part of the grace of God. It is here that prayer itself is described as coming to the *“throne of grace”*. Here is Sovereign Grace- it is a *“throne”*. We may come with *“confidence”* and freedom to pray, but it is still to a *“throne”* that we come. God’s dispensing of answers to prayer is within His own sovereign will. But nevertheless, it is to a throne of *“grace”* that we come. Prayer is one of the advantages of grace. We do not come through an earthly priest, for we have *“great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God”*. We come through the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. We do not fear to come for it is to *“grace”* we come.
- 2:5 One of the objects of our coming to God in prayer is to *“receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”*. The word *“find”* is an interesting one. Circumstances may place us in a situation where we need divine help. We come searching and wanting to the Throne of grace and, instead of being turned away empty handed or disappointed, *“we find grace to help”*. The text promises that each time we come to Him in prayer we will definitely *“find”* this grace.
- 2:6 This Grace is designed to *“help in our time of need”*. There are two words in the Greek for time, χρονος (chronos) meaning *“clock time, chronology time”*, and the second word is καιρος (kairos) meaning *“season, circumstance, situation”*, it has reference to a period of time and a special season of time not necessarily hours and minutes. The Greek term used in Hebrews 4:16 is ευκαιρον (eukairos) meaning, *“an opportune time, a convenient time, a circumstance”*. In Hebrews 4:16 it signifies that special time of need, that exceptional, extra-ordinary time when we most need God’s help and assistance.
- 2:7 Christian, are you doing this? Are you utilising the Grace that is there waiting for you? Are you exploiting the opportunities to come to the Throne of Grace and there find Grace to help with the family, marriage, job, relationships etc etc. The grace is there for you, waiting to be used. Why deprive yourselves of this Grace?

2:8 Let me ask this question of us all. Why is it that we live such spiritually independent lives? Lives that are spiritually bankrupt and devoid of the realisation of God and His Grace? Why do we go through the day with very little acknowledgement of Him? Why do we try to do it ourselves? Why do we moan and complain when things go wrong? Is it because we have developed lives that are thoroughly unspiritual and secular? We think of God on Sunday and in our quiet times, but the remainder of the time we think we can go it alone. God is a kind of fire extinguisher; only to be used in emergencies!

2:9 Let us return to the practice of practicing the presence of God. The Bible says that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. You have a moveable temple. Wherever you go the Spirit goes. This is the presence of God. He is with you; you cannot get away from Him. If this is true, let us develop the habit of turning to the Throne of Grace repeatedly throughout the day facing each and every situation. Turn your lives around. Make them into spiritual lives by which you walk by the Spirit. The grace is there – just go and get it.

2:10 Indeed, this grace is being given to us in abundance. Listen to the teaching of James 4:6, *“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you”.* There it is, *“He gives more grace.....He gives grace to the humble”.* This is the teaching of scripture, why do we keep ourselves so poverty-stricken and fail to avail ourselves of this Grace? The emphasis here is that we should seek God for this. If we are seeking Grace it necessitates humility, you cannot come to God asking for Grace in a proud manner that portrays your personal independence from Him. Coming to God in prayer requires that we seek Him with all our hearts knowing that we cannot do without Him; we are nothing without His Grace. The promise then is that *“He gives more grace”.*

3 The varied sides of God’s grace. 1 Peter 4:10

3:1 *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms”.* The Greek word used here for *“various forms”* is ποικίλοις (poikilois) meaning, *“many coloured, various, diverse, manifold”*. It is used in Luke 4:40, *“When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them”*. The phrase, *“various kinds”* represents this Greek word. Or look at James 1:2 *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds”*. Here it means *“various kinds of trials”*.

3:2 The point that the scripture is making in 1 Peter 4:10 is that God’s Grace is most varied. It comes to us in many different forms. There is Grace to help in those special times of need, and here it represents the many different *“gifts of the Spirit”*. He brings this out in his statement, *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received”*. Notice how Peter proceeds to explain this in the following verse 11, *“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen”*.

- 3:3 The *gifts of the Spirit* then are gifts of grace. They are grace gifts. 1 Corinthians 12, 14 lists the gifts but so does Romans 12:6 ff, *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;....”*. Here again is our key word, grace. *“according to the grace given us...”*. Any and every gift that we have is part of the Grace of God. This is why in Romans 12 and also in Corinthians the emphasis is upon humility in the use of the gifts. They are all from the Grace of God. We cannot boast of our gift, neither can we despise those who have the gifts. We are receivers of the Grace of God. The words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:7 need to be repeated uttered in our ears, *“What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”*
- 3:4 Have you also noticed how the passage in Ephesians that details the gifts is written, Ephesians 4:7 *“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it”*. Then, in the following verses Paul reads out some of the various gifts of Grace, *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers”*.
- 3:5 I want to use this opportunity to teach you some New Testament Greek language. It is really quite simple. The term *grace* in the Greek is **χαρις** (this word is pronounced with a hard `ch` and so the phonetic pronunciation is *charis*). That is the first word I want you to learn. There are a number of other Greek words that are formed from **χαρις** as a base
- 3:6 The second word is this, **χαρισμα** (*charisma*). You will see that apart from the last two letters the word **χαρις** is the first part of this word. **χαρισμα** means simply *“grace-gift”* and is used to describe the spiritual gifts and many other gifts of God. **χαρισμα** is used in for *“gift”* in 1 Peter 4:10, Rom 12:6, 1 Cor 12, , 9, 28, 30, 31. The same Greek word is used in Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift (**χαρισμα**) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”*. You see, so much comes from Grace.
- 3:7 But there is another word which finds its root in **χαρις**. It is a word that is often used in the NT translated as *“forgiveness”*. The Greek word is **χαριζομαι** (*charizomai*). Again, you can see that part of the word **χαριζομαι** comes from the root **χαρις**. It is used in 2 Cor 2:7 *“Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him”*; Ephesians 4:32 *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”*; Colossians 3:13 *“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you”*. The NT also has another word for *“to forgive”*.
- 3:8 The point that is being made here is that forgiveness of our sins comes from the grace of God, **χαριζομαι**. He does not forgive us because of our goodness, or due to our efforts to live a godly life. We do not have to prove ourselves worthy of His forgiveness in order to receive it. There is a danger that having been saved by Grace we think that the rest of the Christian life has to be lived according to works. We confuse sanctification with justification. Sanctification is not another *“law”*. Once converted we do not leave the path of Grace and then enter into a world of works

