

Saving Grace
Psalm 145:8-9

Slide 1

In a small cemetery in Olney, England, stands a granite tombstone with this inscription: *“John Newton, pastor. Once an infidel and libertine. A servant of slavers in Africa. Now by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the Faith he had long labored to destroy.”*

You may not remember his name, but all of us know the song he wrote as a testimony of his life: *“Amazing Grace.”*

What we fail to understand is that the grace of God is like a diamond. As you turn it and look at it from different perspectives you see it shine in new ways.

Therefore, over the next 4 weeks we’re going to be looking at the different aspects of what grace means. Listen to how the psalmist describes God.

Psalm 145:8-9, *“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.”*

Think about that. God’s compassionate. He’s a God of grace. That’s why He sent His Son, because in Jesus we’re offered the gift of eternal life.

Yet, everything around us teaches that you get what you earn in life; that there’s no free lunch; that you make your bed and then you lay in it. Life means competition, and that means working hard.

Listen to these common phrases. They show that we value effort and sweat. These phrases illustrate what we call the American work ethic.

We make money the old fashion way, we... earn it.
There's no such thing as a free... lunch.
There is no gain without... pain.
God helps those who... help themselves.

Which brings to light one small problem... it makes it difficult for us to relate to God because we have this work driven mentality.

Yet, we've been saved by the grace of God. But, what does that mean... *"saved by the grace of God?"*

In order to understand this, I want us to look at five facets of Saving Grace.

I have tried to make this a little easier by using GRACE as an acrostic. So, let's begin with the first aspect of Saving Grace, the letter G... God's Gift.

Slide 2 - God's Gift

If you were to ask fifty random people, *"How do you get to heaven?"*, you'd get fifty different answers. Basically, most would say that you earn your way to heaven.

You'd hear things like, *"The way you get to heaven is you try to be good and do your best"* or *"Work real hard at being good and just try to be a good, moral person."*

Or... *"Do more good things in life than you do bad things in life, and if we just do these things, God will see our effort and let us in."*

Paul disagrees with this thinking. Listen to Romans 3:23-24, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*

Verse 24 tells us that salvation is absolutely free. It's a gift and you don't work for a gift.

In fact, the moment you try earning a gift, it ceases to be a gift. Salvation is free. You can't earn it, you can't buy it, and you can't work for it.

This is the fundamental difference between Christianity and every other religion.

Every other faith or belief system on earth including Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam teaches that salvation is something that you do or earn.

Christianity is different. The religions of the world teach DO, but the central message of Christianity is DONE. It's already been done for us.

It was done on the cross by Jesus. He paid for our salvation. He paid for our sins. It's already been done.

A young fellow came forward in a Gospel meeting, earnestly asking, *"What must I do to be saved?"*

The Christian worker responded to the anxious inquirer, *"You're too late!"* "Oh, don't say that," exclaimed the distressed seeker, *"I really want salvation; I'd do anything or go anywhere to obtain it."*

"I'm sorry," replied the other, *"you're too late for that. Your salvation was completed many hundreds of years ago at Calvary. It's a finished work! All you have to do is simply receive Christ."*

There isn't anything you can do to save yourself. You just accept God's gift of grace because you're not getting to heaven based on what you do.

You get to heaven based on what Jesus has already done. That's the greatest gift you're ever going to be offered.

If you really understand grace, you'll accept it because it's a priceless gift... God's gift to us. Which leads to the next letter in our acrostic...
R: Received by Faith.

Slide 3 - Received by Faith

Grace is received by faith. If I say, *"I have a valuable gift for you. Come and get it"* does that make it yours?

Or, what if you found a gift with your name on it under the tree at Christmas but then ignored it, or you threw it in the garbage along with the rest of the trash. Did you receive that gift? No!

Gifts are not yours until you accept them. The only way we can accept Jesus' gift of salvation is through faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."*

No one can boast they got to heaven on their own merit. If you could get into heaven on your own merit, you'd be bragging about how you did this or that to earn your way.

