

CROSS PURPOSES

DISCOVERING THE
GREAT LOVE OF GOD *for* YOU



D. JAMES KENNEDY, PH.D.
& JERRY NEWCOMBE

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INTRODUCTION



DISCOVER THE ESSENCE

God is love.

1 JOHN 4:8

Once upon a time, there was a young prince who was set to marry a beautiful princess. But something happened—a wicked serpent entered the picture and deceived the princess and made her unacceptable to the prince. Yet the prince still loved her, and he left the glories of his father's palace to win her back. He gave his own life on behalf of the princess, who had now become ugly from following the serpent's way. The prince, however, was raised back to life by his father. Because of his love for her, the prince made the unlovely and unacceptable princess lovely once again. They were married, and they lived happily ever after. The end.

Dr. Warren Gage, professor at Knox Theological Seminary, notes that fairy tales like the above composite sketch are all reflective of the Christian gospel. The Bible begins with a wedding (that of Adam and Eve), and it ends with a wedding (the marriage feast of the Lamb, wherein Christ metaphorically weds His bride, the church—all those who have truly put their faith in Him).

So great is the love of God that when we lost our way because of our sin in following the serpent, He sent His one and only Son, and He Himself paid that which He did not owe to win us back. He paid a debt for us that was so great we could never pay for it ourselves.

This book is dedicated to exploring the magnificent truths of the cross of Jesus Christ. Here are four dozen meditations to help you consider various aspects of the awful price Jesus Christ paid for us when He suffered death for us—even death on a cross.

Each meditation includes a Scripture verse at the beginning and a quotation near the end. The final thought we leave you with in each meditation is the beginning of a prayer; our hope is that this will be the springboard for your own prayer of thanksgiving for what Christ has accomplished on the cross. (This is why we don't end these prayers as we normally would: "In Jesus' name. Amen.")

This book may be used for your personal devotion or for corporate devotion. The goal of each short chapter is to discover afresh the great love God has for you—the essence of which is Christ crucified for your sake and mine.



PART I
HIS GRACE EXTENDED

I



THE RICHES
OF HIS GRACE

*That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches
of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

EPHESIANS 2:7

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound. The more I think about it, the more convinced I am that grace is the greatest thought to ever enter the mind of man. Grace encapsulates in one word the essence of the Christian gospel.

This amazing grace of which we sing is what we are saved by. We are saved, we are redeemed, we are taken to heaven, we enjoy paradise, we avoid the pains of hell—all by *grace*. Therefore, it is a term of exceeding importance, is it not? And yet I've discovered, over many years of talking to many people, that the meaning of grace isn't clear. I've yet to meet one unconverted person who could tell me what it was—could define it or even come close to defining it.

Now, if it is true that we're saved by grace, then it's important to ask ourselves: Can we define it? And if it is true, as I suppose, that no unconverted person can tell me what it is, I think it

would be important to *you* to make sure *you* can define it.

Think for a moment. Grace is _____. What? Your answer to that question may reveal where you really stand with God.

Did you answer it? Do you know what this marvelous term means?

We may be able to define it some way, but one thing is certain: We can never comprehend it, because it plumbs the profoundest depths of human thought. It scales the dizzyest heights of divine revelation. And though we may get ahold of a little corner of it, we can never fully comprehend it with our minds. It is, indeed, beyond full comprehension; it is the greatest thought in all the world.

In the Greek language, the word is *charis*—a lovely term. And what does it mean—this beautiful word?

Many people suppose that grace is essentially justice. Since the Bible says we are saved “by grace” (Ephesians 2:8), and since they believe we’re saved by living a good life and following the Ten Commandments and keeping the Golden Rule and doing the best we can, they suppose grace is another word for fairness. It is a *quid pro quo*—do this and you get that, tit for tat, perfect equity. They think this is what grace is really all about: If I do the best I can and try to live a good life, then I certainly ought to go to heaven, and if I don’t get to heaven, then that just wouldn’t be fair.

The first thing you need to know about the Christian gospel is that it isn’t fair. Be glad it isn’t! Since all of us deserve hell, fairness would mean that hell is where we all would go. So thank God, the gospel is not fair.

