

## Grace of God

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### Sermon Synopsis

In this episode of World Impact, Dr. Billy Wilson explores the life and legacy of John Wesley, a key figure in Christian history whose ministry sparked revival movements in England and the early American colonies. The sermon highlights Wesley's dedication to spreading the gospel—traveling extensively, preaching thousands of sermons, and establishing churches—all rooted in his personal experience of God's grace. Wesley is presented not only as a historical figure but also as an example of how divine grace can transform individuals and societies.

The message situates Wesley within 18th-century England, a time of social inequality, moral challenges, and spiritual hunger. Dr. Wilson details Wesley's early efforts at reform, including the Holy Club at Oxford, and his transformative encounters with the Moravians and on Aldersgate Street, where he experienced the assurance of Christ's saving grace. These events shaped his lifelong commitment to making God's grace accessible to all.

Central to the sermon is Wesley's theological understanding of grace, described in progressive stages: universal grace that initiates spiritual awareness, convincing grace that reveals the need for salvation, justifying grace that brings forgiveness, and sanctifying grace that empowers holy living. Dr. Wilson explains how these "means of grace"—prayer, scripture study, and community worship—help believers experience ongoing spiritual growth and, ultimately, a life marked by love and Christian perfection.

Wesley's grace-centered approach enabled revival in a turbulent society without fostering revolution. His inclusive ministry welcomed marginalized individuals, laying the foundation for the Methodist movement, which continues to influence millions today.

## Sermon Highlights

- John Wesley's discovery of the grace of God transformed his life and ministry, showing the profound power of grace that changes hearts and communities.
- Grace is a gift from God that works progressively in believers—from universal grace that awakens spiritual consciousness to justifying, sanctifying, and ultimately perfecting grace enabling Christians to live in holy love.
- The means of grace—prayer, scripture reading, fasting, church attendance—are spiritual disciplines that position believers to receive more grace, empowering them to grow closer to God and serve Him more fully.
- God's grace balances His sovereignty and man's free will; salvation and growth in grace happen by God's initiative, but each person must respond freely to say yes or no to His work in their life.
- John Wesley's legacy reminds us that grace brings assurance of salvation and the ongoing strength to endure life's challenges, fulfilling the promise that 'best of all, God is with us.'

## Scripture Verses

### Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

### Romans 11:6

And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

### John 1:16-17

Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

### Titus 2:11-12

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all people, teaching us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

### Philippians 2:12-13

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

### Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans (referenced in Wesley's journal)

[Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed while reading about the change God works in the heart through faith in Christ.]

## Quotes

- "Our heart needs to be changed if we're truly converted to Christ." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "John Wesley synthesized the difference, the balance, between God's sovereignty and man's free will by showing that it's absolutely always by the grace of God." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "The means of grace then are when we say yes to the grace of God working in our life, we receive more grace." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "Somebody has said, 'Grace means God's Riches At Christ's Expense.' In the grace of God, we don't get what we deserve; we get God's grace and Christ's riches instead." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "Best of all is, God is with us." - John Wesley

# Bible Study

## Objectives

- Understand the transformative power and multifaceted nature of God's grace as discovered by John Wesley.
- Explore how grace works through human cooperation and free will according to Wesley's theological synthesis.
- Identify and reflect on the different stages/levels of grace: prevenient, convincing, justifying, sanctifying, and perfecting grace.
- Apply practical spiritual disciplines as means to access and grow in God's grace.
- Recognize the significance of assurance of salvation and how grace produces a changed life and zeal for evangelism.
- Encourage living a life of holy love, reflecting God's sanctifying grace and Christian perfection.

## Reading and Reflections

- Ephesians 2:8-9 – Salvation is by grace through faith; a gift from God, not by works.
- Titus 2:11-12 – The grace of God has appeared to all, teaching us to renounce ungodliness and live godly lives.
- Romans 11:6 – Grace and works are mutually exclusive; grace remains grace when not based on works.
- John 1:16-17 – Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, replacing the law.
- Philippians 2:12-13 – God works in us to will and act according to His good purpose, empowering sanctification.
- Reflect on John Wesley's 'heart strangely warmed' moment (Aldersgate experience) as a divine assurance of salvation.

