

Title: **“I AM GRACIOUS”**

Text: Exodus 22:21-27

Subject: *The Gracious Character of Our God*

Date: Tuesday Evening — September 16, 2008

Tape: Exodus #80

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Introduction:

(Exodus 22:21-27) “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. (22) Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. (23) If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; (24) And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. (25) If thou lend money to *any of* my people *that is* poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. (26) If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: (27) For that *is* his covering only, it *is* his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I *am* gracious.”

Here is the reason God gives for giving all these commandments of the law, both the commandments of restitution in verses 1-20 and the commandments of mercy to the stranger, the widow, the fatherless and our neighbors that we have just read in verses 21-27: — “*For I am gracious.*” He commands us to be gracious because he is gracious.

GOD’S CHARACTER

“**I am gracious.**” That is the character of our God. — “**I am gracious.**” That is the reason he does what he does. — “**I am gracious.**” That is my subject. — “*Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...Thou art a gracious and merciful God.*” (Nehemiah 9:17, 31). The fact that God is gracious is set before us as a matter of constant praise in the psalms.

(Psalms 86:15) “Thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”

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(Psalms 103:8) “The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

(Psalms 111:4) “He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.”

(Psalms 112:4) “*He is* gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.”

(Psalms 116:5) “Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful.”

(Psalms 145:8) “The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.”

The gracious character of our God inspires hope in needy sinners, confident faith in believing sinners, and loving gratitude saved sinners.

(Isaiah 30:18-19) “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD *is* a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him. (19) For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.”

(Isaiah 33:2) “O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.”

“*Turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness*” (Joel 2:13). **The Lord our God, the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit declares himself gracious; and he proves himself gracious in all his works.**

The source and fountain of grace is God the Father (Ephesians 1:3), who purposed in himself the everlasting salvation of an elect multitude before the world began. On behalf of that elect multitude he made a covenant of grace with his Son, ordered in all things and sure before ever the worlds were made.

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The mediatorial channel of grace is God the Son (John 1:17). The grace of God is revealed and given to men only by the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. — *“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”*

That does not mean that God did not save his elect by grace before the incarnation of Christ. He did. Salvation has always been by grace (Genesis 6:8). And that grace has always been found and given in Christ (Romans 3:24-26).

(Romans 3:24-26) “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

But grace and truth were fully revealed in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Christ alone always has been, is now, and shall forever be the solitary channel of grace (Romans 5:15, 17, 21; 1 Timothy 2:5).

(Romans 5:15) “But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”

(Romans 5:17) “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)”

(Romans 5:21) “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

(1 Timothy 2:5) “For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

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Grace does not come through the church. Grace cannot be conferred by some pretentious, earthly priest. And grace is not given through the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Grace comes to sinners through Christ alone.

The only bestower of grace is God the Holy Spirit, who is called “*the Spirit of grace*” by the prophet Zechariah (12:10). He is the One who applies the gospel to the hearts of sinners with saving power. He quickens God’s elect while they are yet spiritually dead. He conquers the rebel’s will, melts the hard heart, opens the blind eye, and cleanses the soul. He gives ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel of God is the message of grace. It is called “*the gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24).

(Acts 20:24) “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

To the self-righteous religionist, it is a stumbling block. To the learned, philosophical worldling, it is foolishness. Why? Because there is nothing in the gospel to gratify the pride of man. The gospel of God declares that man can never be saved, but by the grace of God. It declares that apart from Christ, the unspeakable gift of God’s grace, there is no salvation and the state of every human being is desperate, hopeless, and irretrievable. The gospel addresses men and women as depraved, guilty, condemned, perishing sinners. It puts us all upon one level. The gospel declares that the purest moralist is in the same condition as the vilest profligate, that the zealous religionist is no better off than the most profane infidel. Without Christ, without grace, all are lost!

The gospel addresses every descendant of Adam as a fallen, polluted, hell-bent, hell-deserving sinner, utterly incapable of changing his ruined condition. The grace of God, which I now preach to you by the gospel, is your only hope. All men, by nature, stand before God’s holy law as justly condemned felons, awaiting the execution of his wrath upon them (John 3:18, 36; Romans 3:19).