Or imagine you're getting on a 12-hour flight across the ocean and the flight's packed. You booked late so you get a middle seat at the back next to a stinking toilet.

Suddenly, the stewardess comes and says that you've been selected to get bumped up to first class. She walks you to the front and gives you a gift bag and some slippers.

I don't imagine you're going to complain. You're just going to sit there and be happy.

You're getting what you didn't pay for! That's like salvation, it's a gift. You don't earn it, it's free. You can only accept it and be grateful for it.

Salvation isn't based on performance. It's based on God's promise. It's not based on goodness. It's based on God's grace.

You get to heaven, not based on merit, but God's mercy. That's why He gets all the credit, all the glory. There's nothing we can do.

One of my favorites stories in the Old Testament is from 2 Samuel 9, about a disabled boy named Mephibosheth. He was the son of Jonathan, the grandson of King Saul.

Remember the trouble David had with Saul. Saul was the king but he was jealous of David so he tried to kill him which caused David to run for his life.

Then, later on, both Saul and his son, David's best friend, Jonathan were killed in battle. David then becomes king.

When that happened, Saul's family feared that David would seek revenge on them for all the hardships he had gone through, so they ran away.

As a nurse was escaping with one of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, she dropped him. His legs were broken, crippling him for life.

So, this young, disabled boy lived in constant fear; frightened because he believed David wanted to kill him.

But years later, while David was thinking about his friendship with Jonathan and since he had been blessed so much, he wanted to share that blessing with others.

He asked his servant if there was still anyone alive from Saul's household to whom he could show kindness. The servant tells him about Mephibosheth who was crippled and in hiding.

David had him brought to the palace and offered him a place at his own table – to become part of his family as a son.

Mephibosheth, still afraid for his life, replies *“What do you want with a dead dog like me?”*

David was offering grace, but Mephibosheth didn't understand it, so he had a hard time receiving it.

Like Mephibosheth, we've all run from God, and in doing so became broken. We deserved to be forever banished from God's presence, but God's invitation is to come and join His family.

It's an invitation of relationship. It's grace. To receive it we must accept it through faith. G: God's gift, R: received by faith.

Which leads to the next letter in our acrostic... A: Available to Everyone.

Slide 4 –

God's grace is available to everyone. God doesn't play favorites.

Regardless of your background, regardless of your status, regardless of your sin. It doesn't matter whether you're a religious person or a non-religious person.

Romans 4:16, *"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring -- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all."*

Who were these people who live under the law? The Jews. The Jewish people were given the law of Moses.

They were given the ways of God to do the right thing before the rest of us were given them.

Have you ever thought about why the Jews were called God's chosen people? Does God love them more than He loves the rest of us? No. They were chosen for a purpose.

They were chosen to tell the world that there is only one true God. That's what they were chosen for. They were to be like missionaries to the rest of us.

Romans 10:11-13, *"As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

If you like to underline things in your bible underline those 2 words; ANYONE and EVERYONE. There are no quotas in heaven.

It doesn't say only good people will be saved if they call on the name of the Lord, or religious people, or smart people.

No! It says anyone. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord, who has faith in the grace of God will be saved.

The sad thing is, that even though many people know that God offers His unconditional gift to us, they still try to work their way into heaven.

They think that something in their lives is making them good enough so they don't need to receive God's gift of grace through Christ.

You may have done some great things in life, but if you think they're going to get you into heaven, forget it. Heaven is perfect and you're not.

The only way you're going to get in is by receiving God's gift by faith. So, G: Grace is a gift, R: received by faith and A: available to everyone.

Which leads to the next letter in our acrostic... C: Christ purchased.

Slide 5 - Christ Purchased

John 1:17, *"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*

Why through Jesus? Why is Jesus the only way to heaven? Why not Buddha? Why not somebody else? Why Jesus?

I'll tell you why. Because He paid the price of admission. He's already paid for our salvation. Nobody else has done that. He paid for our sins on the cross.

Grace is free, no doubt about that, but it's not cheap. It cost Jesus His life.

