

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Grace is the key word of Christianity. Our God is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29). All our hopes rest upon the grace of the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:11). The Apostle John says, "Grace came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17) and Paul tells us "God's grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

J. I. Packer writes, "The word 'grace' thus comes to express the thought of God acting in spontaneous goodness to save sinners: God loving the unlovely, making covenant with them, pardoning their sins, accepting their persons, revealing Himself to them, moving them to response, leading them ultimately into full knowledge and enjoyment of Himself, and overcoming all obstacles to the fulfillment of this purpose that at each stage arise. Grace saves from sin and all evil; grace brings ungodly men and women to true happiness in the knowledge of their maker" (18 Words, The Most Important Words You Will Ever Know, pg. 94).

From the first day to the last day salvation is completely by God's grace. Jesus the Christ is God's grace in human form. Sinners that we are, we do not deserve what Jesus did for us on the cross. What brought Jesus to this earth is nothing less than sheer grace. I now have two word pictures etched in my mind of God's pure grace. The first is Jesus dying on the cross, bearing our sins and receiving the full wrath of God. God's wrath was rightly aimed at us for we deserve it, but God's aim sent it all upon Jesus. We get all the grace and Jesus got all the suffering and wrath. So, word picture number one for me of God's undeserved grace is Jesus dying on the cross. The second word picture for me of God's grace is heaven itself. Grace triumphs over everything and heaven is ours forever. The cross and heaven are my two word pictures of grace. And I want to soak it in all the time.

None of us can save ourselves. None of us measure up to God's holiness. None of us are good enough to meet God's standards. God's grace is freely given to us, actually imputed into us, and this is what saves us. The perfect righteousness of Jesus is poured into your soul.

God sees you as if you never sinned. God sees you as if you always obeyed. He sees the perfect righteousness of Christ in your soul, and this is why you have life eternal, and you are on your way to heaven.

The Holy Spirit keeps bringing you to Jesus and into a deeper understanding of Jesus and keeps you in Jesus the entirety of your Christian life. The Holy Spirit will not let you ignore Jesus for long and keeps you safe in Christ for eternity. The Holy Spirit keeps you in the grace of God and continues to immerse you in grace all the day long.

Not that long ago I was drenched in sweat. Do you know that itchy sweating feeling when the smell is really bad? Either you take a shower or you will be up all night itching like mad without any sleep. After you shower you feel much better and your family tells you that you no longer stink.

In almost every chapter of Isaiah before chapter 12 we are confronted by how bad we stink in our sin as compared to God's perfect and holy righteousness. God is so perfect and holy that even his wrath is perfect and holy. The purpose of God's wrath is to show people how far they have fallen from God. Now is the time to repent and turn to God and walk in close fellowship with God. This of course fits in well to our season of Advent.

Friends, please hear this. It is essential in our Christian lives to come to a complete stop and take a shower in God's grace. It is essential to cease from all your labors and dwell in the room of God's grace. Wait on the Lord. Listen to his voice. They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. Psalms 62:5(NASB) My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. Psalms 39:7(NASB) "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.

Isaiah comes to a screeching halt and puts all of his focus on God's triumphant grace. Nothing moves us to worship God more fully than being bathed in the grace of God.

Our lives are so hectic and busy. The pace is unendurable. The stress is insurmountable. Stop and dwell on grace and hear the good news of Jesus. I see the good

news like this. Jesus never failed. Jesus never fell short. Jesus never sinned. God's grace has given to every believer the perfect record of Jesus the Christ. Quit trying so hard to please God and bathe in God's grace or take a shower in his grace. God cleanses you. God renews you. You no longer stinketh. God gives to you the fragrance of Jesus the Christ.

In Isaiah chapter six when Isaiah sees the Lord, he gained an understanding of God's grace that remains with him forever. Isaiah viewed God in all of God's holiness. Isaiah was then overwhelmed with his own sinfulness. I truly believe Isaiah thought his life was about to end for no one can see God and live. Isaiah cries out, "Woe is me" (Is. 6:5). Another translation puts it this way. "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man" (NLT). Isaiah thought his life was over. But God touches Isaiah's life with grace and forgave Isaiah all of his sins. He applied to Isaiah the future work of Jesus on the cross. He deserved death and God gave to him new life. Isaiah was immersed, bathed, showered by God's triumphant grace.