(John 3:18) “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that

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believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

(John 3:36) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

(Romans 3:19) “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

Our only hope is grace! As **George S. Bishop** put it...

“Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen that they cannot lift the axe of justice, so corrupt that they cannot change their own nature, so averse to God that they cannot turn to him, so blind that they cannot see him, so deaf that they cannot hear him, and so dead that he must himself open their graves and lift them into resurrection.”

Our only hope of salvation and eternal life is the grace of God freely bestowed upon sinners through Jesus Christ, the sinner’s Substitute.

CHARACTER OF GRACE

All the religious world talks about salvation by grace. But few understand the character of God’s grace as it is revealed in the Word of God. And as soon as grace is defined in biblical terms, man’s opposition to it comes to surface. So let’s look at the character of God’s grace as it is revealed in Holy Scripture. When the Lord God declares, “*I am gracious*” he is declaring his great, glorious attribute of grace.

Grace is an attribute of God which, like his love, is exercised only toward his elect. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of universal grace, or common grace, or of grace bestowed upon mankind in general. The mercy of God is “*over all his works*” (Psalm 145:9); but the grace of God is upon his elect alone. The mercy of God is life upon this earth. The grace of God is eternal life. Mercy is anything short of eternal wrath. The grace of God is eternal salvation. Grace is the solitary source from which the goodwill, love, and salvation of God flow to his chosen people.

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“It is the eternal and absolute free favor of God, manifested in the vouchsafement (infallible promise) of spiritual and eternal blessings to the guilty and unworthy.” — (*Abraham Booth*)

Arthur Pink wrote, “Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God exercised in bestowing blessings upon those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded.”

Grace is completely unmerited and unsought. It is altogether unattracted by us. Grace cannot be bought, earned, or won by anything in us or done by us. If it could, it would cease to be grace. Grace is bestowed upon sinners without attraction, without condition, without qualification. When it comes, it comes as a matter of pure charity, unsought, unasked, and undesired.

In Bible terms grace is placed in direct opposition to works, worthiness, and merit in the creature (Romans 11:6; 4:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9-10).

(Romans 4:4-5) “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (5) But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

(Romans 11:6) “And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

(Ephesians 2:8-9) “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

(2 Timothy 1:9-10) “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

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Grace and works will not mix. And any attempt by man to mix the grace of God with the works of man or the will of man is both blasphemy and a total denial of grace.

If you will search the Scriptures, you will find that **there are four things which always characterize the grace of God.** Whenever men speak contrary to these four things they deny the grace of God.

1. **The grace of God is eternal** (Romans 8:28-30; 2 Timothy 1:9). Grace does not originate in time and cannot be controlled or directed by anything in time. Grace is eternal.

(Romans 8:28-30) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

2. **The grace of God is free.** Paul declares that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). When God declares in his Word that his grace is free, he is telling us that his grace is...

- Without Cause!
- Without Qualification!
- Without Condition!
- Without Change!

3. **The grace of God is sovereign** (Romans 5:21).

(Romans 5:20-21) “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Grace reigns, everywhere, over all things. If grace reigns, then it reigns from a throne. And the One who sits upon the throne is sovereign. The throne of the sovereign God is called “*the throne of grace*” (Hebrews 4:16).

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When the Bible declares that grace is sovereign, it is declaring that God is gracious to whom he will be gracious (Romans 9:11-18).

(Romans 9:11-18) “(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (14) What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (17) For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

Salvation and eternal life is the gift of God (Romans 6:23). — If it is a gift it cannot be claimed as a right. — If it is a gift it cannot be earned. — If it is a gift, the Giver is free to bestow it upon whom he will.

Nothing so riles man and stirs his hatred of God as the declaration that grace is free, sovereign, immutable and eternal. This is the offence of the gospel.

- Grace is abasing to man’s proud heart, putting all upon one level.
- Grace gives no recognition to the righteousness of man.
- Grace makes fallen man utterly dependent upon the goodness of God for salvation.
- And grace is the sovereign prerogative of the sovereign Lord.

