

Outrageous Grace

1 John 3:1 ESV (Pg. 592) See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. **4** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. **5** You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. **6** No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. **7** Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. **8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. **10** By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

- I. Today we continue our "P.R.O.O.F." series, considering the doctrines of God's grace and based on the book by Daniel Montgomery and Timothy Jones.
 - A. Two weeks ago, Pastor David talked about God's Planned Grace: that before time began, God mapped out the plan of salvation from beginning to end; specifically, he planned to adopt particular people as his own children, which he accomplished by means of the cross.
 - B. Last week I spoke about God's Resurrecting Grace: Everyone is born spiritually dead, and therefore there are none who choose, by the exercise of their will, God's way. God must enable us to respond to his offer of free grace, granting them a new kind of spiritual life by Jesus' resurrection.
 - C. Today, we explore God's Outrageous, Scandalous, Incomprehensible and Amazing Grace. God chooses those to be saved on the basis of his sovereign will and good pleasure; not because of what we do or bring to the table.
 - D. We just sang the most well-known song in the history of the church - Amazing Grace. It has been performed by more singers than one could ever count.
 1. Almost everyone is familiar with the first stanza: "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." The song has been heard everywhere!
 2. One of the weirdest uses of this song was in "Star Trek 2: The Wrath of Khan". The emotionless Vulcan, Mr. Spock performs an act of sacrifice, costing him his life. As the grieving Enterprise crew jettisons his body into outer space, a bagpipe plaintively plays "Amazing Grace", though the creator of the show was a notorious atheist; his show unapologetically humanist in nature!
 - E. If you've been in church awhile, you've probably heard the story of how the song was written: A reprobate captain of a slave-trading vessel named John

Newton finds himself in a devastating storm in the middle of the Atlantic. Terrified by the storm, he repents on the deck of the ship, finding Christ, and dedicates the remainder of his life fighting the slave trade in the British empire... and that's the story...kinda...

1. But that's the sanitized, romanticized, and Christianized version; the "rest of the story" is a little more messy and complicated than that.
 2. In truth, John Newton worked in the slave trade for some 4 years after he came to Christ. He didn't speak out against slavery for 34 years after his retirement from the trade, almost 4 decades after he came to Christ! So the question is, "Was John Newton a genuine child of God, while working in the African slave trade, or only after he renounced it?"
 - a) There is no cleaning up the slave trade in which he was involved either! You cannot say, "Maybe his heart wasn't in it!" or "Maybe he was a 'nice' slave merchant! There is no excuse for the genocide of slavery! Millions of families separated! Millions more died of torture, disease, and despair - human beings, made in the very image of God!
 - b) Nor is there a justification of his crimes to say that he was a product of his times, either. The justice and righteousness of God are not seasonal!
- F. Yet in the light of this, we must conclude that John Newton was, in fact, a true son of his Heavenly Father! And if that's true, and we sit here with our sense of morality and fair play literally turned upside down, we must ask, "How"?
1. First, consider what we have been talking about for the last few weeks: None of us are ever saved by our good works (or performance), or because of what God saw that we would become.
 2. We established from the Bible last week that you are not saved because you wanted God (**Romans 3:11b "no one seeks for God"**), therefore we are compelled to believe that we are saved simply because God wanted us!
- G. God wanted us and didn't save us because of our good works. Even though we live in an economy of performance, rewards and punishments, the scandal of grace is that God has chosen not to operate that way! He never asks "what have you done for me lately?". Our answer to the question is immaterial!
1. **Isaiah 64:6a ESV (Pg. 361) We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment...**
 2. You **cannot** improve by your attempts moral perfection. God is so holy and high above us, that we can't come close! He does not grade us on a curve. All of his tests are pass/fail. And if you think you pass, you're delusional.
- H. God didn't want us, and didn't save, us because of what he saw that we'd become. Paul told the Corinthians that God clearly didn't choose them because they were wise, powerful, rich or important.
1. This means that God didn't set out to draft the "dream team". He wasn't trying to "harness our potential"! This may be devastating, but God actually chose a rag-tag bunch of losers like us in order that he could display the beauty, power and grace like nothing else could! It's not about you at all!
 - a) Look at Jacob. He was one of Abraham's twin grandsons. The other was Esau. Esau was his daddy's favorite! He was a hairy, manly, hunter. A ladies man. An assumed leader.