and laws and rules as means of winning divine approval. As I tried to show from Romans 5:1-2, we have been introduced into more Grace, not less Grace.

- 3:9 God gives us everything freely, without strings attached. There is no hidden agenda with God. His forgiveness is free to the Christian just as it is to the person seeking initial salvation. The words of Isaiah 55:1-2 come to mind, *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare”*.
- 3:10 From my experience as a pastor I found that certain folk had difficulty coming to the Lord’s Table. There was a sense of unworthiness and instead of this enabling them to recognise with gratitude the Grace that He provides, they refused to take the bread and wine. Sadly they were caught up in a mindset that made them feel they had to earn the right to come to the Table. Yet, it was this very unworthiness that really gave them the right to come. I used to say that if this attitude prevailed did it mean that when they did come to the communion it was because they felt they had done something to win the approval of God, that they had now made themselves worthy.
- 3:11 No, we are all sinners, yet saved by Grace. There is no sin that God’s Grace cannot forgive, there is no depth to which a backslider can fall that God cannot restore by His Grace. What did Jesus do? He entered this world bringing grace with Him. Listen to the words of John 1:16-17, *“From the fullness of his **grace** we have all received one blessing after another¹. For the law was given through Moses; **grace** and truth came through Jesus Christ”*. My paraphrase of this passage would sound like this, *“From His complete nature we all have received grace and as this is used up it is replaced with another gift of grace. We have this grace because just as Moses introduced the Law, so grace and truth have been introduced to us through Jesus Christ”*.
- 3:12 There it is – *“one grace in place of another grace”*. You can never exhaust the ocean of God’s grace. Our experiences are but the very fringes of his grace. There is statement in Job that I would want to use here, *“And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?”* Job 26:14. We just merely touch the *“outer fringe of His grace”*, what we know is merely a *“whisper”* of His Grace, and none of us can really *“understand”*.

Conclusion

1. We have now looked at Grace in three ways. First, Common Grace; that is God’s kindness and goodness that is spread to all men, the entire world is covered by God’s supporting Grace. Secondly, Saving Grace, that Grace by which a person is brought into the Kingdom. This is the John Newton’s *“Amazing Grace...”*. We owe our salvation not to ourselves but to His divine sovereign Grace. Lastly, Preserving

¹ NIV. RSV *“Grace upon grace”*. Greek *χαριτι ἀντι χαριτος*

Grace. We are kept, guided, guarded and supported all through this Christian life by the Grace of God.

2. What, then should be our response to this subject? I suggest two major practical outcomes:

a] Psalm 116:12, *"How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?"*. This is not to suggest that we pay back to God for His grace. This would be a complete denial of Grace. The Psalmist is asking how he can respond to this grace in a way that will bring glory and honour to God. If ever there was a motivation to worship and to godliness of life, it has to be through an understanding and acceptance of the Grace of God. If, after surveying this material you do not feel within you a growing desire to worship and to change your lifestyle, then I believe you have not really understood it. This is where doctrine, teaching becomes so important and practical. It is the doctrine that moves us. It is the teaching that stimulates us. Recall the words of the disciples after Jesus had taught them about Himself in the OT whilst on the road to Emmaus. What did they say? *"Did not our hearts burn within us"* Luke 24:32. How do we get this *"burning heart"*? I suggest it is through the teaching, especially this teaching on Grace.

b] Secondly, I suggest that this teaching is one of the best motivators to evangelism and ministry. Listen to Paul speaking about his own commitment, *"I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's **grace**"* Acts 20:24. Can see what has happened? Here was a man, a Pharisee, taught by Gamaliel the Law, a man who was brought up under the law, taught that this was the only way to make himself right with God. Suddenly his life is transformed by the Grace of Gospel. He is so impressed by Grace that he is driven to the point of say, *"I consider my life worth nothing to me....."*. I suggest that the doctrine of the Grace of God has driven him to this point of utter commitment, almost to the point of fanaticism. But notice what he wants to do, *"the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace"*.

Do you know the story of Count Nikolaus Ludwig Graf Von Zinzendorfe? In the 18th century there arose in Germany an evangelical pietistic group known as the Moravians. The story goes that he came to Dusseldorf to break his journey and was found wandering around an art gallery. He came across a painting of Christ on the cross and then, with tears streaming down his face he read some words the artist had put at the bottom of the picture, *"All this I have done for you, what have you done for me?"*.

This is not to say that we owe God anything for His Grace, as a kind of *pay back*. No, it is our response of gratitude. Let this image of the Grace of God impel us into action, dispel the idleness, sloth and despondency that creeps up upon us. Keep on thinking of the Grace and let it impel you into action for His glory.

Richard Lee