Ordinarily when we say something isn’t fair, we mean it’s *less* than fair. Let’s say you work at a job making ten dollars an hour. After a forty-hour week, your paycheck should be \$400.

And if you get \$400, that would be fair; it would be equity; it would be proper.

But suppose your boss gives you only \$295. You would go and tell him, "This isn't fair."

On the other hand, suppose after another forty-hour week you get a paycheck made out for ten million dollars. Again you tell your boss, "This isn't fair"—but this time you mean that it's more than fair; it's wonderfully not fair.

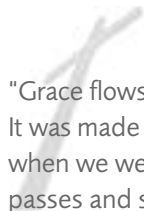
That's exactly what the gospel is—wonderfully more than fair. It is not a *quid pro quo*, tit for tat, this for that kind of a thing.

The full meaning of grace is seen in the cross. Because of my sin, justice demands that I experience the wrath of God. Instead, because of grace, God has taken all my slimy iniquity

and placed it on His own Son. And the just anger of God has fallen upon *Him*, and Jesus in His own spirit and soul and body has borne the penalty for all our iniquity and cried out, "It is done. It is finished. It is paid. It is enough!" He has buried our sins beneath the depths of the sea. He has placed them as far from us as the east is from the west, never to remember them against us.

So rich is the love of God for us. This love is best seen in His Son suffering on the cross in our place.

The whole world without Christ is lost. He comes with infinite mercy and condescension, with the exceeding riches of His grace, willing to forgive us and cleanse us from every spot of sin. He comes to make us whiter than snow, to clothe us in the righteousness of His own Son, to adopt us into His



"Grace flows from His very nature. It was made available to us even when we were dead in our trespasses and sin." (Ken Hemphill)

family, to pardon and justify us, to make us His heir, and to provide for us and take us at last into mansions of paradise. This is only the hem of the garment of the exceeding riches of His grace.

*Prayer: Father, thank You for Your grace
poured out on us by Your Spirit because of
Your Son's death for us on the cross.*

"We who live on this side of
the Cross have no reason to
ever doubt that God loves us."
(Anonymous)



WHAT IS GRACE?

For by grace you have been saved through faith.

EPHESIANS 2:8

We saw in the previous chapter that grace is something unearned and undeserved; we saw what grace is *not*. Now we want to see what grace is.

Many years ago, I read a story that deeply touched me and that says something about the meaning of grace. The story takes us back to the middle of the nineteenth century, out in the hinterlands of czarist Russia.

Imagine that you are looking across a vast panorama of the frozen white steppes of Russia. You focus in closer, and you see a dogsled traveling across those vast expanses of ice. And if you get close enough, you'll observe a Russian nobleman seated on the sled, while holding the reins is an older man—the nobleman's faithful servant of many years.

These two have been traveling for several hundred miles on their way home, and now, at last, their destination is only about twenty miles ahead. They're rejoicing at the prospect of a warm bed and hot food.

As he drives the dogs, the servant has been examining the horizon all around, and now, as he takes a look back, he notices a large dark mass about a mile or so behind them. As he peers closer, he sees a sight that freezes his blood. He realizes a horde of wolves has caught their scent and is now inexorably closing in upon the dogsled.

He gives the reins to the dogs, snaps the whip, and cries the Russian equivalent of “Mush!” The dogs lean into the harness to make as much speed as they can. Still, the pack of wolves draws closer. Now they’re but a half mile away...a quarter mile...a few hundred yards...fifty yards...ten...five.

The wolves are now right behind them! The two men can hear their heavy breathing; the creatures’ red eyes seem like red-hot coals from the very pit of hell. Their yellow fangs are dripping with saliva in anticipation of their next meal.

There’s no place to hide, no place else to go; the men and the dogs cannot outrun these wolves. Their situation is hopeless.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, this old servant throws himself backward off the dogsled—with predictable results. The wolf pack stops and converges on the old servant...while his master is spared.

GRACE = God’s Riches
At Christ’s Expense.

