

Joseph 6 - Amazing Grace

We have been tracking the work of God through the life of Joseph as he carried out the mission that God had given him. From early on, Joseph was given his mission to have preeminence among his brothers including all the responsibility that goes along with that. Each stage of that mission strengthened him more to be able to ultimately complete it. Specifically, he built up momentum as exhibited by his regular resistance to Potiphar's wife. He exercised integrity as he applied himself impartially to the butler and baker and without regard to manipulating things to his benefit. He applied himself to his mission as he carried it out in his work in the world. His maturity was evidenced by exercising discretion when his brothers finally came back into his life. Each one of these things takes life experience to truly appreciate it. Immature people, that is people who have not put in the time to learn these things by *experience*, show their immaturity because they think they know what momentum, integrity, and discretion are just because they know them by *definition* and that *that* is all that is necessary. As important as each of these elements are, there is a quality, a not so secret ingredient, that underlies this situation and all of God's dealings with man.

1. Grace defined.

That ingredient is *grace*. Simply put, grace is showing *favor* with no regard to earning that favor. It is not *whether or not* you earned that favor. It is specifically without earning it. Once you do something to deserve that favor, it is no more grace it is a payment instead. Paul says it succinctly in this way:

Rom 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.

2. Joseph's entire call and mission had come by the grace of God.

What made everything possible in Joseph's life was the grace of God. It's not as though Joseph wasn't *worthy* of *human* approval and reward. In fact, his life was, actually, pretty much standard that way. Sometimes you advance in the situations that you find yourself because you work hard. That was the case when Joseph served in his father's sheep ranching business, as a steward with Potiphar, and a trustee in prison. His situation was *also* standard in that no matter how hard you work, there is no guarantee that you won't also get some pretty raw deals. There was equally no reason why he didn't get any *worse* deal. He could have died in some slave galley. He could have been killed on the spot in Potiphar's house. He could have been thrown into some common dungeon to rot instead of where the Pharaoh's prisoners were. He could have been forgotten by the butler completely. While we have to go through our paces to learn what we will, God's grace keeps us going. God had a job for Joseph to do and He sustained him through his training time by His grace.

Rom 9:15-16 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.

16So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

We get to be saved by God's grace, and then we get to serve by God's grace. Going to heaven is a pretty good deal in spite of the fact that what we really deserve is Hell.

Eph 2:8,9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

9Not of works, lest any man should boast.

If that is *all* our life amounted to, God will have gotten the glory for it.

But then God may choose to use however He wants to. We did not become a child of God by an act of our will or how we ran the race of life. Neither is our service to God dependent on our will power or how fit we are to run the race of life. It is God who chooses how we will be used. Paul recognized this in the way God chose to show His mercy through him as an example.

1Tim 1:15-16 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. **[Paul's job had been to hunt down Christians and God *still*, according to His grace, wanted to save and use him. Paul recognized the fact that he was still the chiefest of sinners.]**

16Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

In the same way, Joseph trusted God's plan and that his mission was sustained by God for His purpose. When God made sure that Joseph was situated in the government of Egypt, you can be sure he saw God's gracious hand at work when his brothers showed up looking for food. You can see this in his reaction when he finally revealed himself to them.

Gen 45:5-8 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: **for God did send me** before you to preserve life.

6For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither *be* earing nor harvest.

7And **God sent me before you to preserve you** a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8So now *it was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Paul described this for the life of the believer in 2Cor 1

2Cor 1:3-6 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, **that we may be able to comfort them** which are in any trouble, **by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.**

5For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* **for your consolation and salvation.**

What we go through by God's grace builds up a *life* of grace for His purpose.

3. God's grace was shown to be *amazing* as Joseph applied it to his brothers.

God's grace is simple in that there is no complex system for appropriating that grace. We don't receive it by any work we do or by any ritual performed upon us. In fact, if any work or ritual were involved at all that would *nullify* the whole concept of grace. Grace is simple in that God just wipes out our sin debt in one fell swoop without regard to any of our efforts or worldly standing. When we prayed and asked God to save us, He simply said, "Yes."