## Key Observations

- John Wesley's journey from moralism to gospel grace highlights that grace is not earned but is a divine impartation.
- The Moravian example demonstrated a peace born from assurance in God's grace even amid life-threatening storms.
- Wesley's ministry bridged God's sovereignty and human free will, showing grace as both sovereign gift and humanly accessible.
- Grace operates in different measures and stages in a believer's life — from initial awareness to Christian perfection.
- Means such as prayer, fasting, scripture reading, and worship serve as channels or conduits to receive greater grace.
- Wesley's legacy includes mobilizing millions worldwide towards revival, personal holiness, evangelical zeal, and social transformation.

## Personal Reflections

- Consider my own experience of grace — have I felt assurance of salvation as Wesley did at Aldersgate?
- Am I actively cooperating with God's grace by engaging in spiritual disciplines that foster growth?
- How does the knowledge of being saved by grace cause me to respond to challenges and fears in life?
- Do I understand that grace calls for a personal response, and I can freely say yes or no to God's work in my heart?
- Reflect on times when the 'heart strangely warmed' has been evident in my life moments of renewed faith or hope.
- Evaluate my love for others — am I growing towards the Christian perfection of living without sin, perfect in love?

## Lessons for Daily Life

- Grace is God's unearned gift—there is no need to earn salvation by works but respond by faith.
- Assurance of salvation combats fear and doubt; believers can live boldly in the confidence of Christ's finished work.
- Spiritual disciplines are not legalistic tasks but vital practices to position ourselves to receive grace.
- Our response to grace must be continual: say yes daily to God's invitations through challenges and joys.
- Grace enables moral transformation — through it, believers live out righteousness, holiness, and love.
- God's grace is sufficient, providing strength and perseverance through trials and obedience.

## Practical Applications

- Make daily time for prayer, scripture reading, and worship as means to access deeper grace.
- Meditate on and memorize key scriptures about grace (Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:11-12, Philippians 2:13).
- Reflect regularly on the assurance of salvation, affirming your trust in Christ's finished work.
- Engage in small group fellowship or 'holy clubs' to spur one another on in grace and holiness, like Wesley's early group.
- Practice acts of love and service as evidence of sanctifying grace shaping your heart towards Christian perfection.

- When faced with temptation or despair, remember Wesley's testimony: 'Best of all, God is with us.'

## Challenges for the Week

- Identify an area where you struggle to fully trust God's grace and commit to surrendering that fear or doubt.
- Start or renew a daily habit of a spiritual discipline (prayer, Bible study, fasting) aiming to receive more grace.
- Share the testimony of how God's grace has transformed your life with at least one person this week.
- Practice 'saying yes' to God's grace when facing any hardship or decision rather than trying to rely on your own strength.
- Confront any legalism or self-righteousness in your heart by meditating on the truth that salvation is a gift, not earned.
- Seek God for deeper experience of sanctifying grace to grow in holy love and overcome habitual sins.

## Further Study

- Dive into John Wesley's journal and works on grace and sanctification.
- Study comparative theology on grace: Calvinism vs. Arminianism, emphasizing Wesley's synthesis.
- Read Romans chapters 3–8 for an in-depth understanding of justification and sanctification by grace.
- Examine the lives of Moravian missionaries for examples of grace in mission and assurance.
- Explore Philippians 2:12-13 in context for how God works in believers' will and actions.
- Research the history and impact of the Great Awakenings and Methodist revival movements.

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the rich and overwhelming grace You have poured out upon us through Jesus Christ. Like John Wesley, may we experience that moment when our hearts are strangely warmed by Your love, giving us assurance and power to live faithfully. Teach us to recognize the different ways You graciously move in our lives and help us to say yes to You daily. Strengthen us through spiritual disciplines so that we grow in sanctifying grace and perfect love. Let Your grace be our shield and our strength in trials, and may we boldly proclaim Your gospel to a world in need. Most of all, remind us daily that You are with us, guiding, loving, and empowering us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

# Daily Devotionals

## Day 1

### Scripture Verse

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) - "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

