

8 - GRACE THAT IS GREATER THAN ALL OUR SIN

AMAZING GRACE

John Newton was born on July 24, 1725. He was raised by a Christian mother who taught him about God and prayed that God would use him as a minister. When he was 7, she died from tuberculosis.

His father was a captain of a merchant ship which sailed the Mediterranean. When John was eleven, he joined his father on the ship. He made six voyages with him before his father retired. Life on board the ship influenced him in a negative way.

As a result of some challenging circumstances, John became a slave of a slave trader in West Africa. He was rescued by his father's friend. After becoming a captain of a slave trading ship, he found himself trying to steer through a violent storm.

When he felt sure the ship was going to sink, he cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us." When God did rescue them, he realized that God's grace was real. Later he wrote the well-loved hymn, Amazing Grace.

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.

T'was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;
T'was grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

AMAZING LOVE

1. What were we all like when Jesus died for us? Romans 5:6-10

(Verse 6) _____

(Verse 6) _____

(Verse 8) _____

(Verse 10) _____

2. What did Jesus' death accomplish for everyone? Romans 5:9,10

(Verse 9)

(Verse 10)

We were justified and reconciled to God through the death of Jesus even when we were helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies.

3. What will Jesus' life save believers from? Romans 5:9, 10

Paul uses the future tense in these verses: “we shall be saved from wrath . . . by His life.” This means he is referring to what believers will experience, rather than to what Jesus did to reconcile the world to God.

The wrath of God will be revealed against those who suppress and reject the truth. God will give them up, allowing them to suffer the consequences of their choices. (Romans 1:18-20; 24,26,28). On the other hand, those who “receive a love of the truth” and want Jesus to save them from slavery to sin will be saved from the wrath of God (John 8:31-36; Matthew 5:3-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

As our High Priest, Jesus is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” Heb. 7:25. As a Priest, Jesus represents us before God, making us acceptable to Him. He also represents God to us. He leads us into the truth about God, hoping we will be willing to accept Him into our lives. God has no problem accepting us as we are. Are we able to accept Him as He is: our Creator, Savior, Redeemer, Healer, Lord and King?

4. What are we given the freedom to receive? Romans 5:11

God took the initiative to reconcile the world to Himself. He then invites everyone to be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:19,20). Jesus describes Himself as knocking on the door of our lives waiting for us to invite Him in (Revelation 3:20). He will not force His way in. When we give Him permission, He will make His home with us (John 14:23; 15:1-8).

ADAM BROUGHT DEATH, JESUS BROUGHT LIFE

5. Read Romans 5:12-14

A. How did sin enter the world? (12)

B. Why did death spread to all men? (12)

C. What is not imputed, or counted, when there is no law? (13)

D. Were the sins of people from Adam to Moses like Adam's? (14)

In Romans 5:12-18 Paul refers to Adam as a type of Jesus (v. 14) and shows how each of them had an impact upon the whole human race. When Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, sin and death entered the world. As a result, “death spread to all men, because all sinned—” Romans 5:12. Paul stops his sentence. He could have said:

A. Death spread to all men, because all sinned *like Adam*.

B. Death spread to all men, because all sinned *in Adam*.

Paul stopped his sentence to explain that the first option could not be right. While sin was in the world since Adam, “sin is not imputed when there is no law.” In other words, a person cannot be held accountable for doing something wrong if the law was not clearly spelled out. For “where there is no law, there is no transgression” Romans 4:15. At the time of Moses, God clearly spelled out what was right and wrong.

Then Paul points out the obvious. “Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.” Death reigned because they had sinned *in Adam*, not *like Adam*, for their sin was not like his transgression.

Adam knowingly chose to learn about evil. Since Adam represented everyone, we all were condemned as a result of his choice (Rom. 5:18). At first, this seems unfair, for we had no choice in Adam's decision. However, Paul is quick to point out that Adam is a type of Christ.

Therefore, we are encouraged to see Jesus as the “last Adam;” as another representative of the whole human race (1 Corinthians 15:45).

Just as in Adam we all sinned and were condemned, so in Christ, we all obeyed the law and died the death that is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 21; Galatians 2:19,20). Therefore, we all are justified through Jesus’ obedience (Romans 5:18).

On the other hand, if we believe death spread to all men because all sinned *like Adam*, then to be consistent, we would have to say people will only be justified when they have obeyed perfectly like Christ. This of course would be impossible and totally contrary to the gospel.

6. How is God’s grace greater than Adam’s sin? Romans 5:15,16

Adam’s one sin brought condemnation and death. The free gift brought justification and life after billions of sins.

7. What will people experience when they receive God’s grace and gift of righteousness? Romans 5:17

Those who receive Jesus as their Savior will experience the reign of grace in their lives. The Holy Spirit will lead them into truth and set them free from guilt, shame, condemnation, and slavery to sin (John 16:13; Romans 8:2-5; 12:1,2; Galatians 5:16-23). He will fulfill the “righteous requirement of the law” in them (Romans 8:4).

