

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE
Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10
Selected Scriptures
Rick Warren

THE BENEFITS OF GRACE

We are...

Saved by grace Eph. 2:8-9
Forgiven by grace Isa. 43:25
Sustained by grace Phil. 2:13
Healed by grace Ps. 147:3
Liberated by grace Mt. 11:28-30
Given talents by grace Rom. 12:6
Used by grace Eph. 3:7
Kept saved by grace Jude 1:24
Transformed by grace Rom. 12:2
Matured by grace 2 Peter 3:18

HOW DO I RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE?

BY _____

"The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John 1:17

"Now we rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God -- all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins -- making us friends of God." Rom. 5:11 (LB)

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us." 1 John 3:16 (NIV)

"You are familiar with the generosity of Jesus Christ. Rich as He was, He gave it all away for us -- in one stroke, He became poor and we became rich." 2 Cor. 8:9 (Mes)

*"So we beg you: **DO NOT** let the grace that you received from God be for nothing!" 2 Cor. 6:1 (NCV)*

HOW CAN I SHOW GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GRACE?

1. BY _____

"Don't you see that you can't keep on living however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? So let people see God in and through your body!" 1 Cor. 6:20 (Mes)

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Pet. 4:10 (NIV)

2. BY _____

"Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." 2 Cor. 9:7-8 (NIV)

3. BY _____

"The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work that the Lord Jesus gave me -- to tell people the Good News about God's grace." Acts 20:24 (NCV)

Who will I tell?

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE
Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10
Selected Scriptures
Rick Warren

For the last ten weeks we've been looking at the amazing good news of God's grace. Tonight we're going to conclude the ten weeks series by having communion as we move into Easter Week. But before we take communion I want us to just review where we've been in the past ten weeks, review the benefits of grace.

Ten things that we've looked at in the last ten weeks:

The Bible says we're saved by grace, that the only way to heaven is through the doorway of Grace. If you're going to get to heaven that's the only way you're going to get there. You can't earn it, you can't work for it, you can't buy it. It's just by God's grace. The Bible says, *"For by grace you are saved through faith and even that is not of yourself it is the gift of God, not of works so no one could boast."* If you could work your way to heaven, can you imagine how boring heaven would be? Everybody would be bragging about how they got there. The Bible says that we're simply saved by grace.

Not only that, we're forgiven by grace. The Bible tells us in Isaiah 43 *"I forgive your sins for My own sake."* We don't deserve it but God says, "I forgive you."

The Bible says we're sustained by grace. Philippians 2:13 says *"God is always working in you to give you the will and the power to do what He's called you to do."* God will never ask you to do anything that He doesn't give you the ability and the power to do. And that power and ability is called grace.

Then the Bible teaches that we're healed by grace. He heals our broken hearts and binds up our wounds.

The Bible says we're liberated by grace. We talked about how we don't have to live under the rules and regulations of legalism. Jesus said, *"Come to Me if you're tired and weary and I will give you rest."* Not a bunch of chores to do but rest. If your Christian life is not a life of resting in Christ, then you're moving back into that legalistic background.

The Bible says we're given talents by grace. God has given each of us the ability to do something well and we're to use it for Him.

Scripture tells us in Romans 12, *"God uses us by grace."*

We're kept saved by grace. You cannot lose your salvation because it's a gift. If you work for your salvation then obviously the moment you stop working for it you'd lose it. If you had to earn your salvation then the moment you stopped earning it, you'd lose it. But since it's all by grace, it's on the basis of what Jesus did, you'd have to lose it by what He didn't do. But He did it all. The Bible says that He said on the cross, *"It is finished"*; it's paid in full. So He keeps us

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10

saved by His grace. Judge 1:24 says *"He is able to keep you from falling."* You don't have to keep yourselves saved.

And we're transformed by grace. The Bible says we're transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Last week Pastor Tom talked about how we mature by grace. The Scripture says in 2 Peter 3:18 *"Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus."* The more you grow in grace, the more you're going to grow spiritually.

The bottom line really is this, it's all by grace. Everything that God does in you, for you, through you, He does by grace.

Robert Louis Stephenson said, "There's nothing but God's grace. We walk upon it. We breathe it. We live it and we die by it. It makes the nails and axles of the universe."

Everything is by God's grace. We wouldn't even have our own lives if it weren't for God's grace.

That's what we've looked at for ten weeks. But it would be a tragedy if we had gone through this entire series and some of you had still never received it, had never really opened your life up to receiving the grace of God. As we conclude this series, I want to ask again the question, "How do I get it?"

You say, "This sounds like a good deal. I want to be saved, forgiven, sustained, healed, liberated, given talents, used, kept saved, transformed and matured. How do I get it? How do I receive the grace of God?"

