

Attributes of God (Series 1): The Grace of God

by A.W. Tozer

God's grace is an infinite and unchanging attribute that brings favor to those who are justly in disfavor, and is always administered through and in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 48:12

Topics: "Attributes of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching, teaching, and singing about the grace of God. He tells the story of the prodigal son as an example of God's grace and mercy. The prodigal son demands his share of the inheritance, squanders it, and ends up in a desperate situation. However, when he repents and returns to his father, he is met with overwhelming love and forgiveness. The preacher highlights the incomprehensible nature of God's grace and encourages listeners to turn to Jesus to experience the abundance of God's goodness and kindness.

Transcript

Tonight I want to talk on grace as one of the attributes of God. It's too big for any man to handle, but we're leaning on the Blessed Spirit. So I want to read some verses merely, merely texts.

They're found all through the Bible, but I'll just select this many. Genesis 6, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Exodus 33, the Lord said to Moses, Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

Proverbs 3, Surely God scorneth the scorner, but he giveth grace unto the lowly. John 1, And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Romans 3, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 5, For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God. And the gift of grace which is by one man, Jesus Christ, by one man, Jesus Christ.

The gift of grace hath abounded unto many. Ephesians 1, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace.

1 Peter 5, But the God of all grace, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Now, I just read a few verses there that I copied out on a card here, so I wouldn't have to flip from one page to another. In order that you might see that this is taught both in the Old and the New Testament.

Now, grace is an attribute of God. Let me repeat patiently a little here and a little there, line upon line and precept upon precept, that an attribute is something God is, not something God has. Grace is therefore something God is.

And it is near to, but it is not the same as, mercy. It is almost the same as mercy, but it is not quite the same. And just as mercy flows out of the goodness of God, so grace flows out of the goodness of God.

Mercy is God's goodness confronting human guilt. Now, we dealt with that last week, that mercy is the goodness of God confronting human guilt. Whereas grace is the goodness of God confronting human demerit.

I talked about justice, and I said that when justice confronts a moral situation, it pronounces death. There is stern disapprobation, where there is blame and divine disapproval to the point of execration, where God must stand against the man. Because the man stands with his sin, then justice must judge.

But still the goodness of God yearns to bestow blessedness, and that is grace. The goodness of God yearning to bestow blessedness, even to those who do not deserve it, but who have a specific demerit. There is a difference between no merit and demerit.

No merit simply is a negative thing, it's vacuity. But demerit is a positive thing. It means that there is not only no merit there, but that there is the opposite of merit.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about grace and mention some facts about it. That it is God's good pleasure, and it flows, of course, out of the goodness of God, and it is what God is like. If you were to meet God, you would find that this is what God is like.

I have said over and over again over the years that one of the big problems of the Church, one of our great losses, is the loss of the proper concept of what God is like. And that if we could restore that again, and we could have an army of preachers going up and down the land preaching about God, what God is like, and the pastors and teachers would begin again to tell the people what God is like, it would put strength and foundation under our faith again. Now, grace is that in God which brings into favor, I'm actually staying very close to the Hebrew and Greek definition when I'm saying this, that it is that in God which brings into favor one justly in disfavor.

And grace and favor, incidentally, are used interchangeably in the English Bible, not always, but very often. I said last week that there was four times as much said about mercy in the Old Testament as in the New. And I think I may have jarred some of you by saying it, because usually we're taught the opposite.

But actually, there's four times as much said about mercy in the Old Testament as there is in the New. But strangely and wonderfully, there's more than three times as much said about grace in the New Testament as in the Old. Now, I read to you that law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Christ is the channel through which grace flows, and it's possible to misunderstand this, and a great many people have. Never underestimate the ability of good people to misunderstand. And we have misunderstood, and we have made it to mean that Moses knew only law and Christ knows only grace.

This is the typical teaching of the hour, but it is not the teaching of our fathers. You will not find it in John Bunyan or John Owen or Henry Schugle or any of the Puritans. You will not find it even in Calvin.

