

# The Grace of God

By Jeremy Lucas

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"I'm a flower quickly fading, a vapor in the wind, here today and gone tomorrow."

"You don't know just how far away from home I've been."

"Will He still reach to me in spite of where I've been?"

If you haven't asked these questions or considered these things, you've most likely felt something like them during your lifetime. Believing you've gone too far, sinned too much, or perhaps been silent too long, it's our nature to assume that the God of the universe would be much better off saving someone who deserves to be saved. We might even say, "If you give me some time, I'll get my act together and things will be better."

Every one of us has known an individual or two that is a constant problem in our lives. For every kind thing we do for this person, they can never seem to return the favor. After a while, we get tired of being kind and treat them like an outcast who doesn't deserve a thing. This is our human state of mind. Which one of us can say that we would never give up the kindness toward someone who treats us like dirt? Our inclination is to spit back, get ruffled, and at times show our worst side.

How then, could we identify or understand a God who doesn't operate like we do?

Our culture, our goals, and our integrity revolve around very simple words that we often use without thinking. We want to be "good" to one another. We want to be "kind-hearted" to one another. But the word you'll rarely hear used in a goal or in a person's character is "grace." That's because we don't relate to each other under grace. We relate to one another based on morality and value. Unfortunately, for every single person you meet, values aren't equivalent. As in, for one man, honesty is his greatest value while the next man finds sexual purity to be his primary moral code. How can anyone be completely "good" when these differing standards suggest that your "goodness" might never be "good enough" from person to person?

Enter Grace.

Grace is the essence of giving what isn't deserved. Sound like anything you get from day to day? Most of us have both small and large expectations of what the world owes us at work, at home, or with friends. And when those things aren't provided, we get frustrated. Again, why is this? Because we believe the world owes us everything that we get. Trouble is, we don't deserve anything. Grace still gives it.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

Saved from what?

"You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked..." Ephesians 2:1-2a

Our morality is immoral. Our goodness is never good enough. Our values only merit the favor of like-minded people. Considering all this, what happens to us when we continue to live as though we can become "more moral," "better," or "of greater value?" We die trying.

Are you interested in living? Are you interested in living to live longer? Are you interested in living with the confidence that you'll know who you are and where you belong?

So enters the Lord Jesus Christ.

From Jay Leno to Ellen Degeneres to your local place of employment, the name of Jesus has become the source of every punchline, the punchline of incredible hatred, and the hatred of tremendous discomfort. Set all that aside and for many, the name itself is simply a cliché that has no weight, no purpose, and no meaning anymore. Who hasn't heard the name of Jesus 1,000 times in the week either through profanity or the butt of a nearby joke? What then would cause a single person reading this to take seriously a name that has no value in our culture?

Are you interested in living? Are you interested in living to live longer? Are you interested in living with the confidence that you'll know who you are and where you belong?

Again, so enters the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:" I Corinthians 15:3-4

Perhaps you read the above two verses and think to yourself, "Yeah, I've heard this one before. Jesus died for me... I know. Tell me something I don't know." Believe it or not, sometimes the things that change us the most are the things we always knew, but never allowed ourselves to accept. What makes the idea of anyone dying for us so unacceptable is that we think of such things within a sense of "goodness" or "kindness." I assure you right now, Jesus was not beaten and crucified out of a sense of integrity that He might do something nice. Do you know why He died?

Because He knew that you needed Him to. Because He knew that if He didn't die, you would.

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

"You were dead in your trespasses and sins..." Ephesians 2:1

How many graves have you visited that had the dead making decisions about life? The dead don't have the opportunity to choose life. That's why, knowing that you were dead, Jesus Christ came and paid the

penalty for your sins, for your immorality, for your fluctuating values, for your frustrating day-to-day... He paid it with His blood.

What's even more amazing, and sometimes so simple that age-old believers forget, is that He wasn't alone on that cross 2000 years ago. You were there too.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."  
Galatians 2:20

This part was Grace. This part was your salvation. What's amazing and so much more enriching to this life is that Christ was raised from the grave.

If you were there on the cross with Him...

"I have been crucified with Christ;" Galatians 2:20

If you were then buried with Him...

"...having been buried with Him..." Colossians 2:12

Then it would be a pretty tragic ending to both His life and ours if the story stopped there, right? Absolutely. That's why He rose from the grave...

"...and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Ephesians 2:6

Terrifying as it might be to say it, what you've been reading has made a drastic shift from the neutral to the personal. What you've seen is a gift of God's grace that truly, truly, truly makes no sense to our natural way of life. Why do this for me? Why do this for you? Why do this for us?

Because He created you and has no desire to see you die apart from Him.

"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),"  
Ephesians 2:4-5

If you've begun to recognize just how real this is and you're beginning to believe in something that seems impossible, it's very likely that you're asking yourself the question, "Who am I? Who am I that the Lord of all would care to know my name?"

"But now in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."  
Ephesians 2:13

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance." Ephesians 1:13-14a

"That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself," Colossians 2:2

"And you are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power:" Colossians 2:10

"We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will," Ephesians 1:11

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." Philippians 3:20-21

"For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." Colossians 3:3-4

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" Colossians 1:14

"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Ephesians 2:18

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Titus 3:5-7

"Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:1-2

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1

"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." Romans 8:15-16

"To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Ephesians 1:6

Having believed in the grace of God through Jesus Christ, you are adopted as a child of God. You are no longer condemned. You are justified. You have hope. You have His mercy. You are an heir to a glorious inheritance. You are hidden in Christ. You are a citizen of heaven. You are sealed and secure. You are no longer far from your Creator.

You ask, "Who am I?"

This is who you are.

May the Lord richly strengthen your spirit this day. For it's my sincere hope that you will begin to find hope in having believed.

[All Quotes are from Casting Crowns and their well-known song, "Who Am I?"]