

The Scandal of Grace

Series: Elephant in the Room #4

Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:14; Ephesians 3:8

Introduction: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14 (NIV)

In 1994 there was a prisoner in the Columbia Correctional Institution in Portage, Wisconsin, serving multiple life sentences. He had killed, had sex with, dismembered, and eaten portions of (in that order) seventeen young men. Reviled as the epitome of human depravity, Jeffrey Dahmer turned heads and stomachs with his acts of necrophilia [sexual intercourse with or attraction towards corpses] and cannibalism.

His vile behavior elicited a nauseating response when it hit the news. America, a country that has a long leash on immorality, was stunned with disbelief at the ungodly acts of this man.

But what happened in April 1994 was even more shocking than Dahmer's depravity. While in prison, Jeffrey Dahmer gave a television interview and mentioned that he wished he could find some inner peace.

A Christian woman named Mary Mott saw the interview and thought, I know where you can find inner peace. So, she mailed several Bible studies to Dahmer. After receiving them, Dahmer immediately read them all and wrote Mary Mott back, asking for more. So, she sent more.

Shortly after, Mott contacted Roy Ratcliff, a minister who lived near the prison, and asked him to visit Dahmer to share the gospel with him. Ratcliff nervously agreed. He visited Dahmer, told him the good news about Jesus, answered some questions, studied the Bible with him, and eventually saw God's grace flood Dahmer's dark soul with life. Dahmer accepted Jesus as Savior and King; **a deranged cannibal rearranged by grace.**

Dahmer's bloodstained hands were washed clean with the blood of Jesus. All the acts of murder, pedophilia, necrophilia, and cannibalism were thrust

down to the bottom of the sea, no longer to have a voice in God's courtroom. Seven months later, Dahmer was killed by an inmate with a broomstick, but as far as we know, he's celebrating in heaven.

Many people were cynical, doubtful, even angry; like the Old Testament prophet Jonah; over Dahmer's "religious experience" in prison. Pastor Ratcliff recalls that many people he talked to doubted Dahmer's conversion.' And most of these doubters were Christians. "They ask if Jeff was truly sincere in his desire for baptism and in his Christian life.

He says, "Yes, I am convinced he was sincere. Why question the sincerity of another person's faith?" If a person confesses Christ and yet fails to demonstrate any evidence, then there's room to doubt. But the cynicism lobbed at Dahmer's conversion did not focus on his post conversion life. He was judged not by his faith, but by his past crimes."

As we continue our sermon series, **The elephant in the room**, "*a very large issue that everyone is acutely aware of, but nobody talks about.*" The elephant I want to talk about today is **The Scandal of Grace**.

Do you like the thought of this man being in heaven? The doubt hurled at Dahmer's conversion gives off the foul odor of spoiled grace that's been sitting in churches too long.

Many Christians, like the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son, believe that rebels like Dahmer are unworthy of the fatted calf; they're appalled at the thought of our Heavenly Father running to meet them and embrace them. Good Christians think, '**we need to keep grace under control.**' But when it snaps our leash and runs loose, we get nervous.

Listen friends, the truth is grace has no leash. It's untamed, unbound, and runs wild and free. Biblical Grace is scandalous.

Most of us have been educated in the "school of performance." We've become so conditioned by it we carry it over into our Christian experience. The grace of God that saves us (Ephesians 2:8-9) loses its meaning when we're bombarded with the pressure to perform.

In many ways, the word grace has lost its stunning beauty, it's become just another religious buzz word. Some say that grace means "unconditional acceptance." But that fails to capture the divine aggression that invigorates grace and causes it to lurch upon the unworthy.

Grace is more than just leniency and unconditional acceptance. Divine grace is God's relentless and loving pursuit of His enemies, who are unthankful, unworthy, and unlovable.

Grace is not just God's ability to save sinners. Grace is God's aggressive pursuit of, and stubborn delight in every person. Grace means that despite our filth, our addictions, our pride, lust for money, comfort, and success, God desires to transform us into trophies of His amazing grace.

