

Beauty of an Amazing Grace

The theme of the message today is amazing grace. So, I thought we could sing this hymn and meditate on those words. It is Hymn 48. You probably know all the verses.

1. 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.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed!
3. The Lord hath promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.
4. Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.
5. When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first begun.
6. Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, Praise God. Praise God, Praise God, Praise God. Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, Praise God. Praise God, Praise God, Praise God.

Lord, we do want to start this morning by praising our Lord. Praise God. As we look into Your amazing grace today, Lord, we want to see the beauty of our Lord Jesus, the wonder of amazing grace. I pray that Your spirit will touch us with this wonder of grace today. Lord, bless the word. I pray that You would speak to each one of us. In Your name I pray, amen.

Introduction

I woke up about 3 o'clock this morning, turned the computer on, and thought, "I wonder what the worship is going to be about?" I said, "Lord, it would surely be good if it was something to do with grace." And I was so thrilled. You know, the story of the prodigal son is just full of grace, isn't it? Amazing grace. And I was so thankful.

Today the topic is going to be amazing grace. I will tell you a little bit about myself, which you probably do not want to know, but I will tell you anyway. I like flowers. When I got married, Mr. Wilson, Sarah's father, used to always go out and get some flowers or some beautiful plant from the yard, and bring it in. It was always on the table. Now, we never did that when I was growing up. Five boys. I mean, you know, what is a flower? My mom loved flowers, but we never put flowers on the table.

I like to go out, I like to raise some flowers. Whatever weed that looks beautiful, I go out and pick it; and I will bring it in, and we will put it on the table. I do not know if you do that or not. I just like to look at the beauty of the flower. I do not want to know how it grew. I do not want to know about the biology of it, or how it pollinates, I just want to see the beauty of it.

The Beauty of Amazing Grace

So today my heart is that in some way we would see the beauty of amazing grace. That is different than the theology of it, or the doctrine of it, because grace is such a big theme in Scripture. Doctrinally speaking, and theologically speaking, it is foundational to your understanding of the Scriptures. But there are some passages in Ephesians that I want us to look at and consider today, that really show the beauty of grace, the amazingness of grace.

It is almost like we could sing “Amazing Grace,” and consider the worship time this morning, and just stop. Because so much of what I was going to share has already been shared in the prayers of the saints. Praise the Lord. What is left for me now is just easy things, but wonderful things, about amazing grace. I hope it will be an encouragement to you.

Grace is mentioned about 155 times in the New Testament. It is a major theme in the New Testament. Even in our hymns, “amazing grace” or “grace,” is of paramount importance all the way through the hymns. I really appreciated the worship at the conference, how the brother stood up and shared a little bit about the hymns; how rich, how amazing the hymns are, and how full they are of amazing grace.

The Greek Word for Grace

Before the worship time, I went through and read about five or six hymns on grace. The theology of it is absolutely amazing. We could almost open our hymn books and read grace, and then pray, and sing a few songs, and end.

Who knows what the Greek word for grace is? It is “charis.” What is the meaning of grace? Actually, the Greek word simply means “unmerited favor.” Unmerited favor, a generous benefit given, a favor bestowed to someone who never earned it. Raised Baptist, that is what we were taught. Truly, the definition of grace is really found in Christ Jesus. He is grace.

But the Greek word means unmerited favor. God's grace to us is unmerited. We were reminded in worship this morning how true that was for the prodigal son, unmerited favor shown upon him. So let us turn to reading Ephesians. I have been meditating in Ephesians for half a year now, and I like to just read and see what pops out at me as I am reading. I want you to notice, as we read, the phrases that have to do with grace.

Ephesians is so full of doctrine and theology that it is hard to focus just on grace. But focus on the way grace is described. Okay? Things around grace. We are going to read Ephesians 1:1-8 and then over to 2:4-7 and 3:8.

Ephesians 1:1-8 says, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be

holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us.”

Ephesians 2:4-7 says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 3:8 says, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.” At the end of Ephesians, the last verse 6:24, “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible.”

The Continuity of Grace

Ephesians 1:2, the first mention of grace, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” I will put that with the end of the book, Ephesians 6:24 where he says, “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.” Grace with you. First, “grace to you;” and then, “grace with you.”