You will not find it among the great revivalists and church fathers and reformers. The doctrine that Moses knew only law and Christ knew only grace. So to read it is to misunderstand it altogether.

To think that because the law was given by Moses, God gave the law through Moses, that therefore Moses knew no grace is to misread or fail to read that passage that before the flood Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Now remember that, Genesis 6. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord before there was any law given. And after the law was given, and Moses had been on the mount 40 days and 40 nights, and God had reached down out of the fire and storm, and with his finger had chiseled the ten words on the tables of stone, it says, Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

God did not deal with Moses on the basis of law. He dealt with Moses on the basis of grace. And Moses knoweth and said, If I have found grace in thy sight, well, then do so in soul, Father, or Lord.

He called him Jehovah. Now, how could it be otherwise, my brethren? How could it be that God should act only in law in the Old Testament and only in grace in the New, if God doesn't change? If immutability is an attribute of God, then God must always act like himself. I have said this many times, and I wish we could get a hold of it, that God always acts like himself.

I was talking to Brother McAfee in the study just before the service began, that prodigal son story where it said that after he had spent all and he went out there among the swine, he came to himself. And I said, What a beautiful idiom. As if God understood that the man hadn't been himself.

But now, through the wisdom taught him by sin, the wisdom taught him by loss and the homesickness, he comes to himself. You don't find people always the same, but you find God always the same. God must always act like himself, and he never varies from himself.

Grace doesn't ebb and flow like the tide. It doesn't come like the weather, a great surge of hot grace, and then we get no grace at all. God must always act like himself, and he must act like himself before the flood and after the flood and when the law was given and after the law was given.

God must always act like himself, and since grace is an attribute of God, that it is that which God is and which cannot be removed from God and yet have God remain God. So there was always grace in the heart of God, and there isn't any more grace now than there ever was, and there will never be any more grace than there is now. We could only see that grace is infinite and therefore it neither ebbs nor flows, it doesn't grow nor diminish, it doesn't die nor be born.

It is what God is, and God is, of course, unchangeable and eternal. Now, here are two important truths that I want you to get, and I want you to take it, and the next time you hear a professor or a preacher say otherwise, go to him and remind him of this. Here are two important truths.

One of them is that no one was ever saved, no one is now saved, and no one will ever be saved except by grace. Now, get that in your mind, my brethren. I was quite surprised to learn here only within the last couple of weeks that this was believed by Robert McQuilkin and taught by Robert McQuilkin, the very justly famous expositor and teacher who founded Ben Lippin and Columbia Bible College.

Well, this is the fact, that nobody was ever saved except by grace. Before Moses, nobody was ever saved except by grace. During Moses' time, nobody was ever saved except by grace.

After Moses, and before the cross, and after the cross, and since the cross, and during all this dispensation, during any dispensation, anywhere, anytime, since Abel offered his first lamb before God on the smoking altar, nobody was ever saved in any other way than by grace. Ah, my brethren, if you could only get a hold of that. And then the second thing is that grace always comes by Jesus Christ, that grace always came by Jesus Christ.

The law was given by Moses, but grace came by Jesus Christ. But it didn't mean, and is not to be understood, that before Jesus was born of Mary there was no grace, because God dealt in grace with mankind looking forward to the incarnation and death of Jesus before Christ came, and now since he's come and gone to the Father's right hand, God looks back upon the cross as we look back upon the cross. Everybody from Abel on was saved by looking forward to the cross.

Grace came by Jesus Christ, and everybody that's been saved since the cross is saved by looking back at the cross. Grace always comes by Jesus Christ. It didn't come at his birth, but it came in God's ancient scheme.

I was trying to think up a word that I could use, and I remembered Finney's word. He talked about the Christian scheme. Now the word scheme has gotten into bad company, and we think of it rather that it has connotations that are not pleasant.