The original Greek word for grace is **charis** (with a hard "ch~" like karis). Charis was not invented by Christians. Charis didn't originate with Jesus, Peter, or Paul. The word **charis**, in fact, was used widely in the ancient world. When Jesus walked through Palestine talking about God's **charis**, His hearers knew what the word meant. When Paul traversed the Mediterranean world announcing a message of **charis**, he would have been readily understood. If he got into a debate with Greek philosophers, they, too, would have grasped the meaning of **charis**.

That's because **charis** simply means **"gift."** Rich people in the ancient world often gave gifts, to other people. They would donate **charises** to their city: a fountain or statue in the city square. They would give a **charis** to someone in need of food or shelter. The wealthy were eager to give gifts to people because the ability to give a **charis** showed (or showed off) that they had the means to give. So, Christians weren't the first people to talk about grace.

But Christians revolutionized what **charis** meant, and here's why. When rich people gave a **charis** to someone, they didn't give it indiscriminately. They gave **charises** only to those who were worthy to receive it; those who had a high status, were morally upright, intellectually perceptive, or physically remarkable. After all, they wouldn't want to squander their **charis** on some

low life. A rich person wouldn't waste **charises** on outcasts, the unappreciative, or those who had nothing to offer in return. **But Jesus did.**

Jesus and His followers gutted the word **charis** and infused it with fresh meaning, with life-giving power. Jesus did more than give **charis** to people. He made it His mission to give to the beggars, low-lives, and all who crossed His path. Jesus hunted them down and showered them with **charis**.

Paul, a one time enemy of Jesus, was gloriously overcome one day by God's grace and devoted his life to proclaim the message of **charis** that he once found toxic. He picked up where Jesus left off and infused this well-known term with the same unwelcomed splendor that changed people's lives.

Paul says it like this in Ephesians 3:8 "**To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,**" (KJV)

When the Bible was translated from Greek into English, the translators had a difficult time finding an English word that could adequately describe what the **unsearchable** riches of Christ really meant. The word unsearchable first means **inexhaustible**, riches that cannot be **exhausted**.

Unsearchable also means **untraceable**. It is saying, you could follow the trail of the unsearchable riches of Christ as far back in time as you wanted, and you could never find the source because the source is an infinite God.

When Jesus wrote His last will and testament, which we call the New Testament, or the new covenant. He not only wrote it, He sealed it with His blood. Then He rose again from the dead to ensure that His will would be carried out. **His desire was that we would have His untraceable riches available throughout eternity.**

1. We are rich in the unsearchable riches of His **provision**.
2. We have the unsearchable riches of His **pardon**.
3. We have the unsearchable riches of His **power**.
4. We have the unsearchable riches of His **providence**. He is watching over us, He is guiding us, and He makes all things work together for

- good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.
5. We have the unsearchable riches of His **promises**, over 7,000 of them in the Word of God that you can claim and apply to your lives.
 6. And then we have the unsearchable riches of His **patience**.

STORY: There was a barber in a small local town who had been the only barber in town for years; think of Floyd in Mayberry. Everyone went to this barber to get their hair cut. Then, one day a big hair salon franchise came to town and opened shop. They advertised, "**All Haircuts for \$3.00**"

Slowly, the barber's business began to dwindle. He just couldn't compete, so he hired a business consultant. The consultant spent a day asking many questions. At the end of the day the barber asked, "So what do you think? Should I close shop?" The consultant said, "Not yet. I'll be back tomorrow." The next day the consultant showed up with a huge banner that he hung in front of the barber shop that said, "**We Fix \$3.00 Haircuts!**"

God addresses the mess of our lives with scandalous grace. If I asked, "Do you believe in grace?" Of course, you would say, 'yes.'

But have you been changed by grace? Shaped by grace? Strengthened by grace? Emboldened by grace? Softened by grace? Snatched by the nape of your neck and shaken to your senses by grace?