- b) Jacob, though, was a weasel. His name literally meant “deceiver”. He came out of the womb competing with his brother, later cheating him out of his birthright and stealing his father’s blessing by conspiring with his mother against her blind, aged husband. Later he embezzles from his father-in-law! Did I mention he was a mama’s boy and a coward! Everyone wanted to be pals with Esau, but everyone kept one eye on the scoundrel Jacob while they clutched their wallets and tried desperately to avoid him!
2. **Romans 9:10 ESV (Pg. 551)** ...when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, **11** though they were ***not yet born*** and had ***done nothing either good or bad***—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— **12** she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” **13** As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” **14** What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! **15** For he says to Moses, “***I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.***” **16** So then it depends not on human will or exertion, ***but on God, who has mercy.***
- a) God chose Jacob and rejected Esau before either child had made a moral decision or action. Paul insists here that God is not unjust; rather, he is sovereign. He does not ask permission, or look for a reason to dole out mercy. He does according to all that he pleases to do.
- b) This scandalizes us! We work hard thinking God owes us something. We pat ourselves on the back in our superiority, because we’re not child molesters, axe murderers or slave traders. And yet while we’re boasting, God is busy saving child molesters, axe murderers, slave traders, perverts, gays, lesbians, pharisees, liars, cheats, lazy bums, drug addicts, convicts, whores, republicans and democrats, etc. because he wants to, so his purpose in election will stand, simply because he called.
- I. This is what John was celebrating in the text we read at the beginning! The love of God that enables to become his children, and that is changing us to be more like him! We should all worship increasingly in the light of this great fact.
- II. I imagine there’s a couple of objections brewing in the congregation. You may wonder if our continuing in sin and pursuit of holiness even matter if what I am saying is true. You may also wonder why we ask you to tell people about Christ if God is sovereignly electing those who are destined to believe.
- A. On the question of indwelling sin and personal holiness, I would suggest the real question is not, does holiness ***matter***, but rather, how does one ***become*** holy?
1. Most of us spend way too much of our Christian life either obsessing over, or ignoring the Law of God. Neither option is correct or helpful.
- a) We should not obsess over the Law because the Bible teaches us that it is ***completely powerless*** to make us better. **Romans 3:20 ESV (Pg. 548)** ***For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.***

- b) We should not ignore the Law because Scripture tells us that in it, God's righteousness is revealed. It's our yardstick to know how much our lives are looking like (or are opposed to) Jesus, and to know what he desires.
 - c) We must find a better way to become holy. The Law will not help us, it will just show us in HD detail how unholy we are!
2. **2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV (Pg. 562) And we all, with unveiled face, *beholding the glory of the Lord*, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.**
- a) We become holy (more like Christ) by looking at his glory. His glory is seen in his total person. His grace and justice, his discipline and his mercy. In considering Christ, we are changed from glory to glory.
 - b) This means that we are not only initially **saved** by grace, looking to Jesus; we **live** daily by grace, looking to Jesus. Jesus doesn't save you and hand the reigns of your life back! He saves you to change you!
 - c) We don't change so God can love us, God loves us so we can change. John said, **1 John 3:9 ESV (Pg. 592) "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God."**
- B. But if all this planned and resurrecting grace and unconditional election is true, why must we even bother proclaiming the story of Jesus to the world? Won't God just save who he's chosen anyway? The answer to this is two-fold:
1. First, we share the gospel because we have been commanded by Christ to do so. We have been commissioned to share the Gospel until the last one of the chosen is gathered in. The orders have never been altered and never will!
 - a) You cannot claim to believe in God's sovereignty if you scoff at the orders he gave to his church! And Ezekiel says you're playing with fire if you do!
 - b) **Ezekiel 3:18 ESV (Pg. 404) If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.**
 - c) We do what God commanded because he commanded it. We need no other reason. To insist on one, or to second-guess him is treason and rebellion of the highest order.
 2. Secondly, we share the Gospel because of our zeal for God's glory. For too long the church has shared Christ as a church growth initiative or as a "personal sales quota" endeavor, earning brownie points in Heaven.
 - a) These are lousy and ultimately doomed reasons to share Christ! We must be compelled to share Christ with everyone so that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
 - b) John Piper has said: **"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."** When we share the truth of God's redeeming love in Christ, we are seeking more worshippers that will add their voices and hearts to our passionate desire to see the whole earth worshipping our God and Savior; the true King!

- III. “Was John Newton a genuine child of God, while working in the African slave trade, or only after he renounced it?” Yes. Just like you are a genuine child of God as you sit here this morning struggling to be free from your porn problem, your out-of-control temper, your unforgiveness, your greed and materialism, your addictions.
- A. How can we know that he was? Because God loved him and didn’t leave him in his practice of sinning, but for his glory, transformed him, from glory to glory, into a force to demolish the sin he once justified!
 - B. Could God do the same with you? It begins when you admit that you are saved because he chose you, that he gained nothing in the transaction but another soul redeemed from death and the pit of hell; and that “to the praise of his glorious grace”.