But oh, even a hundred years ago it was a good, pure word. It meant a carefully wrought plan. And so the old writers could talk about God's redemptive scheme, God's redemptive plan, carefully wrought and thought out and wrought out.

And so grace came according to God's ancient plan in Christ Jesus. And no grace was ever administered to anybody except by and through and in Jesus Christ. When yet Adam and Eve had no children, God spared Adam and Eve by grace.

And when they had their two boys, one offered a lamb and thus said, I look forward to the Lamb of God. He accepted the grace of Christ Jesus for a hundred thousand years before he was born, and God gave his witness that he was justified. So the grace did not come when Christ was born in a manger.

It did not come when Christ was baptized or anointed of the Spirit. It did not come when he died on a cross. It did not come when he rose from the dead.

And it did not come when he went to the Father's right hand. Grace came from the ancient beginnings through Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son, and was manifest on the cross of Calvary in fiery blood and tears and sweat and death. But it had always been operative from the beginning.

If God had not operated in grace, he would have swept the human race away. He would have crushed Adam and Eve under his heel in awful judgment, for they had it coming. But because God was a God of grace and because he had already an eternity planned, a plan of grace, and the Lamb of God had been slain before the foundation of the world, there was no embarrassment in the divine scheme.

And God did not have to back out and say, I am sorry, but I have mixed things up here. He simply went right on. I heard a great southern preacher one time remind us, talking about the way the work of God as

being a wheel spinning on a hub.

And he said, when Adam spun off of the wheel and went rolling down, he said, God put Christ on and he has been on that spinning ever since. A rather odd illustration. But the first Adam slipped away and the second Adam already was there.

And anything God has ever done for anybody, of all this grace of all we receive, and grace for grace, so that God's grace is for everybody, and everybody receives in some degree God's grace. Everybody receives in some degree God's grace. The lowest woman in the world, the most sinful, bloody man in the world, Judas, Hitler, if it hadn't been that God was gracious, they would have been cut off and slain along with you and me and all the rest.

For I wonder, after all, there is too much difference in a sinner. When a woman sweeps up a house, some's dirty, black, some's gray, some's different colored, but it's all dirt and it all goes before the broom. And when God looks at humanity, he sees some that are very white, but they're dirt.

And he sees some that are very black and they're dirt. And he sees some that are morally speckled and it's all dirt and it all goes before the moral broom. So the grace of God is operated toward everybody.

Now, not the saving grace of God. Remember, there's a difference. When the grace of God becomes operative through faith in Jesus Christ, then there is the new birth.

But the grace of God nevertheless holds back any judgment that would come until God in his kindness has given every man a chance to repent. Now, grace is God's goodness, I said. It is the kindness of God's heart, the goodwill, the cordial benevolence.

It is what God is like. And I would like to tell you and keep telling you, for it's very hard for us poor bound creatures to remember it, that God is like that all the time, like, thought, gracious. God is kind all the time.

God is filled with goodwill and cordiality and benevolence all the time, all the time. All through, God is like that. You'll never run into a stratum in God that's hard.

You'll always find God gracious all through. And always and all times and toward all peoples forever. You'll never run into any meanness in God, never any resentment or rancor or ill will, for there's none there.

God has no ill will toward any being. God is a God of utter kindness and cordiality and goodwill and benevolence. And yet all of these, remember, work in perfect harmony with God's justice and God's judgment, for I believe in hell and I believe in judgment.

But I also believe that those whom God must reject because of their impenitence, yet there will be grace. God will still feel gracious toward all of his universe, for he's a God and he can't do anything else. Now, grace is infinite, I have said, and I don't want you to strain to understand infinitude.

I had the temerity to preach on infinitude a few times, and wonderful as it seems, I got along all right, at least I got along all right, preaching on infinitude, the limitlessness of God. God's grace is infinite, but I say let's not strain to try to understand it. Let's try to measure it against ourselves, not against God.