4. **The grace of God is discriminating and distinguishing** (1 Corinthians 4:7).

(1 Corinthians 4:7) “For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*”

Grace discriminates. Grace segregates. Grace makes differences between men. Grace chooses some and passes by others. God has his favorites,

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whom he has from eternity singled out from the rest of Adam’s race, to whom he will be gracious. In fact, the very word “*grace*” means “favor.” — “*Gracious*” means “favorable.”

- Grace separated Abel from Cain.
- Grace separated Abraham from the rest of his family.
- Grace separated Jacob and Esau.
- Grace separated David from his brothers.

The only difference between the children of God and the children of the devil is grace. Every child of God knows it and gladly acknowledges, — “*By the grace of God I am what I am*” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

WORKS OF GRACE

We know that God is gracious as we experience and know his great works of grace. Let me remind you of those works of God’s grace as they are set forth in the Word of God.

I will not spend much time here. But I want you to understand that everything involved in the salvation of sinners is the work of God’s grace. There is nothing required for our salvation that is in anyway dependent upon, determined by, or conditioned upon man, not the worth of man, not the works of man, and not the will of man. We are saved by grace alone (Ephesians 1:3-2:1-10).

- Purposed Grace
- Performed Grace
- Powerful Grace
- Experienced Grace

God’s **election** is the election of grace (Romans 11:5-6). God’s **covenant** is the covenant of grace (Psalm 89:2-3).

(Psalms 89:2-3) “For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. (3) I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,”

Our **adoption** into the family of God was by grace (Ephesians 1:5-6). The **redemption** of our souls by Christ was a marvelous work of God’s grace

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(Hebrews 2:9). We are **justified** by grace (Romans 3:24). We are **forgiven** by grace (Ephesians 1:7). Our **regeneration and calling** is by the grace and power of God the Holy Spirit (Galatians 1:15-16). Our **sanctification** is by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 1:30). Our **preservation** in grace is by grace (John 10:28-30). And our **resurrection** shall be the work of God’s grace (John 5:25-28).

From the gates of hell to the gate of heavenly glory, we owe our salvation to grace alone. When our great, almighty God and Savior has finished the work, he shall *“bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!”* (Zechariah 4:7).

TROPHIES OF GRACE

The glory of God’s gracious character shines forth most splendidly when we behold the trophies of his grace, and observe unworthiness of those sinners he has saved by his marvelous grace (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called:* (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea,* and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Here are four trophies of grace which will serve to illustrate what I have so feebly tried to preach.

1. **Manasseh the King of Judah** (2 Chronicles 33:1-13) — Manasseh was a barbaric monster. He sacrificed his own children upon the burning altars of his chosen idols. He filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. His sacrilegious indecencies perverted the whole nation. He lead Judah into corruptions unmentionable, even among the heathen. Yet, the grace of God

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touched his heart, renewed his soul, forgave his sin and made him an heir of heavenly glory!

2. **Saul of Tarsus** (Acts 9) — A more blood thirsty persecutor of God’s church the world has never known than Saul of Tarsus. He was a monster of a man, hell-bent upon the destruction of God’s lambs, determined to annihilate Christianity. His thirst for violence and murder was insatiable. His rancorous heart was filled with violence. Never did a man live who, in the opinion of human judgment, was more certainly deserving of eternal damnation. Yet, this godless, implacable wretch of a man is today seated with Christ upon his throne, a trophy of the grace of God!

3. **The Corinthians** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The Corinthians were the most sensual, profligate people of the ancient Roman world. They were the most vile of the vilest age in the annals of human history. Yet, through the infinitely tender mercies of an ever gracious God, a great multitude of them today are robed in white and crowned with glory.

4. **The Man who now preaches grace to you!**

- I am Gomer!
- I am Onesimus!
- I am the prodigal son!

I am a sinner saved by grace! — Grace chose me. — Grace redeemed me. — Grace preserved me. — Grace called me. — Grace keeps me. — Grace will bring me home.

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;

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Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas 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;
‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.”

Hear this word from the triune God and go home rejoicing. — *“I am gracious!”*

Amen.