

Grace is found through the Cross

The cross of Jesus Christ is not a comfortable idea. It confronts us. It unsettles our assumptions about ourselves and about God. If we are honest, most of us prefer a version of faith that tells us we are basically good people who simply need a little improvement, a bit of moral encouragement, perhaps some spiritual guidance. But the cross refuses to support that illusion. The cross tells a far more serious story about the human condition—and a far more glorious story about the grace of God.

At the heart of the gospel lies this simple but staggering truth: we are saved by grace. The apostle Paul writes, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Grace means undeserved favour. It means that God acts towards us not because we have earned it, not because we have improved ourselves enough to deserve it, and certainly not because we have succeeded in religious effort. Grace means God moves first.

The cross exposes the bankruptcy of human self-salvation. No amount of moral striving could bridge the gap between a holy God and a sinful humanity. If we could have rescued ourselves, Calvary would never have been necessary. But the Son of God hanging on a Roman cross tells us something profoundly uncomfortable: our situation was far worse than we imagined, and God’s mercy is far greater than we dared hope.

At Calvary, Christ took upon Himself what we deserved so that we might receive what we never deserved. Our guilt was laid upon Him. Our judgement fell upon Him. Our condemnation was carried by Him. The cross is not sentimental—it is substitution. The innocent standing in the place of the guilty.

And yet this act of justice is also the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever seen. Paul writes, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Notice what that verse does not say. It does not say that Christ died for us once we had sorted our lives out. It does not say that God waited until humanity had improved enough to deserve redemption. The cross happened while we were still sinners—while humanity was rebellious, broken, and spiritually lost. Grace begins with God’s love, not our goodness.

This is what makes the gospel so breathtaking. God does not stand at a distance waiting for us to climb our way towards Him. Instead, He descends into our brokenness and rescues us. The cross reveals a God who moves towards sinners, not away from them.

And through that sacrifice something extraordinary becomes possible—real forgiveness. Paul writes, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

Our modern culture often prefers to soften the idea of sin. We speak of mistakes, weaknesses, or poor choices. But the cross tells us that sin is deadly serious. It destroys lives, corrupts hearts, and separates humanity from God.

Yet grace does something remarkable. It does not pretend sin does not matter; it deals with it completely. Christ bears its cost so that we can be released from its penalty. Redemption means freedom purchased at a price. Forgiveness means that what once condemned us no longer holds power over us.

The cross declares that the past does not have the final word. Shame does not have the final word. Failure does not have the final word. Grace does.

And with forgiveness comes something even more profound—restored relationship with God. Paul writes, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Peace with God is not merely a feeling of inner calm. It is the restoration of a broken relationship. The hostility caused by sin has been removed. Through Christ, the door that was closed is opened again. Grace does not merely rescue us from judgement; it brings us home.

But the cross does not only change our status before God—it changes how we live. Jesus made this unmistakably clear when He said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

Grace is not passive. It reshapes our lives. Those who have received mercy begin to extend mercy. Those who have been forgiven learn to forgive. Those who have encountered sacrificial love begin to live themselves sacrificially. The cross therefore becomes both our salvation and our pattern for living.

When we stand before the cross, we see the deepest truths about God and humanity revealed in a single moment. We see the depth of God’s grace, the power of His love, the reality of forgiveness, and the restoration of relationship.

And we discover something else as well—that grace continues to sustain us long after the moment we first believed. The Christian life begins with grace and continues by grace.

As the Lord said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Grace begins at the cross. And it never moves beyond it.

Questions

1. Grace means that salvation is a gift from God rather than something we can earn through effort or religious performance. In what ways do people sometimes try to “earn” God’s approval, and how does understanding salvation as a gift reshape our faith and humility? - ***Ephesians 2:8***
2. The cross reveals that God acted in love towards us even while we were still living in sin. What does this teach us about the nature of God’s love, and how should it affect the way we view ourselves and others who are far from God? ***Romans 5:8***
3. Through the death of Christ, believers receive redemption and forgiveness. How does understanding the cost of forgiveness deepen our appreciation of grace, and how might it influence the way we deal with guilt, shame, and forgiving others? ***Ephesians 1:7***
4. Because of Christ’s sacrifice, believers are justified and brought into peace with God. What does it mean practically to live with the assurance that we have peace with God, and how should that shape our daily relationship with Him?
Romans 5:1
5. Jesus calls His followers not only to believe in the cross but also to live in its pattern of self-denial and obedience. What might it look like in everyday life to “take up your cross daily,” and how does grace empower us to live this way? ***Luke 9:23***