God never measures anything in himself against anything else in himself. That is, God never measures his grace against his justice or his mercy against his love, because God is all one. But God measures his grace against our sin.

Grace has abounded unto many, said Romans 5. Grace has abounded unto many, said Ephesians 1, the riches of his grace, and says Romans 5 again, where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. Now, when God says much more abound, I told you quite a while ago that God has no degrees. Man has degrees.

We give men their I.Q.s, one of the worst things you can do. I think I told you that when I was in the Army, I had an I.Q. along with the May I.Q. test, and I read it, I read it very high, and I've had a lifetime to try to keep from remembering that, and to keep very humble before God, you know, because whenever I get thinking about this thing, hmm, I read it up among the top four percent in all of the Army. And, of course, you know what that does to you, you know what it does to you.

And you have to keep humbling, and God has to keep chastening you to keep you down. We vary in our I.Q. Some people's I.Q. drags along behind, and some are way up there. Like one of my grandchildren, he's got an I.Q. so high that he's a pest.

And my wife and I worry a little bit, as good grandparents should, over that boy. He's all right. He wants to be normal, but his parents can't forget his high I.Q. Well, he may turn out to be a very, very good truck driver later on, but he's got a high I.Q., higher and lower.

Some have very great kindness, some are not so kind. But there's nothing in God that can compare itself with anything else in God. What God is, God is.

But when we measure it against ourselves, when it says grace does much more abound, it means not that grace does much more abound than anything else in God, but it means that grace much more abounds than anything in us. So that no matter how much sin a man has done, literally and truly grace abounds under that man. Old John Bunyan wrote his life story.

And do you remember what he called it? I think it was one of the finest titles ever given to a book. It was a little too long. Now they don't give them such long titles, but he called it Grace Abounding Toward the Chief of Sinners.

That was his title, Grace Abounding Toward the Chief of Sinners. Nowadays we just shorten it to Grace Abounding. Nobody ever reminds or remembers that it said Grace Abounding Toward the Chief of Sinners.

Now John Bunyan honestly believed that, that he was the man who had the least right to the grace of God. Nobody that anybody ever had any right, but he felt his sinfulness. Grace abounded.

And so for us who stand under the disapprobation of God, who by sin lie under the sentence of God's eternal everlasting displeasure and banishment. Grace then is an incomprehensibly immense and overwhelming plenitude of kindness and goodness. And if we could only remember it, my brethren, if we could only get a hold of it, we wouldn't have to be played with and fooled with so much and entertained so much.

If we could only walk around remembering that the grace of God toward us who have nothing but demerit, it's an incomprehensibly immense attribute, so vast, so huge, so overwhelming that nobody can ever grasp it or hope to understand it. And it is the loving kindness of God toward the people. Would God have put up with us this long if he had not had this in him? If God had had only a limited amount of grace, well, if he had had only a limited amount of grace, he wouldn't have been God.

If he'd had only a limited amount of anything, he wouldn't have been God because God to be God must have an infinite, not amount, because amount means a measure. You can't measure God in any direction. God dwells in no dimension and can be measured in no way.

Measures belong to human beings. Measures belong to the stars. Distance, as I've pointed out, is the way heavenly bodies account for the distance they are, the space they occupy, their relation to other heavenly bodies.

The moon 250,000 miles away, the sun 93 million, I mean, 93 million miles away and all that kind of thing. Well, that's these heavenly bodies accounting to our intelligence for where they are. But God never accounts to anybody for anything he is.

God's immensity, God's infinitude must mean that the grace of God must always be immeasurably full. When we sing the grace of God, amazing grace, amazing grace, wrote this man. Why, of course it's amazing.

How can we stand and gaze at the fullness of the grace of God? You see, there are two ways to think about the grace of God. There's to look at yourself and see how sinful you were and say, God's grace must be, must be oceanic. It must be vast.

It must be huge as the space to forgive such a sinner as I am. That's one way, and that's a good way, and probably that's the most popular way. But there's another way to think of the grace of God too, and that's think of the grace of God being the way God is, so that always it remains the way God is.