Grace is a fundamental part of the Epistles. Paul loved grace. He opened and closed each one of his books with either “grace to you” or “grace with you.” He ended with “grace with you.” The originator of that “grace to you” and “grace with you” is God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Over and over and over; to church after church after church; he says, “grace to you” and “grace with you.” No matter what circumstance the church was in, the salutation, the greeting, was grace is conferred to you in a continuous way. God's grace is always coming towards you. Then he would end the book with “grace with you,” that God's grace is always abiding with you.

Now that was such a blessing to me. It seems that God, the originator of grace to us, will cause that grace to continually be with us. In all situations of life, in all situations of church life, His grace will always be with us. Later you will get the sense, but I just want to tell you now: it is God's great delight and desire that the grace of God the Father and God the Son would always be towards you; and would always remain with you, never leaving you.

We are never meant to be without the grace of God. It is continual, never-ending grace. This morning, out of pure nervousness, I went and walked down by the river to release some energy. Where I walk, there is a lot of shade, but then a shaft of light will come through the trees. I walked through a shaft of light and just stood there. To me, this is a great picture of grace coming down, streaming down, while I was standing in the rays. What a wonderful picture of grace constantly streaming down from God the Father and God the Son, streaming down to you. You are walking in that grace.

We are not meant, dearly beloved ones, to take one step in this life apart from grace. Isn't that wonderful? We are not meant to walk one step without this amazing grace of God shining down upon us. Now my handwriting is terrible, but I went to Paul's epistles and wrote down the beginnings of each book, what it said about this matter. So, here I have all of Paul's epistles: "grace to you," and at the end, "grace with you." Some interesting things popped out to me.

Four times at the end of the book, Paul says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." For some reason I have never noticed a benediction. I am usually on to the next book before I read the end of the book. But, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." That grace that streams down from above comes to your spirit and then out into your walk, into your life.

Peter has an amplification of this. He said in I Peter, "May grace and peace be yours," which is still grace to you. But he adds, "In fullest measure." II Peter says, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you." Doesn't that make sense with Peter? Because he was speaking to those scattered abroad in great trial and tribulation; and he was saying, "God's grace is to you." But in your trial, in your difficulty, as the ones scattered throughout, wherever you are scattered; he wanted that grace to be with you in fullest measure, that it would be multiplied to you.

At the end of an epistle, when Paul would talk about "grace with you;" Peter would say, "The God of all grace... will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." (I Peter 5:10.) He said, "Grow in grace." (II Peter 3:18.) I encourage you to study this, write these down, and meditate on them before the Lord. It is a wonderful thing to do.

Who knows what the last sentence of the Bible is, without looking? I would not have known either. I would not have remembered. What does it have to do with grace? "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen." (Revelation 22:21) That is the last sentence of the Bible. Through all of Revelation, all the things that he talks about, he ends up with grace. It seems like grace is the beginning and the end. It is the beginning and end of our life. It stays with us all the way through.

Predestined Us to Adoption as Sons

The Eternity Aspect of Grace

Ephesians 1:4, "Just as He chose us in Him," so I want you to pay attention to "He chose us in Him." In verse five, "He predestined us to adoption." In verse six, He did this "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Before the foundation of the world, He chose us. Then He predestined us to adoption. All of this was done by grace.

Now, brothers and sisters, I do not want to get into the theology of predestination and election and all of that; but here it plainly says to me that grace reached back, before the foundation of the world, and chose you and me. Everyone in this room today has been chosen from before the foundation of the world. This is large and big, isn't it? Too much

for us. But there is a verse in II Timothy 1:9. You can turn there if you want. I will read it to you.

“Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.” There is an eternity aspect to grace, that God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. To me, this is a wonderful thing. It gives stability to your Christian walk, to your Christian life, to know that our Father chose us in His Son from before the foundation of the world.

Adoption as Sons

Then we come to adoption as sons. This is by grace. Think about the wonderful privileges we have as adopted ones who have been adopted by grace. Today we experience one of those privileges of sonship, of being His child, when we get to worship together as family. We get to worship our Father together. We have been brought into a family, we have been adopted, and we get to worship together.

In our prayer gathering on Wednesday nights, we have access to the throne of grace because we are His children. His name is upon us. What grace is that? We receive the spirit of adoption. We can cry, “Abba, Father,” which came up in a song today.