The Bible says in three simple words: By trusting Christ. God made it so simple that nobody could say it was too hard to understand. It's not 23 steps and four pathways and eight guide roads and thirty-two rituals to go through. He just says, By trusting Christ. That's it. It's just as simple as putting my faith in Him.

The Bible says this in John 1:17 *"The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* All of grace, all of what we've talked about for ten weeks is wrapped up in a person. He is the source. Grace and truth comes through Jesus Christ. If you don't get it through Christ, you don't get it.

He's saying that you don't get God's grace, that's His power and ability to do the right thing to make it in life, to be sustained, to become what God meant for you to be in the first place -- you don't get grace through religion. You don't get grace through ritual, not even baptism or communion. You don't get grace through rules. You don't get grace through religion, rules, regulations.

But you do get grace through a relationship. *"Now we rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God, all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins making us friends of God."* That's what you call having friends in high places! You become a friend of God.

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10

How? By becoming in relationship with Jesus Christ, His Son. Circle "relationship" because He says that's how we get the grace we need to live. But also underline "in dying for our sins". That's what we're going to look at tonight as we take communion. It says that this grace came to us because of what Jesus has done in dying for our sins.

Grace is free. All you have to do is accept it. It's free to you. But it's not cheap. It cost Jesus His life. Grace is the most expensive commodity there is. Jesus died on the cross to pay for it. And Jesus never wants us to forget that. He never wants us to forget the sacrifice that He made so that we could experience the grace of God, so He gave us a reminder. He created a symbol. Tonight we're going to participate in that symbol as we conclude this series. Those who are going to share and serve the Lord's Supper come forward now. The Bible says that this is a symbol of what Jesus did so we can have His grace.

This week we're going to celebrate Easter. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. But before we do that, we need to remember the death of Jesus on the cross. What happened when Jesus died on the cross? What really took place when He hung there 2000 years ago that makes something so significant that we celebrate it and remember it with a symbol 2000 years later?

When Jesus died on the cross, He did three things.

1. He paid the penalty for sin. That means my penalty for my sin has already been taken care of. It's like getting a "Get out of jail free" card from Monopoly. That's what grace is. One day you're going to stand before God and He's going to say, "Obviously, you blew it. You sinned." Somebody has to pay for those sins -- either you or somebody else. And Jesus did it. He paid the penalty for sin so I can be forgiven for them.

2. He broke the power of sin. What that means is Jesus now gives us the power to change the habits, the hurts, the hang-ups in our lives that mess us up.

3. The presence of sin will be obliterated. One day we're going to go to heaven and there isn't going to be any sin there. He's guaranteed it because of the cross. It's guaranteed.

There's a lot of mystery and misunderstanding about taking communion. Most of us come from many, many different backgrounds. The question is often: "What should be my attitude when I take the Lord's Supper?" How should I feel when I remember the death of Jesus Christ? Should I feel guilty when I take communion remembering all the sins I've committed. Should I feel guilty? No. Communion is not to make you feel guilty. Communion says "Remember Jesus has already paid for all your wrongs." You don't have to feel guilty any more. That's grace.

Should I feel grief? Should I feel, when I take the Lord's Supper, that this is like a funeral and it's something sad as I remember the death of Jesus Christ? Should I feel grief when I take communion? No. Because Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later after they put Him in the tomb they said, "He's back...." He didn't stay dead! So we don't serve a dead God, a dead Savior. We don't have to grieve.

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10

We don't have grief, we don't have guilt. What should the attitude be when we take communion? Gratitude. When I take these two elements that symbolize what Jesus did for me, I should be thinking, "How could God love me like this? How could God love me this much?"

The Bible tells us how much He loves us. 1 John 3:16 *"This is how we know what love is, Jesus Christ laid down His life for us."* He laid down His life for us! That's what we should be grateful for.

Communion, the Lord's Supper, is a symbol. But it's not for everyone. It's only for believers. It's only for those who've accepted that grace gift. But you can become a believer right now. There's nothing to stop you.

When we take these symbols of bread and juice and as we remember what they symbolize, in your mind you'll be saying, "Lord, by taking this, I believe that Jesus died for me and I accept His grace today."

Prayer:

Father, as we take this communion, as we receive these elements, we remember what You've done for us and we're grateful. We thank You for Your love for us. Lord, if there are some here tonight who have never received Your grace may they in this very act tonight receive You. Not that this cracker is anything special, it's just a symbol. But as they do it, the faith that they say, "I believe Jesus died for me" and I receive His grace today." In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

On the night Jesus was betrayed He took bread and broke it and blessed it and He said, "This is My body which is for yo. Do this to remember Me."