Max Lucado says, God's grace has a white-water, riptide, turn-you-upside-downness about it. Grace comes after you. It rewires you. From insecure to God secure. From regret-riddled to better-because-of-it. From afraid-to-die to ready-to-fly. Grace is the voice that calls us to change and then gives us the power to pull it off.

Perhaps through overuse, grace has become another nice term dumped into our worn-out bag of Christian lingo. We say grace before meals, include grace in gospel presentations, and slap the word grace on the names of churches, but if we never hug a homeless person, befriend a beggar, or forgive our enemy seventy times seven, then we confess grace with our lips but mock it with our lives.

Scandalous grace is not just a New Testament thing. Every character, every event, every single page from the Old Testament bleeds grace. The reason we miss it is because we've been trained to read the Bible, especially the Old Testament, **morally**.

That is, we generally look to the Old Testament as a showcase of moral examples to live by. We need to believe like Abraham, live like Jacob, lead like Moses, fight like Joshua, worship like David. We should fight like Samson, flee like Joseph, and stand up for God like Esther. But there's a huge problem.

First, this moral approach puts the emphasis on people rather than on God.

Second, most of the characters of the Old Testament are not good moral examples to follow. Abraham was a liar, Jacob was a cheater, Moses was a tongue-tied murderer, Esther never even mentioned God, and Samson was self-centered, and enslaved to lust and bloodshed.

So, instead of reading the Bible **morally**, we should read it **theologically**. This doesn't mean that there aren't some moral examples to follow.

Rather, reading the Bible theologically means that we look first and foremost at what the passage teaches us about God. What is God doing? How is God revealing Himself? How is God going to overcome our sin, keep His promises, and reestablish the relationship He created us for?

There are many Christians in the church trying to make God love them. They spend their lives doing, serving, witnessing, fasting, judging, performing, and feeling the unbearable weight of condemnation when they fail to measure up. They don't realize it, but they are acting like **grace-less** Christians who atone for their sin and try to win God's favor by grinding out good works.

I'm talking about believers who inch along in a tit-for-tat view of a God who disciplines us when we mess up but otherwise remains distant. We live as if grace is what God did in the past but is something that bears no significance for our ongoing relationship with Jesus.

God not only loves us; He likes us. He eagerly dirties His hands with our mess to mold us into masterpieces of beauty. And when we emerge clean, we owe it all to God. From beginning to end, our Christian lives are a **tapestry of grace**.

You can't make God love you. God loves you because of who He is and because of what Christ has done. His love is not based on what you do, or what you don't do.

One story in the Old Testament gives us a glimpse of God's scandalous grace. Judah is left with a widowed Canaanite daughter-in-law, Tamar, and he tells her to wait until his youngest son grows up so that she can marry him. It never happens.

A few years go by, and Judah is strolling by a village and sees a woman sitting near the city gate. Judah breaks out his best ancient pickup line: "**Here now, let me come into you**" (38:16 NASB). Judah has sex with her, but since he has left his wallet at home, he pays her on credit (Gen. 38:17-18).

Come to find out, Judah actually slept with his daughter-in-law, Tamar! She dressed up so that her father-in-law would sleep with her. But it gets worse. She gets pregnant and ends up having twins-Perez and Zerah. And you thought you had a bad week! But God takes this complicated story and turns it into a **charis** moment.

Just so you know, Genesis 38 is placed right after Genesis 37 and just before Genesis 39; duh, right? But the placement of Genesis 38 is significant because Genesis 37 begins the "Joseph story," which runs all the way to the end of Genesis. Joseph is known for his obedience, dreams, and for being one of the most moral characters in the Bible.

But Joseph isn't mentioned in Genesis 38, although he is the star in Genesis 37, and the main character in Genesis 39-50. The story of Judah and Tamar, in Genesis 38 interrupts Joseph story. And Judah and Tamar's intrusion into Joseph's story is intentional. Joseph flees sexual lust, while Judah sprints toward it. Joseph is morally impeccable, while Judah is a moral train wreck.

