

## IS GRACE REALLY AMAZING?

HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4, EXODUS 33:19, 1 PETER 5:10, 1 CORINTHIANS 15:10,  
EXODUS 34:6, JAMES 5:7-8

Grace is often attached to the descriptive word “amazing.” The hymn that put the two together was penned in 1779 by a slave trader who came to faith. The unspeakable wretchedness of his business enterprise closed in on his dark soul. Guilt and shame consumed him – until he found mercy. In a moment of profound inspiration, he wrote. John Newton’s lyrics ring true in the hearts and minds of as many today as they did over two hundred years ago. Believers and unbelievers alike. “Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound...”

It is a fitting title for a recent feature film biography of the humble Brit who managed to lead the Parliament to pass legislation that would end the slave trade in the British Empire. John Wilberforce’s inspiration? John Newton’s hymn. The two were close friends. They shared the experience of an amazing grace that brought them both to redemption in Christ. Their insights and their passion changed a nation, sparked a revival and significantly diminished the evil impact of a heinous industry. So it’s the fitting name of the recent film. Amazing Grace.

Lots of people know Newton’s lyrics. Too few understand the meaning. It’s common to see a lone bagpiper draw a large memorial service to a close as the haunting melody, *Amazing Grace*, pierces the silence with strains that mix both grief and hope. It becomes a catalyst for tears that heal. The grace notes linger long afterwards and replay in the quiet moments of reflection, bringing peace.

So Philip Yancey asked the question in the title of his probing book – “What’s so Amazing about Grace?” The answer fills the pages of his weighty volume.

We come to attributes of God that are rooted in his essential goodness. Grace is getting what we don’t deserve. That’s good. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. That’s good. Patience is giving us time to figure it out. That’s very good.

That brings us to **the heart of the matter**. Grace is goodness to those who ought otherwise to be banished. Mercy is goodness poured out on the undeserving. Patience means that punishment is suspended. All of these are God’s nature.

It would be a mistake to say that the Old Testament portrays a God of justice and the New Testament a God of grace. The tension is not between the two Testaments. All of God’s attributes are eternal. They are his nature. While our finite minds recoil at what appears to be a conflict, there is no contradiction in God’s character. You’ll see God’s grace and mercy in the Garden of Eden

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

AUTHENTIC INTERACTION · COMPELLING CONNECTION · IRRESISTIBLE EXPERIENCE  
LOVING ACCEPTANCE · EVANGELISTIC INFLUENCE

and the Garden of Gethsemane.

When we cry out for mercy, he hears us. It is the gift of his grace. He sustains the universe. With all its evil and conflict and suffering and self-serving ambition at the expense of the innocent, for these many millennia, it has required a God-sized patience.

So Paul declares, “By grace” we are saved. It is the “God of all mercy” who adopted us as his children. It is only because of his divine patience that we can stand up at all.

And when we stand, we thank him for his amazing grace.

**BACKGROUND** – Some of God’s attributes fill us with a sense of wonder and awe. Others trigger a profound well-spring of gratitude and praise. We may trip over the enormity of infinity, but we fall into the lap of grace. According to his eternal plan brought into time and space through Christ Jesus, we are welcomed into God’s presence. It is his mercy and his grace that make it not only possible, but real. His patience gives us time.

*Review 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Exodus 33:19, 1 Peter 5:10, 1 Corinthians 15:10, Exodus 34:6, James 5:7-8*

Think it over...

1. Paul describes God as the “Father of all mercies” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ESV). How so?
2. God is the final arbiter of mercy and grace (Exodus 33:19, compare Romans 9:15). Could it be otherwise?
3. Peter calls him the “God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10). How does this help us in our struggles and trials and suffering?
4. Paul (1 Corinthians 15:10) says that he’s become the man he is by God’s grace. How did God’s grace shape him through his years of ministry?
5. When God met Moses on Mount Sinai delivering the law, he identified all three of this week’s attributes (Exodus 34:6). How do these attributes relate to the commandments written on tablets of stone?

Bring it home...

1. If God is the father of all mercies, how will that help us in our trials and troubles?
2. Is mercy and grace something we earn? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. What is God’s stated purpose in our suffering and trials?
4. How has God’s grace shaped and molded your life?
5. How can we fear God without being afraid?
6. Would you say that grace is “amazing”? Why?

**SHARE. SUPPORT. AFFIRM. PRAY.**