

Amazing grace: Ephesians 2.1-10

Thanks to Peter Pound for sharing this heartwarming story, and to Linda for our Thought for Today.

Peter's story: *My Godson who was a Minister at a Church Plant in a very poor area of Birkenhead developed a brain tumour in his mid 20s he was married and had a baby daughter. It was terminal and to see the degeneration was heart wrenching, but he and his wife faced it head on. They had great faith and the belief in the love of Jesus and that he had been called to do a job which he did brilliantly and had for filled that calling.*

Tim was in the hospice of the Good Shepherd near Chester at the end and he never complained, not once from initial diagnosis until the end of his life. Tim was a shining example of his belief in the love of Jesus and of the resurrection where all our Sins were forgiven.

We are very close to the family and Tim would be so proud of his wife Amy and the way she has brought up their daughter to be such a beautiful funny and well balanced little girl. They still live in the same house on that rough estate in Birkenhead opposite the Church that Tim planted which has flourished and they have a wonderful congregation from the estate.

It makes me thank the Lord every day for the his blessings and that it was in the poor and squalid areas that Jesus Preached. Tim in his way taught me so much and never to judge those less fortunate but to be ever thankful and that every community no matter how rough or poor is filled with good people looking out for each other. I hope that when the time comes, whenever that is. as we know not the day or the hour, that I will have that courage and faith that Tim and Amy and the rest of the family showed at the end.

God Bless, Peter

Amazing grace!

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to

be our way of life. Eph. 2. 4-10

Grace is at the heart of this passage from Ephesians: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”* These were also the watchwords of Martin Luther’s Protestant Reformation which became: *“Grace alone; faith alone; Scripture alone.”*

The Old Testament was quite clear in its teaching - salvation had to be earned by total obedience to God’s Law. However, that Law had become so demanding that for many Jews it was more of a stumbling block than means of drawing closer to God. Paul through his Letter to the Ephesians wants us to understand that what Jesus demonstrated by his life and teaching was that people should pay more attention to the spirit of the Law than the letter of the Law.

Jesus opened our eyes to a new way of seeing and being in relationship with God by painting a picture of God who loved his people more than anything else. Jesus told stories about God being like a shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep who are safe to go search for the one which is lost and restore that lost lamb to the fold. He spoke of a woman taken in the act of adultery who he refused to condemn but instead made a simple request, *“go and sin no more.”* He spoke of God being like a Father who runs to meet the prodigal son who had demanded his inheritance early and gone away and squandered it and now comes home disgraced – the Father doesn’t criticize or condemn, but rather he embraces and clothes and restores his sonship. Forgiveness, redemption, salvation, grace.

“Saved by grace through faith, it is a gift of God not anything we do or earn”. We cannot repeat those words too often. But what is this faith - this gift and grace, which saves us? We have a tendency to think of faith in terms of what we know or don’t know. We have faith in something even though we can’t fully comprehend it; we have to take it on trust, or on ‘good faith’ as we sometimes say. Faith is ‘faith’ because it is belief in what is unseen – it’s something we live into, sometimes it’s a finger-tip faith where we are just about hanging on and at other times, we are given glimpse of grace which are deeply significant and empowering. Or as the writer of Letter to the Hebrews puts it *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Heb. 11.1*

For me one of the best expressions of God’s amazing grace is summed up in one of my favourite John Newton hymns. His words come from a lived and personal experience. He was a slave trader-turned-abolitionist– turned-Anglican clergyman, who fully believed that regardless of sins committed, the soul can be delivered from

despair through the mercy of God, "Amazing Grace"

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I'm found;
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fear relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares,
We have already come.
'Twas grace that brought us safe thus far,
And grace will lead us home.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.*

Free, unmerited grace, sounds like one of those advertising promises that's just too good to possibly be true, but that is exactly what God extends to us.
Every blessing, Linda

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