So why the contrast? If you read the Bible morally, then you might conclude that the contrast shows us how to live a moral life like Joseph and how not to live an immoral life like Judah. There may be some truth to that, but the real contrast shows us that God's promise to redeem His wayward children and to forgive us, enjoy us, **cannot** be impeded by wickedness. God's promised Messiah, the One who will redeem the world is known as the Lion from the tribe of...Joseph...No. Jesus is the Lion from the JUDAH.

God deliberately selects the genealogical line of Judah, not Joseph, to bring forth the Savior. According to Jesus's genealogy in Matt. 1:2-3, **Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron.**

God hand selects the illegitimate son from an illicit affair between a father-in-law and daughter-in-law dressed to be a part of His redemption plan.

God transforms Judah's mess into a conduit of grace. The scandal of Grace means that no mess, no failure, no broken marriage, no affair, nothing can prevent God from using you. **So let God use you.**

We move from Genesis and find the entire book of Exodus is shaped by grace. If there ever was clear evidence that God saves people based on who He is and not on what we have done, it's the exodus from Egypt. God doesn't rescue His people from Egypt because they are righteous. They aren't fasting, praying, or even living righteously while in slavery. God's power is released on account of His compassion, not Israel's righteousness.

God loves you because of who He is and because of what Christ has done. Whether you are depressed, suicidal, underweight, over-weight, dumb, smart, popular, socially rejected, happily married, divorced, physically fit, physically disabled, funny, whether you are Judah or Joseph, Rahab, or a Proverbs 31 woman-God loves you because you are made in His image.

God authored all the beauty of creation, but through the incarnation, Jesus experienced our pain, and brokenness. The pain of being rejected, abused,

unloved, uncared for, mocked, shamed, and disrespected. Jesus knows and has experienced all of this. And He willingly endured it to bring us God's love.

Jesus not only knows when we feel lonely, discouraged, scared, or exhausted, He has been there. "**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.**" 2 Cor. 8:9 (NIV).

I think many Christians are willing to put up with social outcasts and misfits, but this isn't grace. It's tolerance. Where there's no pursuit, no stubborn delight, there's a superficial Christianese grace, but it's not **charis**.

God aggressively and delightfully values and uses thugs and misfits to build His glorious kingdom: abrasive, self-assured people like Peter, hotheads like James and John, violent brawlers, and extortionists like Simon and Matthew, and the mentally and physically abused like Mary Magdalene. He doesn't give them a bowl of soup and shuffle them out of the back door of the church. **He gives them responsibility in His Kingdom.**

Grace isn't a term. It's not a doctrine. It's not a buzzword. It's not the words of a song, a prayer before meals, a name plastered on our churches. It's not leniency or niceness. It's not something that can be domesticated or completely understood. And it's something that can ever grow old or stale.

If you aren't challenged by the God dying for His enemies; if you aren't stunned by Jesus beckoning the publicans and sinners to embrace their pardon from sin; if you can't love your enemy, then I would suggest that you have not meditated on the scandal of grace brought by Jesus' death at the cross long enough, where He declared "**it is finished.**"

And when Jesus declared, "**It is finished,**" He meant it. God's punishment for our sin was paid for, permanently settled, finished - 100 percent.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,"

(Rom. 8:1). None. God will not and cannot condemn you after He has already condemned Jesus for you. His blood doesn't cover 90 percent of our sin, but all of it. Past, present, and future.

The message of God crucified should never get old. And grace should never be tamed and chained up inside the gated community of a church. It needs to be unleashed and celebrated. We need to see each other as God sees us and stop judging people on past sins instead of present grace-filled lives.

The bible says it like this: **7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!** Romans 5:7-8,10 (NIV)

We're hardwired to believe that good people get the good stuff and bad people get the bad stuff. But the Scandalous Grace of God changes all that. Aren't you glad? There is hope for everyone you love and everyone you hate, for every good person, not saved, and every vile person who rejects God's love and offer of forgiveness.

