

## What Sets Christianity Apart

Years ago, a large international conference was held of religious leaders from around the world. In the midst of the conference, a debate began about what it was that set Christianity apart from other religions.

Some argued that it was God coming in the flesh that set Christianity apart from other religions. They decided that wasn't it, because other religions claimed that their gods came in human form. Some argued that it was love, or sacrifice, or the resurrection, or one thing or another; each idea being shot down.

Finally, C. S. Lewis, having arrived late, walked into the conference and asked what all the noise was about. When told they were discussing what it was that set Christianity apart from all other religions, he said, "That's easy. It's grace."

How true it is. My friends, the thing that sets Christianity apart from every other religion, and every cult in the world is grace, the "unmerited, unearned, undeserved, favor of God." And I want you to know, my friends, God's grace is sufficient.

In 2 Corinthians 12, we read that Paul was complaining. He had a thorn in the flesh. We don't know what that was. We don't know if it was a physical problem he couldn't overcome. We don't know if it was a temptation he regularly struggled with. We don't know if it was an attitude he battled with.

We don't know, because the Bible doesn't tell us. We do know that this thorn in the flesh was brought about by a messenger of Satan and we do know that Paul prayed several times that God would take it away. But God never did.

There are those who will tell you that if you pray and don't see a positive answer to your prayer, it's because you don't believe enough, or you don't have enough faith.

Horse feathers! Sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers for the same reason we don't give our children everything they ask for. God knows better.

Paul prayed 3 times to have this thorn removed and God said, NO!" Instead of answering Paul's prayer, God said, "My grace is sufficient." That means God's grace is enough. Turn to the person beside you and tell them, "God's grace is enough."

God's grace is enough. It doesn't take anything else. God's grace is enough.

## I. GOD'S GRACE IS ENOUGH TO SAVE YOU

> Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you were saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift-

I want you to know this morning, that God's grace is enough to save you. Do you realize there is nothing you can do to earn your salvation? You cannot be good enough. The Bible says the best you could hope to do, your best works, are like filthy rags compared to God's holiness.

My friend, you can never be good enough to be saved. You can never go to church enough. You can never give enough to the church. You can never help enough poor people. You

can never visit enough prisons, or light enough candles, or pray enough to earn being saved. It is only by God's grace that you are saved.

So quit trying to be good enough to be saved, and trust Jesus. Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into Him." Tell somebody, "God's grace is enough to save you."

## II. GOD'S GRACE IS ENOUGH TO SEAL YOU

- Romans 5:20-21

Paul says, "The law of God opened my eyes. I saw myself. I saw my sin. I saw who I really was. My sin increased. But God's grace multiplied even more."

Dear friend, do you realize that if you are truly born again, if Jesus is truly your Savior, that you are saved, signed and sealed, just waiting to be delivered? You cannot lose your salvation. When you invite Jesus Christ into your heart to be your Lord and Savior, He comes in to live, to stay, forever.

The Holy Spirit lives within you.

- John 10:27-30

Jesus says, "The sheep the Father has given Me are in My hand, and no one can snatch them out of My hand. They are in the Father's hand, and no one can snatch them out of God's hand."

The Rev. Gene Gregory writes "Several years ago, Gladys, Drew and I took a trip out west. We went and saw the Grand Canyon, some Indian cliff dwellings, the Petrified Forest and all of that stuff. One of the things Drew and I enjoyed the most while we were out there was the climbing. Drew and I climbed mountains, and rocks, and hills. That was 3 years ago, when Drew was only 4. Often, Drew and I climbed places many adults wouldn't climb; much less take their children. Any time we climbed some steep or high places, I always held Drew's hand. Now let me ask you, "When Drew

climbed with me, was he depending on his grip on me, or was he counting on his Daddy's grip being strong enough to hold him?" Right. Drew was counting on His Daddy's hand being strong enough to hold him, or catch him if he slipped.

Some of you people are still living like your salvation depends on your grip on God. You're afraid you'll sin and He'll quit loving you. You're afraid you'll mess up and lose your salvation, so you go from one day to the next, never knowing if you're still good enough to be saved.

Guess what? You're not, and neither am I. My salvation doesn't depend on my good works, or my good living. It doesn't depend on my grip on God. It depends on God's grip on me, and God grips with grace.