The law tells me when I do wrong, but Grace says, *"Here's how to get back on track. You're forgiven. Let's get going in the right direction."*

Romans 8:1, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

In the New Testament the favorite description for someone who has received the grace of God is the term *“in Christ.”*

It’s used over 120 times referring to someone who has found salvation through the grace of God. Someone who has received the gift of God in Christ.

Imagine a world without cars or planes or other means of travel. Now imagine that getting to heaven was like getting to Japan.

There’s no way that you walk that far. There’s no way you can swim that ocean. In your own strength it’s impossible.

There’s no way we can earn our way to heaven. We’re just not good enough or strong enough. To dwell with a perfect God in heaven requires perfection, and none of us measure up to that standard.

You might as well be told to jump so high that you can touch the moon. In our own strength it’s impossible.

But then along comes a rocket. In a rocket it’s possible. It does what we can’t. So, it is when we’re in Christ. Jesus offers to do for us what we can’t do for ourselves.

Galatians 2:21, *“I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”*

If you could be saved and could get to heaven on your own merits, the cross was a waste. If you could get to heaven without any help from God, Jesus didn’t need to come and die on the cross for you.

But there was no other way. You're either going to get into heaven in Christ, or you're not going.

Grace is all that God does for us because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Another acrostic of GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. It comes through Christ and only through Christ.

I heard the story of a pastor who died and was standing outside the pearly gates. Posted on the gate was a sign that read *“Entrance Requirements – 1000 points.”*

He went over and was met by an angel. The angel asked, *“Why should I let you in?”*

He explained that he had been a pastor and missionary for 40 years, that he had preached thousands of sermons during that time and lead many people to Jesus.

After listening for a long while the angel said, *“Wonderful, you get one point.”* The pastor was shocked, *“All that for only one point!”*

He went on and described in detail all the ways he had served, how he had helped the poor and counseled the weary. After all that the angel said, *“Wonderful, now you have 2 points!”*

The poor man's face fell with futility, and his shoulders drooped as he seemed resigned to his fate. *“I may as well give up,”* he said. *“How can anyone be good enough to get into Heaven. In fact, it seems impossible without the grace of God.”*

The angel smiled and said, *“Your right, and you’re standing at the wrong gate. This is the works gate, no one has ever entered here. Right over there is the grace gate where Jesus is waiting to receive all who have put their trust in Him.”*

G: Grace is a gift, R: received by faith, A: available to everyone, and C: Christ purchased.

Which leads to the last letter in our acrostic... E: Extended to Eternity.

Slide 6 - Extended to Eternity

Romans 6:23, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

The results of God's grace are going to go on and on forever. Eternal life is one of the benefits of grace. You could say that grace is the gift that keeps on giving.

God saves the best for last and the best is yet to come. With Jesus it just keeps getting better and better.

Have you ever thought of what is heaven really going to be like? The Bible tells us that heaven is going to be like four things:

- It's a place of reunion where we are reunited with other loved ones who have accepted the grace of God.
- It's a place of reward where we are rewarded for the character that we developed and the way we served other people here on earth.
- It's a place of release where we're freed from all pain, all suffering, all sadness, all sorrow, all grief, all depression and loneliness.
- It's a place of reassignment where we are given new work that we like to do based on how God has gifted us. We'll be given new assignments that we love to do.

It's going to be a wonderful place and it's the gift of God.

Slide 7

Conclusion

Maybe you've heard these truths before, or maybe you are hearing it for the first time. God offers you a relationship with Him as well as eternal life, but you have to accept it.

Maybe you opened a lot of gifts this past week, but I can guarantee you that this is the greatest gift you'll ever be offered.

Peter Drucker was known as the father of American management. He wrote dozens of books on business management and had regular articles the Wall Street Journal.

He was a brilliant man and was known to have a deep Christian faith. One day he was asked, *"How did you become a Christian?"*

He said, *"When somebody first explained grace to me, I realized I was never going to get a better deal."*

You're never going to get a better deal than what we've talked about today. Open your life to the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

It's your only hope and it's free. God is inviting you into His family. He's calling you home.