That's God being like God. And when God shows grace to a sinner, he isn't being dramatic. He's acting like God, and he'll never act any other way but like God.

On the other hand, when that man that justice has condemned, when that man turns his back on the grace of God in Christ and refuses to allow himself to be rescued, then the time comes when God must judge the man, and when God judges the man, he acts like himself in judging the man. When God shows love to the human race, he acts like himself. When God shows judgment to the angels that kept not their first estate, he acts like himself.

Always God acts in conformity with the fullness of his own holy, perfect, symmetrical nature. And remember that God always feels this overwhelming plenitude of goodness, and he feels it in harmony with all his other attributes. I'd like to repeat there's no frustration in God.

I'd like to repeat that the evangelists and the pastors effort to explain, you know, we use metaphors. I picked up a little book today called The Book of God by Spinoza. Now, I don't follow Spinoza fully, but I get help from lots of men I wouldn't go across the street with.

But nevertheless, they do say some things sometimes, and we get help from a lot of people, and he talks about the infinitude of God, this man, the infinitude of God. Well, God is infinite, and God always remains God and never changes, and this the man believed. Now, everything that God is, he is, I say, in complete harmony, and that there is never any frustration in him, but all this he bestows in his eternal Son.

You see, a lot of people have talked about the goodness of God, and then they have got sentimental about it, and they have said God is too good to punish anybody, he is too good to banish anybody. And so they have ruled out hell. One man preached a sermon called The Damnable Doctrine of Damnation, and

so he damned the doctrine of damnation.

Well, you see, his concept of God wasn't adequate. A man who has an adequate conception of God will not only believe in the love of God, but he will believe in the holiness of God. He will not only believe in the mercy of God, but he will believe in the justice of God.

And when you see the everlasting God in his holy perfect union, when you see the one God acting in judgment, you know that the man who chooses evil must never dwell in the presence of this holy God. But a lot of people have gone so far, and they write books, and tired and lovesick women read them, and then they write poetry, and pretty soon everybody gets to believing that God is so kind and loving and gentle. Well, God is so kind that infinity won't measure it.

God is so loving that he is immeasurably loving. But God is also holy and just. You ought to keep that in mind, that the grace of God comes only through Jesus Christ, and is channeled only through Jesus Christ.

For the second person of the Trinity brought, opened the channel, and grace flows through. It flowed through from the day that Adam sinned all through Old Testament times, and it never flows any other way. So let's not write dreamy poetry about the goodness of our Heavenly Father, who is love.

Love is God, and God is love, and love is all, and all is God, and everything will be okay. That's the summation of a lot of teaching these days, but it's false teaching, my friends. If I want to know this immeasurable grace, if I want to know this overwhelming, this astounding kindness of God, I have to step under the shadow of the cross.

I must come where God releases grace. I must either have looked forward to it or I must look back at it. I must look one way or the other to that cross where Jesus died.

Grace flowed out of his wounded side, and the grace that flowed there had saved Abel, and the grace that flowed there saves you. So we must remember that always. No man cometh unto the Father but by me, said our Lord Jesus Christ.

And Peter said that there is no name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved except the name of Jesus Christ. The reason for that is, of course, that Jesus Christ is God. Law could come by Moses, and only law could come by Moses.

But grace came by Jesus Christ, and it came from the beginning. It could come only by Jesus Christ because there was nobody else that was God who could die. Nobody else could take on him flesh and still be the infinite God.

And when Jesus walked around on earth and patted the heads of babies, forgave harlots, and blessed mankind, he was simply God acting like God in a given situation. That's all. Just acting like God.

And everything that God does, he acts like himself. If you could only remember it and keep it in your heart, put it down somewhere and remember it. But this one act of Jesus, this one act, this divine act, this human act, it couldn't have been a divine act alone for it had to be for man.