### Reflection

John Wesley's life is a powerful beacon of God's transformative grace. Imagine traveling over 250,000 miles—ten times around the earth—on horseback and on foot, all to proclaim the Gospel and awaken hearts to the power of God's grace. Wesley's discovery on that fateful evening on Aldersgate Street wasn't just a moment; it was a revolution of the heart that rippled through centuries and continents. Grace isn't simply a concept to be understood; it's a divine power to be experienced. Wesley's profound moment of his heart being "strangely warmed" reveals that grace brings assurance and peace that surpasses all understanding. He learned from the Moravians on that storm-tossed sea that assurance of salvation is possible because salvation is by God's unmerited favor—not by our tireless efforts. Think about your own journey. Perhaps, like Wesley, you've been striving emotionally and spiritually, trying to earn God's favor through good works or moral living. But the good news from Ephesians is that our salvation is not a reward for work but the gift of God's grace received by faith alone. In a world full of turmoil and personal struggles, it's easy to lose sight of this gift. Yet grace says, "You don't have to be afraid, even in the storms of life." Just as the Moravians sang amidst the tempest, so can we live in peace knowing God's grace is with us. Today, reflect on the greatness of this gift. Is there an area where you've been trying to "earn" God's love? Wesley's story reminds us: grace is God's initiative—it begins with Him and remains with Him, inviting us simply to receive. And when we say yes to that grace, we're forever changed.

### Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your amazing grace that saves me not by what I do, but by what You have done. Help me to trust fully in Your gift and to rest in the assurance that my heart can be warmly and wonderfully transformed by You. Amen.

## Day 2

### Scripture Verse

Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV) - "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."

### Reflection

John Wesley's discovery of grace didn't just stop at assurance of salvation—it extended into a life of sanctification and discipleship. Wesley recognized that grace isn't a one-time event but a journey, a living interaction between God's power and our willing hearts. Think of grace like a river: it flows in, transforming us, but we must dip our containers repeatedly to experience more. Paul's exhortation in Philippians reminds us that we play a part in this ongoing process. We are called to "work out" our salvation with reverence and intentionality, yet it is God who energizes and empowers our efforts. It's not spiritual legalism or burden; rather, it's an active, vibrant partnership. Perhaps you resonate with Wesley's early frustration when he preached morality without the life-changing power of grace. Many of us can relate to spiritual dryness or feeling worn by rules rather than energized by God's love. Just as Wesley began with 'prevenient grace'—the grace that awakens us to God's truth—so we can lean into the practices Wesley taught: prayer, fasting, Scripture reading, and worship. These aren't mere duties but "means of grace," channels through which God pours in strength and wisdom. Remember a time when you felt spiritually refreshed after making intentional room for God's presence. Maybe it was a quiet morning, a heartfelt prayer, or a moment of worship. These moments are the footprints of grace increasing in your life. As you decide to say yes to God's invitation daily, you join Wesley in a life shaped by grace, moving toward love perfected and holiness imparted. This balance of surrender and effort reflects the beautiful tension of God's sovereignty and our free will. We're invited to choose, and in that choosing, more grace flows. Like Wesley, be encouraged that as you discipline your spiritual walk, grace will meet you with new power and love.

### Prayer

Father, teach me to live daily by Your grace, cooperating with Your Spirit as You work in me. Help me to say yes to You each day, opening my heart to the deeper levels of Your love and holiness. Amen.



## Day 3

### Scripture Verse

Titus 2:11-12 (NIV) - "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

### Reflection

On the journey from knowing about God's grace to living fully in it, John Wesley encountered deep social realities of his time: poverty, moral decay, and division. Yet through it all, grace was the great equalizer. Grace teaches us not only that we are saved but also how we can live rightly—self-controlled, upright, and godly—even amidst chaos. Wesley saw grace at work in the hearts of ordinary people, transforming a divided England and sparing it from greater unrest during times of political upheaval. His life challenges us to consider: How is God's grace at work in your everyday challenges? Maybe you face hardship in family, work, or society's pressures. Wesley's legacy shows us that grace empowers us to rise above circumstances and engage life with godly courage. Imagine a young boy facing hardship with God's hand upon him, much like Wesley at Charterhouse School. That same grace that warmed Wesley's heart is yours today. Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense — riches that invite you to reject sin's enticing lie that you must earn favor or overcome alone. The progression of grace—from universal grace calling all, convincing grace bringing conviction, justifying grace declaring us righteous, to sanctifying grace enabling holy living—is an ongoing outpouring. It's grace that not only brings peace but teaches us new ways to live and love. Reflect today: Are you resisting God's grace? Are you leaning into it, allowing it to change your heart and life? Wesley's final words, 'Best of all, God is with us,' remind us that grace is the ever-present reality in every trial and triumph. You are not alone—grace is sufficient, powerful, and personal. Let your heart be strangely warmed anew.

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You that Your grace reaches me where I am today. Help me to live in the fullness of Your grace, turning away from what dims Your light in me and embracing a life that honors You. May my heart be warmly transformed each day as I walk with You. Amen.

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