Every other religion of the world rejects the idea of grace and insists that we must contribute something to our salvation. We must try harder and be better; we must live morally. All the various religions of the world offer a self-help way to merit restoration with God, whether it's the eightfold path of Buddhism, the karma and reincarnation cycle of Hinduism, the laws, and ordinances of the Mormon church, or the four pillars of Islam. **Only Christianity suggests that God offers a relationship to people based on grace.**

Some people reject the grace of God. They don't want to have anything to do with the grace of God. Others reject the grace of God a different way. It's not that they don't believe in Jesus; they just don't believe that grace + faith + nothing else = salvation.

They believe that it's God's grace plus their good works. And in that sense, they reject the grace of God, because the grace of God is the unmerited favor of God. You can't add merit to something that's unmerited.

In the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Acts, Paul was responding to a vision of a man in Macedonia who said, "Come help us." Paul went to Macedonia

and entered the city of Philippi. When he got there, he sat by the riverbank and immediately Lydia, a seller of purple, listened to him, believed the gospel, and was baptized. Later he met a young woman possessed with a spirit of divination. Paul commanded the evil spirit to come out of her and the Bible tells us that she was delivered, and she was gloriously set free.

That did not sit too well with some of the men in the city of Philippi, who were getting rich from her fortune telling. And so they seized Paul and Silas, led them off to the Magistrate, and said, "These men, being Jews, are causing trouble in our city."

They put them in chains, beat them until their backs were torn and bloody and threw them in jail. The Bible tells us that at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. Earthquake hit, opened all the prison doors

Now the jailer was afraid. Under the old Roman law, a jailer whose prisoners got away would have to face death himself. Acts 16 (NIV) says, **27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

Now this is the question that everyone faces at some time or another in his or her life, agnostics, infidels, blasphemers, moral people, famous people, infamous people. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief- they all face this question. The executive and the ditch digger, the millionaire, and the homeless, the genius and the illiterate, the young and the old - all face this question: **"What must I do to be saved?"**

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." (NIV) That is the only answer to life's most important question: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

In John 14:6 when Jesus was talking about heaven, He said: **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** (NIV)

In Acts 4:12, Peter said, **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.** (NIV)

God didn't overlook your sins, lest he endorse them. He didn't punish you, lest he destroy you. He found a way to punish the sin and preserve the sinner. Jesus took your punishment, and God gives you credit for Jesus' perfection.

Other people receive the grace of God in vain, according to 2 Cor. 6:1. That word vain means "empty." It means "useless." It means "to no effect."

People that receive the grace of God in vain are not letting God's grace change their lives. Paul said to the church in Galatians, **"Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?"** (NIV)

STORY: Years ago, a Christian counselor named Frank Lake, got really concerned because he was working with Christians, who were all fired up to serve Jesus, and within a couple of years they would get discouraged, resentful and get burnt out. He got together with a theologian by the name of Emil Brunner, and they began to reflect on the life of Jesus in the Gospels.

When they examined Jesus' life, they saw a pattern to it. The apostle John summarized it this way: **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."** (John 1:14) Three verses later he repeats this same idea. **For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.** (John 1:17)

I love that. **"Full of grace and truth."** Jesus did not come to strike a balance between grace and truth. He brought the full measure of both. John had seen this firsthand. He was in the crowd when Jesus said to a woman caught in adultery, "I don't condemn you, now leave your life of sin." Translated: "What you did is a sin. It was wrong. But I'm not going to give you what you deserve. I'm extending to you what you don't deserve: **grace.**"

There is a difference between grace and mercy. Mercy is when God doesn't give us what we do deserve -- punishment. Grace is when God gives us what we don't deserve -- blessing.

Have you ever been to a church that is very legalistic? Transparency and honesty are dangerous in a church created for church people whose goal is to always look good. **The casualty in a church for church people is GRACE.** It's hard to extend grace to people who don't think they need it.