But that is not all. Jesus has elevated the human race by becoming one with us. As a result, Christians will reign with Christ throughout eternity. “For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him” 2 Timothy 2:11,12.

WHAT CHANGED WHEN JESUS DIED AND ROSE

8. Read Romans 5:18, 19

A. What is the impact of Adam's offense or disobedience?

Verse 18 _____

Verse 19 _____

B. What is the impact of Jesus' righteous act and obedience?

Verse 18 _____

Verse 19 _____

C. What tense is used in v. 19 concerning their impact on others?

Adam _____

Jesus _____

Verse 18 - Our Legal Status Changed At The Cross

In verse 18, Paul refers to our legal status. In Adam, we all were condemned. In Jesus, we all were justified. Having been redeemed, we are truly free to choose life with Jesus or death with sin.

Verse 19 - Through Adam's Sin Our Human Nature Became Sinful

Here Paul refers to our human nature. Because of Adam's sin, we all have been born with a sinful nature (See also Romans 3:23; 5:12-18). Because of Jesus we don't have to be a slave to our sinful nature. Jesus sets us free (John 8:34, 36). This freedom comes, not by our nature changing now, but by the Holy Spirit living in those who want Jesus as their Savior (Rom. 8:1-4; 2 Peter 1:4).

Verse 19 – When Jesus Returns, We Will Receive A Sinless Nature

At the second coming of Jesus believers will be changed. Their bodies will be recreated. Their corruptible, sinful natures will be gone. They

will receive a sinless nature like Adam had before he sinned. This is why Paul uses the future tense in Romans 5:19 when he says “by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.”

“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

Paul says “we shall all be changed.” Is he referring to everyone or just believers? Earlier in the chapter Paul clarifies who are raised at the second coming. “In Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming” 1 Corinthians 15:22,23.

In Revelation 20:5 we learn that unbelievers will be raised a thousand years later. So the “all” in 1 Corinthians 15:51 would refer to all who are resurrected at the second coming of Jesus.

In Romans 5:19, Paul uses the word “many” to be consistent in his comparison between Adam and Jesus. Many, [all], were made sinners as a result of Adam’s sin. We all have a sinful nature (Eph. 2:3). Many, [those who believe], will be made righteous. They will receive a sinless nature when they are changed at the second coming of Jesus.

The word “many” can refer to a large group of people. It can also refer to everyone. Based on the broader context, we learn that Paul is using it in both ways in verse 19.

(See Mark 10:45 and 1 Tim. 2:5,6 for an example of the word “many” referring to all. Jesus said He came to give His life as a ransom for many. Paul wrote that Jesus gave His life as a ransom for all. There is no contradiction, for many can mean all.)

GRACE THAT IS GREATER THAN ALL OUR SIN

9. What was the purpose of the law? Romans 5:20

People cannot be held accountable for something they don't know is wrong. If after the law is spelled out, they continue to live contrary to the law, then the seriousness of the "offense" increases. It moves from ignorance to rebellion (or transgression).

Then if we try to keep the law and discover we keep failing, we become discouraged, and the offense becomes bigger in our minds because we feel hopeless. Our very nature is corrupt. This is described in the Bible as iniquity, a word that means bent. Our love is bent inward – selfishness.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure" Jeremiah 17:9, NIV. Even our best works are motivated by selfishness and so are referred to as "filthy rags" Isaiah 64:6.

10. What happens when sin increases? Romans 5:20

The law reveals how desperate our condition really is. However, God not only forgives our ignorance and transgression, He also takes responsibility for our iniquity. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" Isaiah 53:6. (See also Exodus 34:6,7.)

God doesn't clear the guilty by turning a blind eye to their failures. Neither does He make someone else pay for their mistakes. His law and justice are upheld because the human race is redeemed in the same way the human race is lost – through a person who represents everyone. In Adam we sinned and were condemned. In Christ we died and obeyed.

11. What is associated with the reign of sin and of grace? Rom. 5:21

A. Sin _____

B. Grace _____

The kingdom of grace reigns with other-centered love. Sin reigns with self-centered love. Grace brings life and joy and eternal life with God. Sin brings temporary pleasures and then painful consequences. It leads to broken relationships, misery, hopelessness, and death.

God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” 2 Peter 3:9. “‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.’” Ezekiel 33:11.

Sadly, many will continue to embrace sin and the kingdom of darkness. When Jesus returns, they will prefer death over life with God (Revelation 6:16). “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light.” John 3:20.

With sadness, God will honor their choice. The final death is associated with the reign of sin because that is the natural consequence of cherishing sin. It is not the result of God punishing people and getting back at them for rejecting Him.

Those who embrace the kingdom of grace will experience peace with God now, along with healing in their lives. Having learned that Jesus fulfilled the law for the whole human race through His perfect life and death, they are drawn by His unconditional love.

This leads them to repent and surrender their lives to Him (Romans 2:4). The Holy Spirit will then fulfill the law in them (Romans 8:4). When Jesus returns, they will say, “This *is* our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This *is* the Lord;. . . we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Isaiah 25:9.