We, as His children, can cry out, “Abba, Father.” We are protected, provided for, disciplined. We are never cast off; we are sealed for redemption. We inherit promises as heirs, we have fellowship with God. It is amazing that we are called “children of God.” To be brought into His family is an amazing grace. We lose a lot of the sense of wonderment at that. Paul did not. In the last part of Ephesians 2, he was saying all these things that you have as an adopted son. This is a wonderful thing, you are brought into God's household, and he lists all those wonderful things about being brought in. So, praise the Lord, there is amazing grace there.

I have written down, “It is a love that embraces us. What manner of love is this? What manner of grace is this? that we should be called sons of God?” This morning, how the Lord, how God the Father, embraces us to become His sons. It is like He ran for us and embraced us as His sons. So that is amazing grace.

The Unfathomable Riches of Christ

Next, we will read Ephesians 1:7-8. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us.” Before we go there, I want to bring in Ephesians 3:8, that phrase, “the unfathomable riches of Christ.”

The Riches of Christ

The riches of Christ: riches mean abundance, fullness, plentiful, of great value. The riches that Christ has are plentiful, abundant. There are probably no words to describe how wealthy it is. When we think of wealth and riches, we compare it to something. I do

not know what you think of, but I think of riches as somebody who has a mountain of gold somewhere; and there is a storehouse of treasure that they have, and they have vast wealth. I want to tell you that the riches of Christ are vast. It is beyond our understanding because it says the “unfathomable riches;” riches so great, not that it cannot be known, but that “unfathomable” means “unsearchable.”

It is as if you wanted to trace the riches of Christ to the furthest limit, and you cannot get there. When you think you are there, there is much, much more. The depth of it is deeper than you could ever imagine. That is what it means; but it is spiritual wealth that really cannot be understood. There is always more to Christ than we know. Ellicott has some very interesting things to say about this. He says, “Wealth which we can see in part, but can never wholly measure, a wealth we can enjoy but not exhaust. It is unsearchable as a mine, inexhaustible, whose treasure can never be fully explored.” So that is the riches of Christ.

I just looked up some phrases about the riches of Christ, and I will read them. The riches of His kindness mentioned in Romans; the riches of His tolerance, the riches of His patience; the riches of His glory; the riches of wisdom, the riches of knowledge of God; the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Riches in glory; riches of Christ in you; riches of His grace; and riches of His mercy, which someone read in prayer this morning. Christ our Lord is rich, He is rich.

He Lavished on Us

So, take that thought and then go back to verse seven, “According to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us.” This word “lavish” means “to be abundantly furnished with; to be affluent; to furnish one richly so that he has abundance; to confer a thing abundantly; and to exceed a fixed measure over and above what is expected.”

We have the riches of Christ, the riches of His grace; as in my mind, a big heap of heavenly treasure, heavenly wealth. According to that heavenly wealth of Christ, which is riches in Christ, He then lavishes upon you and me. I picture different coins of grace falling down upon the saints. But all those riches that He has in heaven through our Lord Jesus is being lavished down upon us. Grace is being lavished upon us. I find that to be exceedingly wonderful.

Extravagant Grace

It is a grace that is extravagant toward us. When you go out and eat, are you an extravagant tipper? or are you cheap? I am not going to look around, but I like to try to be extravagant. Not too much, but you know what you are supposed to be. But I realize I am really not extravagant. I am not lavish. Now if I gave someone a million dollars for a hamburger, that would be extremely lavish. I might be a little stingy sometimes. But do you know what? Our God is not stingy. His grace is not apportioned out a tiny bit at a time. His grace overflows. His grace is super-abundant to you and me. What a wonderful thing that our God is that way.

You have the great sense here, to me, that our Father delights in pouring out the grace of the Lord Jesus upon us. It is His desire and His great delight to pour out grace upon us. Well, I was going to say He does not have to be that way, but He is that way. He is extravagant. It has nothing to do with us; it has to do with the awesome character of God. The Lord's table is grace being lavished upon us. Every Sunday morning, we see another coin of grace, as it were, and another coin of grace the next Sunday, Sunday after Sunday. Actually, day by day the wealth of His grace, the riches of His grace, are being lavished upon you.

It is continual, and it never stops, and it is always busy. The riches of Christ are not held in reserve to be doled out just a little bit at a time. The Father delights to bless us in His Beloved Son. Isn't that wonderful? That is wonderful to me.