On the other end of the church spectrum are those who declare that the church is for everyone, regardless of belief **or** behavior. These are the churches that value openness, tolerance, and acceptance above the truth. The problem with this approach is you must pick and choose which parts of the Bible to believe. **The casualty in liberal churches is TRUTH.**

Jesus tells the rich young ruler that to gain eternal life, he must sell everything and follow him. Then, a few months later Jesus whispers to the criminal crucified next to Him that on that very day they will meet in paradise! Seriously, one guy must dedicate the rest of his life to Jesus; the other guy gets in heaven with a minute left on the clock.

Frank Lake called this rhythm, where divine grace was always flowing into Jesus and then flowing out through Him, **The Cycle of Grace**.

1. The beginning movement in the cycle of grace is acceptance.

Before He begins His ministry, Jesus gets baptized by John the Baptist. When He comes up out of the water, He hears the voice of his Father say, "'this is my Son in whom I am well pleased. The voice addresses just Jesus. "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." That's your identity. I love you. That's your value. That's your worth. I am well pleased. That's joy. That's delight." For Jesus, this is the beginning of the cycle of grace.

Identity and acceptance come before achievement and work because identity and acceptance are rooted in Grace.

To the Ephesians, Paul wrote that ***'in Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood'***. (1:7)

Redemption is not a renovation, it is not a restoration, it is a new creature, regenerated and made God's own possession by the blood of Christ. Our acceptance begins by receiving His saving grace. We are not mistakers in need of correction. We are sinners in need of a Savior. We need more than a second chance; we need a second birth.

2. The next movement is sustaining grace.

The Bible tells us, "God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished..."

Saving grace saves us from our sins. Sustaining grace meets us at our point of need and equips us with courage, wisdom, and strength. Sustaining grace promises not the absence of struggle but the presence of God.

Paul says: ***"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"*** (Rom. 8:32 NIV).

1 Peter 5:11 ***"My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that the grace of God is with you no matter what happens."***

God's Sustaining Grace will help you if:

1. Tempted and feel like giving in.
2. Tired and feel like giving up.
3. Troubled and feel like giving out.

Sustaining Grace supplies Spiritual Power when we are weak

Listen to these words from Annie J. Flint's hymn, "He Giveth More Grace"

He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as our labors increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials he multiplies peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

3. Next is Significance. Here in this movement in the cycle we begin to have grace not just flowing into us but through us to other people.

Jesus was clear on his significance, and he would talk about it often in His "I am" statements: "I am the Way. I am the Bread of Life. I am the Vine. I am the Good Shepherd." He would affirm his follower's significance by saying: "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world."

As Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). The apostle sensed within himself not just the influence of Christ but the person of Jesus. Christ moved in. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Most of us believe all the prepositions: Christ **for** me, **with** me, **ahead** of me. But the greatest truth is that Christ is **in** me.

Paul refers to this union 216 times. John mentions it 26. No other religion or philosophy makes such a claim. The Christian is a person in whom Christ is happening.

Acceptance...sustaining grace...significance...and....

4. The final act in the cycle of grace is Fruitfulness. Jesus did kingdom work all the time, but he did it from grace, and therefore, he did it with joy.

John 15: 7-11 ***"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear***

much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

James Merritt said: ***“Grace doesn’t give you the license to live the way you want to. It gives you the liberty to live the way you ought to.”***

EVIDENCE OF GROWING IN GRACE is that you are *Abiding in Christ*

Abiding in Christ cannot be separated from expressing the life of Christ. Biblical Christianity *is* an expression of the life of Christ.

When I'm in Christ, can you see my imperfections? Can you see the things that I'm ashamed of? Can you see the things that have ripped up my life and other people? All you can see when I'm in Christ, is Christ. When God looks at me, He only sees the perfection of Jesus Christ.

Grace has no leash, it can't be tamed, it runs wild and free. Biblical Grace is God's relentless and loving pursuit of His enemies, who are unthankful, unworthy, and unlovable. Are you thankful for God's grace?