GRACE FREES US TO CHOOSE OUR MASTER

12. After writing, “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,” what questions does Paul ask in Romans 6?

A. Romans 6:1 _____

B. Romans 6:15 _____

Some thought, “If sinning a lot made God look good, why not continue in sin to show how abundant God’s grace really is?” Others thought, “Since Jesus freed us from being under the condemnation of the law, the law was done away with and it was alright to continue sinful behavior.”

13. Read Romans 6:14,15,23 along with Galatians 3:10-13; 4:4,5.

A. Why is it a problem to be under the law?

B. Who are the ones who are under grace and not under law?

C. When and how did people move to being under grace?

Being “under the law” is not a problem if a person has never sinned. Under the law, a righteous person would be able to live forever (Galatians 3:12). However, since we all have sinned (Romans 6:23), being under the law means that we are all under “the curse of the law” and must die. This is why Jesus is so important to all of us.

“As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ . . . Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” Galatians 3:10,13.

14. What are we free from now that we have died? Romans 6:7,14

Verse 7 _____

Verse 14 _____

The word translated “freed” is the same word translated “justified” in Romans 5:9. Having died in Christ, we are free or “justified” from sin. The just demands of the law have been met, for “the wages of sin” have been paid (Romans 3:31; 6:23). Sin no longer has dominion over us.

It no longer has the ability to control or destroy us, for in Christ everyone:

- Has died the death that the law demanded (2 Corinthians 5:14).
- Who was under the law has been redeemed (Galatians 3:13; 4:4,5).
- Has been freed from the condemnation of the law (Romans 5:18).
- Has been saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5,6).

15. In the light of Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 6:8-10), how are we to think about ourselves? Romans 6:11

In Christ we not only died, but also rose again. “God . . . raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus” Eph. 2:6. We are to choose to believe the truth from God’s perspective that we are “alive to God” and no longer under a death sentence.

This can be very helpful when Satan presents his lies to us. When we have sinned, he tries to convince us:

“You’ll never be good enough. There’s no use trying. You have failed so many times, how can God still love you? You’re making a mess of things. You might as well give up trying to be a Christian. If you didn’t profess to be a Christian, you wouldn’t be a hypocrite. Then you could really have some fun. You can come back to Jesus later. Maybe it won’t be so hard then.”

If we believe Satan’s lies we will be tempted to turn away from God. He would then lead us into more pain and brokenness in his attempt to destroy us (John 10:10).

However, when we believe the truth from God’s perspective, we will experience the security we need in order to be honest with God, confess our sins to Him, receive his forgiveness, and allow Him to “cleanse us from all unrighteousness” 1 John 1:9.

16. What are we free to choose now that we are under grace and not under the dominion of sin or the curse of the law? Rom 6:12-19

Verse 12 _____

Verse 13 _____

Verse 16 _____

Being under grace means we are all free to choose who we will serve: God or Satan. We are not free to exercise dominion ourselves and be our own masters. Adam surrendered that privilege when he chose to learn about evil. We don't like the word slave, but Paul uses it so we can understand that our choice is not about performance, but about which kingdom we want to be a part of and who we want to have as our King.

- Do I choose to be a “slave of sin” and Satan? __Yes __No
- Do I choose to be a “slave of righteousness” and God? __Yes __No

FREEDOM TO LOVE AS JESUS HAS LOVED US

17. What did some people desire to be under? Galatians 4:21

Paul was shocked that anyone would want to be under the law. He asks, “Do you not hear the law?” He then summarized his conclusion:

“If you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” Gal. 5:2-4.

Jewish Christians tried to convince the Gentiles that Jesus' perfect life and death was not sufficient to make them acceptable to God. Based on Genesis 17:10-14, they believed circumcision was still necessary. They thought Paul had rejected the law when he didn't require Gentiles to be circumcised. However, they had not understood the true meaning of the symbol. It was to lead them to trust in what God wanted to do in their lives. This is what Moses referred to in Deuteronomy 30:6.

“The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

Paul embraced the true meaning of circumcision. “Circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision He is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter” Romans 2:28,29.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . , for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” Galatians 3:28,29.

Paul wanted everyone to understand there was nothing we can do to make ourselves more holy or acceptable to God. Jesus accomplished this for the human race through His perfect life and death. We are all free to come to Him just as we are. We are free to surrender our lives to Him and pray, “Let Your will be done in my life.” (Matthew 6:10).

18. What counsel does Paul give to those who realize they have been freed from the curse & condemnation of the law? Gal. 5:1,13-24

A. How are we to use our freedom? (1,13, 14)

B. How does the law relate to the fruit of the Spirit? (14, 22, 23)

C. What daily choice does the Christian make (24; Luke 9:23)

Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you” John 15:12. “Freely you have received, freely give” Matthew 10:8. We can use our freedom to love or destroy one another; to build up or tear down. Finding security in Christ frees us to love others rather than take advantage of them. Jesus invites us to surrender our lives to Him and let Him save us from all aspects of sin. (This is what it means to take up our cross daily.)