When I first read that story, I said to myself, “That is grace.” On more mature reflection, I realized this story is but the foothills of grace. It does at least bring out one aspect, one facet of this precious diamond of grace—that grace involves a great sacrifice, even the sacrifice of one’s own life for another.

But to understand even further the amazing grace of God, let’s suppose the nobleman in that story had repeatedly abused his servant, physically and emotionally. In this light, the servant’s sacrifice would be even greater.


Or what if we change up the story even more? What if the servant hadn’t really been faithful after all, but had always been lazy, mean-spirited, and disrespectful—and it was then the *nobleman* who threw himself to the wolves to save the other man’s life? This, too, would be a picture of God’s grace toward us.

The Bible declares: “God demonstrates His own love toward

us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

We’re all guilty of killing the Son of God. Grace involves unmerited favor to the wickedest of sinners. It doesn’t matter how bad you’ve been; in the words of a well-known hymn (which paraphrases Scripture), we have received “grace greater than all our sin.” How big your sin is doesn’t matter; grace is greater. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20). Grace is greater than all the sin of all the world. This is the grace that saves us. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

*Prayer: Dear Father, thank You for
the amazing grace made available
through Your Son.*



“Grace comes into the soul, as the morning sun into the world, first a dawning; then a light; and at last the sun in his full and excellent brightness.” (Thomas Adams)



HOW TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right
to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.*

JOHN 1:12

When God created humankind, all was well and right with the world. Humanity's relationships with God were pure and unbroken. But when Satan deceived Adam and Eve, those relationships were broken. And ever since, man has been striving to get right with God again.

How do we get right with God? And what does the cross have to do with it?

Getting right with God is by faith in Jesus Christ and not by works. This faith, if it is true faith, will result in good works. But we're not saved by doing good works.

The apostle Paul declared, "A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ"; we believe in Jesus "that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

We cannot add to what Christ did on the cross. When Jesus died, He declared, "It is finished" (John 19:30). We cannot add in any way to this finished work on the cross.

I remember a story about some people who moved into a new house, and they had a good friend who was a German

woodworker, a master craftsman. He was invited to see the house, and as he looked around it he noticed that there was no coffee table in the living room.

He never said anything, but after he left he started to work in his workshop, and he worked for two months. He built the most magnificent coffee table imaginable, with the most gorgeous curved legs and all kinds of various designs in it. He put sixteen coats of varnish on the surface until it became a veritable mirror.

Finally, he wrapped it in a soft cloth and brought it over to their house, set it down in the living room, threw off the cloth, and said, "Voilà!" There it was.

"Ahhhhh...beautiful!" It was, without a doubt, the most beautiful table they had ever seen in their lives.

Then the craftsman said, "You are my dearest friends, and I present this to you as a gift."

The man of the house then stepped out of the living room and came back in a moment with a piece of course sandpaper in his hand. He said to the craftsman, "Oh, thank you again for your gift. And now I must do my part."

"*Don't touch that!*" the craftsman said. "If you touch it, you'll ruin it. It is already finished. It is complete. It is done!"

Likewise we read that Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished." It is complete. It is done. It is perfect. As the hymn says, "Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe."


So I ask you: Have you received this perfect gift of eternal life? Have you trusted in Christ alone as your only hope of eternal life? Have you trusted in His finished work on the cross alone for the salvation of your soul?

DID YOU KNOW?

When Jesus hung on the cross and had finished paying for our sins, He declared, "It is finished." The Greek word there is *tetelestai*—a financial term meaning "paid in full." Christ paid for our sins in full.

Throw the sandpaper away. There is nothing more that needs to be done for your salvation. And even if there were, there's nothing *you* could do. It is Christ alone who makes us right with God.

Prayer [If you have not put your faith solely in Christ's finished work on the cross, please consider praying along these lines]: *Lord Jesus Christ, come into my heart. Cleanse me. Forgive me. Justify me by Your grace because of Your death upon the cross. I abandon all trust in any goodness of my own and place my trust in You only, and I turn away from my sins and ask You to take control of my life and help me to follow You. Thank You right now for the gift of eternal life. In Your name, amen.*



"Nothing in my hands I bring.
Simply to the cross I cling."
(Augustus M. Toplady)