Grace *is* very simple, but it is not *just* simple: it is *amazing*. That is why the very title of one of the most universally beloved hymns is so powerful: *Amazing Grace*. It was written by a man who truly knew how amazing God's grace is. Listen to the testimony of John Newton, the author of that hymn:

The Greyhound [the ship on which Newton was serving at the occasion of his salvation] had been thrashing about in the north Atlantic storm for over a week. Its canvas sails were ripped, and the wood on one side of the ship had been torn away and splintered. The sailors had little hope of survival, but they mechanically worked the pumps, trying to keep the vessel afloat. On the eleventh day of the storm, sailor John Newton was too exhausted to pump, so he was tied to the helm and tried to hold the ship to its course. From one o'clock until midnight he was at the helm.

With the storm raging fiercely, Newton had time to think. His life seemed as ruined and wrecked as the battered ship he was trying to steer through the storm. Since the age of eleven, he had lived a life at sea. Sailors were not noted for the refinement of their manners, but Newton had a reputation for profanity, coarseness, and debauchery which even shocked many a sailor.

John Newton was known as "The Great Blasphemer." His mother had prayed he would become a minister and had early taught him the Scriptures and Isaac Watts' *Divine Songs for Children*. Some of those early childhood teachings came to mind now. He remembered Proverbs 1:24-31, and in the midst of that storm, those verses seemed to confirm Newton in his despair:

Prov 1:24-31 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

27When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

29For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

30They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

31Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

John Newton had rejected his mother's teachings and had led other sailors into unbelief. Certainly, he was beyond hope and beyond saving, even if the Scriptures were true. Yet, Newton's thoughts began to turn to Christ. He found a New Testament and began to read. Luke 11:13 seemed to assure him that God might still hear him:

Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

That day at the helm, March 21, 1748, was a day Newton remembered ever after, for "On that day the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of

deep waters." Many years later, as an old man, Newton wrote in his diary of March 21, 1805: "Not well able to write; but I endeavor to observe the return of this day with humiliation, prayer, and praise." Only God's amazing grace could and would take a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor and transform him into a child of God. Newton never ceased to stand in awe of God's work in his life.

Though Newton continued in his profession of sailing and slave-trading for a time, his life was transformed. He began a disciplined schedule of Bible study, prayer, and Christian reading and tried to be a Christian example to the sailors under his command. Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* provided much spiritual comfort, and a fellow-Christian captain he met off the coast of Africa guided Newton further in his Christian faith.

Newton left slave-trading and took the job of tide surveyor at Liverpool, but he began to think he had been called to the ministry. His mother's prayers for her son were answered, and in 1764, at the age of thirty-nine, John Newton began forty-three years of preaching the Gospel of Christ.

In 1779 Newton left Olney to become rector of St. Mary Woolnoth in London. His ministry included not only the London poor and the merchant class but also the wealthy and influential. William Wilberforce, a member of Parliament and a prime mover in the abolition of slavery, was strongly influenced by John Newton's life and preaching. Newton's *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, based on his own experiences as a slave trader, was very important

in securing British abolition of slavery. Missionaries William Carey and Henry Martyn also gained strength from Newton's counsel.

Newton lived to be eighty-two years old and continued to preach and have an active ministry until beset by fading health in the last two or three years of his life. Even then, Newton never ceased to be amazed by God's grace and told his friends, "My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior."

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<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1701-1800/john-newton-discovered-amazing-grace-11630253.html>

- *Amazing* grace revealed.

Joseph had already extended grace to his brothers when he dealt with them back when they came to live in Egypt. But the *appreciation* of that grace could have been obscured by the fact that there was something that Joseph stood to gain by receiving them. Their father, Jacob, was still alive and could have been perceived as a restraining force on Joseph. Out of respect for his father, Joseph might have been obliged to treat them with favor. It could also be said that, not only did Joseph care for the approval of his father while he was alive, but that Joseph's only *other* interest in letting them live was to get them to bring his full brother, Benjamin, as well. When we look at Genesis 50, we see the brothers make a move out of desperation as soon as their father, Jacob, was dead.