The Surpassing Riches of His Grace Through Eternity

Turn to Ephesians 2:4-7. We come to that last verse, verse seven, "in order that in the ages to come He might show (demonstrate) the surpassing riches of His grace." Now there it is again. "The surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Before you were born, before the world was created, His grace was upon you. You did not know it; you were not born yet.

Then we find out here, that before sin, by the way, His grace is upon you. After sin is done away with, the Father is going to be showing the surpassing riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. How gracious the Lord was in John 14:1-2, when the disciples were troubled, He told them not to fear. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places... I go to prepare a place for you." There we know we are going to be seeing the wonderful riches of God's grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus more and more and more. We will begin to search the unsearchable, to know some of the exceeding greatness of the riches of His grace to come.

So, grace extended to eternity past; it extends to eternity future. Not only is grace continuous in our short lifespan, but it reached all the way back, and it goes eternity forward. Grace, amazing grace.

Conclusion

God's Grace Is Always Sufficient

Let us go to II Corinthians 12. We will start with verse one and read through verse ten. II Corinthians 12:1-10.

"Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such a man I will boast; but

on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me.”

So, Paul went up to the third heaven, where no man is supposed to go; but the Lord brought him up there, and he saw things that were amazing. Then the Scriptures go on to say.

“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!”

So, the apostle Paul, a Spirit-filled man, was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him from exalting in this revelation that he had, which he could not share, but to keep him humble before God. So that he would not exalt himself, God gave him this messenger.

“Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.”

So, his prayer request is, I am reading between the lines, “Lord, I am humble now. I do not need this messenger of the flesh. I have learned my lesson.” I am guessing. But the Lord said.

“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

Do you know God's grace is sufficient for you? This is Paul in this instance. But in our life, God's grace is always sufficient. There is a sufficiency of the grace of God that we continually walk in.

Finding Grace in the Wilderness

I do not know who was sharing recently from Jeremiah 31:2. As it was shared, a line popped out in the verse above it. I was just shocked because I had never seen this phrase.

It says, “They found grace in the wilderness.” Found grace in the wilderness. As I was meditating on the sufficiency of grace and this wonder of grace, I was thinking about those times I have been through in my life. Times that there are still waters, the brook is dried up, the pastures that are supposed to be green are barren. The sky that is supposed to have a cool breeze, I am talking spiritually, is brass. The weather is so hot; you feel torn down, beaten down by heat and exhaustion.

You are in the wilderness, and you do not know why. Especially in our lives, with the passing of our parents, it felt like a wilderness. But grace is found in the wilderness. That is amazing. God's grace that streams down upon us is found in the desert place, in the dry place, in the barren place.

That grace which you experienced in that time, I do not want to say you treasure more than all the others, because all of God's grace is to be treasured. But it means so much

more when you see the grace of God in the wilderness. No matter where our steps go in this life, God's grace is always toward us. That grace He lavishly, super-abundantly gives to us. Isn't grace wonderful? Grace is amazing. We cannot live without it.

Let us pray. *Oh, Lord, I want to thank You. I think of the verse that says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing," with all the spiritual blessings, all the riches of Christ. Father, You have blessed us in Him. We praise You. Lord, I pray that we would know, day by day, Your continuing grace upon us. Lord, may we be encouraged. We heard many wonderful things at the conference, and Lord, everything that You want to do, there is sufficient grace for that to be done in our assembly. Lord, I pray that every time we gather as Your children, we would know Your grace, Your mighty grace upon us. Lord, that we might enter into the wonderful privileges of being Your sons, those who have been saved by grace and brought into adoption as sons. What a wonderful thing. Lord, fill us with Your grace. May we know it day by day. May our hearts sing as we walk along. Lord, even in trouble and trial, may we know the grace of God that passes understanding. In Your name, I pray. Amen.*

<i>Beauty of an Amazing Grace</i>	1
Introduction	1
The Beauty of Amazing Grace	2
The Greek Word for Grace	2
The Continuity of Grace	3
Predestined Us to Adoption as Sons	4
The Eternity Aspect of Grace	4
Adoption as Sons	5
The Unfathomable Riches of Christ	5
The Riches of Christ	5
He Lavished on Us	6
Extravagant Grace	6
The Surpassing Riches of His Grace Through Eternity	7
Conclusion	7
God's Grace Is Always Sufficient	7
Finding Grace in the Wilderness	8

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