It couldn't have been a human act alone for only God could save. So it was a human act and a divine act. It was a historic act, a once-done act, done there in the darkness on the tree, that once-done act.

Hidden there, that secret act in darkness, once done and never repeated, owned and accepted by God the Father Almighty who raised him from the dead the third day and took him to his own right hand. So let's not degrade ourselves by vulgarizing the atonement. Over the last generation or two generations, popular men, and they're good men and they won some to Christ.

And I thank God for everybody that's been won. But you know, even while you're winning men to Christ, even winning them in great numbers, you can be so misreading and laying wrong emphasis that you start a trend that is bad. And over the last two generations, evangelists have commercialized the atonement.

And they've given us the doctrine of paying of the price. Now, I believe he paid the price all right. And I can sing, Jesus paid it all to him I owe.

But I hope I know what I mean. And we simplify it and illustrate it and we vulgarize the atonement. My brethren, I do not know how he did it.

I can only stand as Ezekiel stood in the valley of dry bones and raise my head to God and say, Oh, Lord. Back there when the prophet said that he would come and give himself a ransom for many, they didn't know quite what they were writing about, Peter said. And even angels that watched the pen, the quill pens, right over the old-fashioned paper, the story of the coming Messiah, looking over the shoulders of the prophets as they wrote, the angels desired to look into it.

Not even the sharp-eyed angels around the throne of God know how he did it. In secret there in the dark, he did a once-done act, never done before, never done again. Historic act, finished, done, completed.

And because he did that, the grace of God flows to all men. Oh, my friend, let's remember that angels and prophets and even Paul said, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, manifest that God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit. Scene of angels preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world and received up into heaven.

And this mightiest mind, many say, many serious-minded, worthy scholars are ready to say that Paul's mind was the greatest that ever was known in the human race, except, of course, for the perfect mind of Christ. But this mighty mind never tried to understand it. He said, great is the mystery of godliness.

And that's all. We're saved by his blood, but how are we saved by his blood? We're alive by his death, but where are we alive by his death? Atonement was made in his death, but how was atonement made in his death? Let's not vulgarize it by trying to understand it, but let's stand and gaze at the cross and say, O Lord God, Thou knowest worthy is the Lamb that was slain and the angels envious. If angels can be envious, look upon us ransomed sinners and desire to look into it.

But God says to the angels, the spirits burning there before the throne can bear the burning bliss, but they have never, never known a sinful world like this. So God says, go help my people, go help my people, and he sends them out to be ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation, but he never explains to them. And I doubt whether there's an angel or archangel anywhere in heaven that understands what happened there on that cross.

We know he died. We know because he died we don't have to. We know that he rose from the dead and because he rose from the dead we'll rise from the dead who believe on him.

We know he went to the right hand of God and sat down in perfect approval amidst the acclamations of the heavenly multitude, and we know that because he did we'll go there with him. But why God shut up in the secret of his own great heart forever? We can only say worthy is the Lamb. Well, let's not try to understand, let's just believe.

You know, Brother McAfee, that it was a hundred years before the Church ever began to talk about and try to explain atonement? A hundred years. The fathers never tried. Paul never tried to explain it.

Peter never tried. The fathers, early fathers, never tried. It was only when Greek influence came in and men began to try to think their way through, and then they gave us explanations.

And I appreciate those explanations, but I, for my part, stand and gaze on him and say, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know how he did it nor what it all means any more than a two-year-old baby stands gazing into her mother's face and says, Mother, how did I get here? And the mother smiles and says, You'll know later.

And doesn't try to explain to a two-year-old intellect. But I think that God, when we say, Oh, God, how is it? I do not believe that God will say, You'll know later. I think he will say, I believe on my son, for what is of the earth he lets us know, but what is of heaven he holds in his own great heart.

And what he won't tell the angels, maybe he won't tell us. Oh, the wonder of it, the awesomeness of it. Can we preach too much about it? Can we sing too much about it? Can we pray too much? Can we insist on it too much? Well, maybe we should cease the strain to understand and we should just hear the story in five minutes.