Near the city of San Juan Campos in Brazil there is a remarkable facility. It's a prison. Twenty years ago the Brazilian government turned it over to a band of Christians. They said "You can run it and you can run it on Christian principles." So they cleaned up the prison and renamed it Humanita. With the exception of two full time staff members, all the work there is done by inmates. Families outside the prison adopt a inmate to do work with during and after his term. Recently Chuck Colson went and visited this prison. He says, "When I visited Humanita I found the inmates smiling, particularly the murderer who held the keys, opened the gate and let me in. When I walked in, I saw men who were at peace with themselves and with God. I saw clean living areas. I saw people working industriously. The walls were decorated with Biblical sayings from Psalms and Proverbs. My guide escorted me to the notorious prison cell that was once used for torture. Today, he told me that block houses only a single inmate. As we reached the end of a long concrete corridor and he put the key in the lock he paused and said, 'Are you sure you want to go in?' 'Of course,' I replied impatiently. 'I've been in isolation cells all over the world.' Slowly he swung the massive door open and I saw the prisoner in that punishment cell. It was a beautifully carved crucifix by the Humanita inmates. 'The prisoner Jesus hanging on the cross. He's doing time for the rest of us,' my guide said softly."

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10

This is what the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus is all about. Jesus has served your time. He paid your penalty. He was hung up for your hang ups. He died in your place. When we take communion, we remember that Jesus took the punishment that we should have taken. The Bible says this in 2 Corinthians 8 *"You are familiar with the generosity of Jesus Christ. Rich as He was, He gave it all away for us in one stroke, He became poor that we might become rich."* You can spell "grace", G-R-A-C-E as God's Riches At Christ's Expense. That's what grace is -- God's Riches at Christ's Expense. As we take this cup and drink it today and as we remember what Jesus has done for us, I want you to say in your mind, "Jesus Christ, thank You for Your amazing, outrageous, inconceivable grace." Jesus said do this to remember me.

In light of what Jesus Christ has done for us, what should be our response? In light of the fact of all those ten things that grace offers to us are made possible because of what Jesus did on the cross, how should I respond? *"So we beg you [hear the urgency in Paul's voice!] do not let the grace you receive from God be for nothing."* What do I owe Jesus Christ? I owe Him the rest of my life! I owe Him all that I've got. I owe Him the past, the present, the future -- everything.

As we conclude the ten week series, I want to give you three ways you can express gratitude for God's grace.

1. I CAN SHOW MY GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GRACE BY MAKING MY LIFE COUNT.

1 Corinthians 6:20 *"Don't you see that you can't keep on living however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? So let people see God in and through your body."* You can't understand the grace of God and just keep on living the same way you've always lived. You can't understand the grace of God and keep on ignoring His commands, or keep on wasting your time on trivia, or keep on spending your money any way you think you can spend it. You can't do that anymore. You have been bought with a price.

After the failed assassination attempt on President Reagan, I remember him saying, "I have a new sense that I was spared for a purpose and that all my time belonged to God after that."

Because of Calvary, because of the cross, because of what we just celebrated and remembered, you were spared for a purpose. Jesus Christ did not die on the cross for you just to go on living any old way you want to. He made you for a purpose. He created you for a purpose. He redeemed you for a purpose. He died for you for a purpose. And He wants you to fulfill it.

1 Peter tells us this: *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."* The abilities and the talents and the opportunities and the education and the freedom and the relationships and all the things that you have that bless your life were not given just to be squandered. They were given for a purpose. God expects you to use those for a purpose. He has shown you His grace.

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10

I beg you, don't waste your life. Jesus Christ died for it. If He died for it, you'd better not waste it. Make your life count.

2. BY BECOMING A GENEROUS PERSON.

"You are familiar with the generosity of Jesus Christ, rich as He was, He gave it all away in one stroke. He became poor and we became rich." If you want to measure how much you understand grace, if you want to measure how much you're living by grace, if you want to measure how much you are grateful for grace look at your giving. "Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace [circle "all grace"] abound to you so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in ever good work."

Circle the "all"s -- "all grace", "all things", "at all times", "having all that you need", "you will abound in every good work" -- those are the promises related to the person who becomes like Christ. What was Christ like? He was a giver. God so loved the world that He gave." You're never going to become like Jesus until you learn to be like Jesus. The Christian life is summed up in three words -- love, serve, give. Until you learn to be generous with your time, your money, your life, your resources, your opportunities you're not going to be like Christ. Nothing is greater proof that you understand grace than that you are lovingly gracious and generous to other people and to God.

If you're uptight when I or some other pastor starts talking about giving or you get defensive or you get stingy or you get nervous it means you don't understand grace. Look at the verse again. He says if you give cheerfully, liberally, abundantly what's God going to do? He will take care of all your needs, all the time, in every way, however you need them.

Here's the question: Are you going to trust the God who gave His life for you? If you can trust Him enough for salvation, can't you trust Him enough in your finances?