Gen 50:14-18 And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

15And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will

certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

18And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants.

We can't really tell whether Jacob had *actually* commanded that Joseph forgive them after his death, but we can surely see the anguish that brought the brothers down on their faces before Joseph. Joseph had a great opportunity to ignore them. Without any way to prove their claim, it would easily have looked implausible and unlikely that Jacob had given any such command. Joseph had been greatly abused by them in the past and they certainly still deserved any punishment he could have given. Joseph had plenty of power of authority to be able to get even with them. He could *still* easily have *them* thrown into prison as they had caused *him* to suffer. They even suggested themselves that *they* now become *his* slaves, just as *he* had been a slave. The more we heap on arguments for why there was no reason for Joseph to have blessed his brothers now that their father was gone, the more amazing his grace would become if he were disposed to extend it to them. What's so amazing about grace is that it's so *abnormal*.

- Grace is amazing specifically because it is grounded in the grace of God.

We live in a tit for tat, dog eat dog, one upmanship world, always teetering at the brink of disaster and annihilation.

And yet grace is always abounding and being extended. It should not be confused with being a doormat. Grace is extended but not always everyone receives that grace for themselves. Grace is not just forgiving people whether they are want it or seek it or not, but being ready to give that forgiveness whether someone deserves it or not.

While the Scriptures don't specify what Joseph's sins were, don't lose sight of the fact that he was still a sinner. When we keep that in mind about ourselves, it helps us to stay balanced when we are tempted by pride and self-righteousness. As Joseph had received grace from God, he extended it to his brothers. When all the incentives were removed for Joseph to be merciful, he *still* maintained that grace and offered it anew to his brothers.

Gen 50:19-21 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God?

20But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

21Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

The sum of that grace is based on the thought, "Am I greater than God that I can exact more punishment than he would?" We need to see things from God's perspective. God is gracious and had a plan for the brothers' lives as well as Joseph's. It was *God's* grace that Joseph was extending to his brothers.

4. How to exhibit amazing grace.

We need to exhibit that same grace that Joseph had from God. This is where our sense of being on mission for God agains comes through to carry us forward. Interpret all things through the filter of your mission. Things are fallen out for your benefit because God means it for good. In general, all things are

working toward the kingdom.

Php 3:7-10,13-14 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

⁸Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

⁹And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

¹⁰That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

¹³Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Life is a conveyor belt. Work on what is placed in front of you and when the conveyor belt moves it on, let it go and work on what God brings your way next.

Matthew 6:33-34 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³⁴Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

All things in your life are working together for the good for God's purpose for your life:

Rom 8:28-29 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.

²⁹For 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.

Rom 5:1-5 being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

³And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

⁴And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

⁵And hope maketh not ashamed; because **the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

We are saved by the grace of God. If you have never turned to Him and asked Christ to save you according to His grace, then it is time to leave off your efforts which cannot bring salvation. Instead ask Jesus today to save you by *His* work on the *cross* where He paid for your sins with His life-blood. This has been described by the acrostic **God's Riches At Christ's Expense.**

We live and breathe and work by the grace of God. We extend that grace to all around us so that *they* may be persuaded to accept the grace of God. Instead of walking around fearful of what others are thinking of you, live out your life of

service thinking of others and helping them experience the grace of God.

1. Grace defined. Rom 11:6
2. Joseph's entire call and mission had come by the grace of God. Rom 9:15-16, Eph 2:8,9, 1Tim 1:15-16, Gen 45:5-8, 2Cor 1:3-6
3. God's grace was shown to be amazing as Joseph applied it to his brothers. Prov 1:24-31, Luke 11:13 , Gen 50:14- 21
4. How to exhibit amazing grace. Php 3:7-10,13-14, Rom 8:28-29, 5:1-5, James 1:2-4