When you know your sin so deeply, God's grace becomes that much more meaningful to you. Instead of death, we get new life. Luther says where there is forgiveness of sins there is new life. Instead of utter ruin we are made brand new creatures. God's grace is so amazing.

Chapter 12 verse 1 uses the phrase, "In that day." In that day can have more than one meaning. It can refer to the time when God's people return to Judah and Jerusalem after being held in captivity in Babylon for 70 years, which is present day Iraq. God's anger had been spent and now is the time of comfort. Isaiah's focus is now God's triumphant grace and the comfort it brings.

Returning to the homeland was their ever-great joy. They returned singing on the way to the Lord God Almighty. They knew the great power of God's deliverance. They drank deeply from the well of joy. God's grace is triumphant.

Friends, the phrase in that day can also be referring to the 2nd coming of Jesus. On that day we will finally understand God's triumphant grace. When we see God, we will know all his

comfort. We will finally fully see that the anger and wrath of God we deserved was bore for us completely by Jesus on the cross. He got the wrath and we get the comfort and all by God's grace. The Kingdom of God will reign everywhere, and the salvation of God will be experienced in all its fullness. You will forever trust and never be afraid. God Himself will be your strength and you will be weak no more. Even Christians who do not like to sing will break forth in song for God's triumphant grace will overwhelm you. You can't help but praise the Lord.

Even as God provided water in the wilderness during the time of Moses, God's triumphant grace will provide everything that we need. And yes, all of us, even people today that I call old poops, sour to the core, will experience the joy of the Lord. No sour faces. No more looks of pain, only faces radiating the beauty of the Lord joyfully.

Friends, sometimes in worship, sometimes when you are praying, sometimes when you are all alone with the Lord, or sometimes when you are using your spiritual gift to the glory of God, you become overwhelmed with God's Holy Presence. All you can do is give thanks to God as you call upon his name. You are filled to overflowing and you want to tell everyone about God and make known God's deeds among the people. Filled with the Presence of God and knowing so deeply the grace of God you want only to exalt his name. God's missionaries sense this and they want God's deeds to be made known in every nation.

Please know when Jesus comes again the joy that we will know, the worship that we will do together as we praise our exalted God, there will be people from every nation for God's grace triumphant grace is spread to ever nation. Matthew 24:14(ESV) "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Habakkuk 2:14(NASB) "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The week Jack died we had some very personal conversations. Actually we had personal conversations for over 20 plus years. Jack worked in a funeral home for his

professional life. When you do funeral work for a living you know a lot about death and dying, maybe even too much. In the hospital Jack knew his body was shutting down and his life was now to be a number of hours, not days. Sandy of course did not leave his side. Jack lived his whole life in Christ, running to win. He could see the finish line in front of him when he would cross to the other side. He did not want to leave his family, but he finished the race a true winner and entered the joy that was now his. He put me in my place in one of our last conversations. I told Jack, "I am jealous of where you are going." He got really serious and said quite frankly to me. "Don't think like that." "Always be thankful for what you have and where you are." What a great definition of a life living in the grace of God, always being thankful to God for what you have and where you are. There is much joy in that, a foretaste of the joy to come. Paul writes, **2 Timothy 4:7 (ESV)** ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

God's grace triumphs. No more sadness or pain or anguish. Sin, evil, disease and death will be no more. There will be heavenly bliss, a joy indescribable. Jesus is coming again. We will all be made whole. Jesus' death on the cross bearing the wrath of God that we deserve means God's triumphant grace opens up the gate to heaven. Please bathe in that grace. Take a shower in that grace. Ponder that future grace and it will lift you up. God's grace triumphs. This is the message of Isaiah 12. Amen and Amen.