> Ephesians 2:6-7 He also raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavens, in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

"During the building of the Golden Gate Bridge over San Francisco Bay, construction fell badly behind schedule because several workers had accidentally fallen from the scaffolding to their deaths. Engineers and administrators could find no solution to the costly delays. Finally, someone suggested a gigantic net be hung under the bridge to catch any who fell. Finally in spite of the enormous cost, the engineers opted for the net. After it was installed, progress was hardly interrupted. A worker or two fell into the net but were saved. Ultimately, all the time lost to fear was regained by replacing fear with faith in the net."

My friend, quit living in fear and trust the grace grip of your heavenly Father. God's grace is enough to save you. God's grace is enough to seal you, and God's grace is enough to change you.

### III. GOD'S GRACE IS ENOUGH TO CHANGE YOU

> 1 Peter 5:10 Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you...

God, because of and through His grace, will change you. Turn to the person beside you and tell them, "God's grace will change you."

God's grace will change you.

a. Restore - The Bible says, because of sin, you and I have fallen short of the glory of God. According to this verse, because of grace, God can and will restore you. You, like Paul, may feel like the chief of sinners. You feel that you can never get a grip on life again. You feel that you can never be clean, you can never be forgiven, and you can never go back. You say, "Jeff, if you only knew what I've done. I can never have a close relationship with God again. He'll never take me back.

My friend, you can't go back, but you can go on, because God will restore your relationship with Him. David, after sinning with Bathsheba and after having her husband killed, cried out, "My sins are always before me." Later, because of the grace of God he was able to write,  
> Psalm 51:7 Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow.

b. Establish and strengthen - Do you remember Peter? Peter was a coward. Peter, the one Jesus promised He was going to use to build the church. Peter, the one who claimed he would never leave Jesus. Peter denied and abandoned Jesus when Christ needed him most. But, because of the grace of God, Peter was changed from a coward to a champion. He was strengthened and established where nothing would shake him.

Dear friend, God changed Peter. He changed Paul, and God

will do the same for you if you let Him.  
So what shall we do with God's grace? If God's grace is enough to save us, if it is enough to seal us, if it is enough to change us, what shall we do with God's grace?

The correct response to God's grace is to:

## I. ACCEPT HIS GRACE

Take Jesus at His word. Jesus says, come unto Me all ye who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. This morning, accept God's grace. Tell Him right now, "God, I don't deserve your forgiveness. I don't deserve your grace, but I accept it." Will you accept His grace right now?

## II. TRUST HIS GRACE

Second, trust Him. When He says He has you in the palm of His hand. Trust him. You worrying about it, isn't going to change a thing. Rest in the grace that He offers. Some of the saddest people I know are Christians who still worry about whether or not they're saved. They can be some of the most uptight people in the world. My friend, Jesus said, "My peace I leave with you." Trust His grace, and accept His peace.

## III. SHARE HIS GRACE

When Jesus cast the demons out of the Nazarene demoniac, and the delivered man wanted to follow Jesus, what did Jesus tell Him to do? He said, "Go and tell." Go tell the people what I have done for you. Go share with them the grace I've shown you.

- Luke 12:48 ...Much will be required of everyone who has been given much.

If God has shown you grace, then be willing to show grace

to others. I am afraid that too many of us have forgotten how much grace has been shown us by both God and by others. I am afraid that we have gotten how much grace God has shown us, and so have become unwilling to show grace to others. I know I have sometimes allowed myself to forget about the log in my own eye, and have become preoccupied with the speck in my brother's eye.

Do you remember that rules for women that went around on the internet some time back? A husband, speaking to his wife said, "If I say something and you can take it 2 ways; one way that will upset you, and another that won't, I meant it in the good way."

Gentlemen, if you want your wife do cut you some slack, to show you grace in what you say, then you had better show her grace in the things she says. Give her the benefit of the doubt. If you want your children to cut you some slack when you are unable to do something you told them you'd do; then you had better cut them some slack, show some grace when you interpret their hasty promises. If you want your friends to show grace, when you inadvertently stick your foot in your mouth; then you had better show them some grace. If you want your loved ones to show grace when you forget to call, then you had better show them some grace and give them the benefit of the doubt. We've got to get the chips off our shoulders and start showing one another grace, the same grace God shows us.

Share God's grace with others. Share what you receive. God's grace is enough to save us, to seal us, and to change us. Our responsibility is to accept His grace, trust His grace, and share His grace.

Charles Swindoll wrote:

Jesus Christ came to our wall,  
Jesus Christ died for our fall;

So that regardless of death and in spite of sin,  
Through grace, He might put us together again.

Amen.