The story of grace told by the Lord of all grace and the fountain of all mercy, relieved in by the simple-hearted. A certain man had two sons. One of them said to the father, His father, Father, divide the portion that is mine with me.

And the father divided the portion and when he had received it he went into a far country. There he did live riotously and when he had spent all a great famine came in that land. And this ungrateful boy who had demanded his share before his father's death and thus had violated one of the tenderest conventions of human society now goes and asks for a job feeding hogs and he was a Jew.

Things got worse and worse and he had nothing and finally he had to push a hog away and eat some of the husk. And those who fed the hogs wouldn't give him any. They'd let it alone.

This is for the pigs. He managed to stay alive and one day he got to thinking. That's when he came to himself, you remember.

He'd been somebody else but now he comes to himself. That's repentance. And he thinks about home, about father.

And he knew that that father hadn't changed and that's what Jesus was trying to tell us, the father hadn't changed. Oh, a long time ago, for I won't say how many but it's a great many years ago and I was in my earliest twenties. I had heard the prodigal son was a backslider but I didn't read it in the 15th of Luke.

He couldn't be a backslider and fit all the circumstances. I'd heard he was a sinner but I couldn't hear God say of a sinner, this my son was dead and is alive again. It didn't fit the circumstances.

So I went to God and I said, God, will you show me? And I went to a place all by myself. I used to spend days in praying all alone. And I went there and suddenly there flashed over me the understanding and I have never had reason to doubt that this was God teaching me his Bible.

I never heard anybody else say this and I haven't made a lot of it but God said to my heart, the prodigal son is neither a backslider nor a sinner. The prodigal son is the human race. The human race that went out to the pigsty, to the far country in Adam and came back in Christ, my son.

For if you'll notice there were two other parables there. The parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. The sheep that wandered away was part of the human race that will be saved and when he comes back he's a part of the human race that's redeemed and that will accept redemption.

So, these, all these, all these of every race and color around the world that have come back have all come back in Christ and they've all come back in the person of that prodigal. All that's the redeemed human race coming back. And do you know what they found? They found the father to be like.

They found he hadn't been changed at all. Insult, wrong, his neighbors pitied him and they said, oh, isn't that terrible the way that boy treated his poor old dad. And his father was humiliated and shamed and sorry and grieved and heartbroken.

But when the boy came back he hadn't changed at all. And Jesus was saying to us, you went away in Adam but you're coming back in Christ. And when you come back you'll find the father hasn't changed.

He's the same father that he was when you all went out every man to his own way. When you came back in Jesus Christ you'll find him exactly the same as you left him unchanged. That's the story of the prodigal son.

He ran and threw his arms around him and welcomed him and put a robe on him and a ring and said this, my son is dead. He's alive again. This is the grace of God, my friend.

Isn't it worth believing in, preaching, teaching, singing about while the world is dying? If you're out of, out of the grace of God tonight you know where the grace is. Turn your eyes upon Jesus and there's the grace of God flowing free for you. All the grace you need.

The great kindness of God in Christ Jesus. If you set your teeth against him the grace of God might as well not exist for you and Christ might as well not have died. But if you yield to him and come home then all the overwhelming incomprehensible plenitude of goodness and kindness in the great, illimitable reaches of God's nature are on your side.

And even justice, as I said before, is on the side of the returning sinner. He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And all the infinite attributes of God rejoice together when a man believes in the grace of God and returns home.

Let us pray. Father, we pray for all of us. We pray that thou would sweep away our self-righteousness, even any little traces of the ragged traces of self-righteousness that may be left.

Sweep them away and save us from ourselves. Let grace abound from Calvary and teach us that it is not by grace and something else but grace alone, thy goodness, thy kindness in Christ Jesus. This we ask in the name of the Lord who loves us.

Amen.

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