The truth is you really don't own anything. You don't own anything! God loans it to you for 60, 70, 80 years. It's all His in the first place. If my daughter comes to me and I give her five bucks to buy me a present, where's the money really coming from in the first place? But God does that with us. He gives to us liberally, generously, abundantly. Then He says, "Now show a little gratitude. Be generous in giving yourself. Tithe back to Me." Why? Because He needs to money? No. He wants you to become like Him. He doesn't want you to have a stingy heart. He wants you to have a Jesus-heart. A heart that says, "I can't wait to give in every area."

The Bible says in Romans 8:32 *"Since God loved us enough to give us His own son, won't He love us enough to take care of every one of our other needs?"* That's kind of logical. The fact is, I can say I love God, I can sing that I trust God and put Him first, but my wallet, my checkbook, can show a real difference. God wants me to become generous like Him. And He wants me to make my life count. Those are ways to show gratitude.

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10

3. BY SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF GRACE.

Acts 20:24 *"The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the work that the Lord Jesus gave me -- to tell people the Good News about God's grace."* Notice it doesn't say the most important thing in life is to get married, to fund your retirement, to travel a lot and have a lot of fun, to become famous or pay off the house. It says the most important thing in life is to fulfill your mission. If Jesus died on the cross for you and showed His grace to you so that you can fulfill your mission if you don't that's called a massive eternal waste.

Part of that mission -- just a part, not all -- is to tell other people the good news of grace. God put you on this earth for a reason. God put you on this earth for a purpose. He has a mission that only you can fulfill. But part of that mission, once you step across the line, is to tell other people. You know Christ because somebody told you. Who are you going to tell?

If somebody died for you, would you want to know about it? Yes. And that is the motivation behind everything we do here at Saddleback church. Jesus died for every single person in Southern California and the world. This week end the typical resident in Orange County will sit at home watching tv, with a hot cocoa or Budd, newspaper, kicked back and relaxed -- totally unaware that Jesus Christ died for him and the grace that is available, both in the past, the present, and the future. Totally oblivious to that fact. If that person lives and dies without ever knowing that their sins are forgiven, that there's a place, that there's a purpose for living, then for that person, Jesus Christ's death is a waste. The Bible tells us in 2 Peter that the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God wants everybody in His family. Everybody needs Jesus. Because God cares, we must care. One of the ways we show gratitude for our own salvation is to share that good news with other people and to tell them. Because people are dying without the grace of God.

Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you? If you died right now, is anybody going to be in heaven because of you? Who am I going to tell.

This next week is Easter week. We're going to do nine services here at Saddleback. Why? Because everybody needs Jesus. We're going to do enough services so there will be plenty of seats in every service. People this time of year are more open to an invitation to come to church than at any other time of the year. Don't waste it. Last year over 1000 people gave their lives to Christ at Easter. Friends and relatives of yours that you brought. Do not come to Easter to hear the greatest news in the world, without bringing somebody that you care about, that you love, that you're concerned that they go to heaven too and not just you. If you can't think of anyone, start praying that God would open up your heart to see the faces of people around you who are desperate for the good news. They are running from fad to fad to therapy to books to seminars to this New Age thing to that psychic thing, running everywhere. Trying to find fulfillment in an affair, workaholic, some sport, some hobby, and there's this gaping God-hole in their life that says only the grace of God can fill it. And we have the greatest news in the world. The way we show our gratitude for the grace of God is by making our own lives count, by living a life of extravagant generosity, and by telling as many people as we can about the good news.

LIVING IN GOD'S AMAZING GRACE
Good News About Grace - Part 10 of 10

Prayer:

You may need to confess your ingratitude to God today. You may need to say, "Jesus, please forgive me for taking Your grace for granted." You may need to confess a fear. "Father, I've been afraid to make my life count for You" or "Father, I've been afraid to use the abilities You've given me in ministry" or "I've been afraid to tithe and put You first in my finances" or "I've been afraid to identify myself as a follower of You at work. Please forgive me for taking Your grace for granted."

I invite you to follow me in this prayer, "Father, I want to make my life count for You. I want to commit the rest of my life to using the life You gave me in serving You and fulfilling the purpose You made me for. I want to fulfill my mission. I want to become a generous person starting with tithing back to You in gratitude for all You've done. I'm going to trust You with my finances. I want to be used in sharing the good news of Your grace. Help me to find at least one person this Easter to invite to hear Your word." If, as we took communion, you prayed that prayer and said, "God, by taking this tonight I'm saying `Jesus, I believe in You and I want to receive Your grace.'" If you're accepting Christ into your life, please let me know about it by indicating your decision on the communication card. Pray this, "Lord, thank You for loving me enough to die for me. I don't understand it all but as much as I know how I want You to come into my life and save me and lead me from here on out. In Your name I pray. Amen."