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It Wasn't Free to Him

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Series: God's Amazing Grace

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Father, the privilege of prayer, once again, brings us spiritually to our knees, in recognition that apart from You, we can do nothing. Truly, Yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory. Ours is the privilege of falling at Your feet in adoration and praise, and watching You work.

We come this morning in our weakness, for You to demonstrate Your strength. We come, Father, recognizing that apart from grace, we have nothing to offer and no way to offer it. But because of that incredible grace that You have provided for us, that supernatural power to work through us, to do that which we cannot do naturally, in the spirit realm everything is ours to give.

So we humble ourselves in Your presence, Father, and appropriate that grace. It is free, it is undeserved, but it is ours. And may we learn a lesson this morning, Father, about how that wonderful grace affected You—a lesson, perhaps, that by Your grace we will never ever forget.

There are so many here, Father, that are struggling—some are physical problems, some are emotional problems, some are economic problems, many have spiritual problems—all coming to just look at You. So take us out of the way, Father, and be our teacher, be our instructor, and be our guide. And our prayer, Father, is that we might literally be changed more perfectly into Your image.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Try to place yourself inside this story with me, if you will. The scene is a hospital waiting room. There is confusion everywhere. A lot has happened in the last few hours, and its effect is going to be felt by everyone in the waiting room. There is a variable as to what's going on in the hearts of these people that most of us can't even fathom.

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Picture, if you will, in one end of the waiting room was a group from the lower east side, most of whom live in the projects. They include a large group of older teens and young adults. They've all got leather jackets on, unusual haircuts and earrings worn where people often don't. They were reasonably subdued, but were obviously tough. They were quite aware that they were being observed. A policeman stood in the corner writing out a report, that, incidentally, was part of the influence that was keeping them subdued.

Now picture in the other corner of the waiting room a somewhat distinguished looking man. He wore a white doctor's jacket and, with him, were his wife and his daughter. His face was drawn, and you could see his eyes were red. Obviously, his whole family was in deep mourning. And standing alongside, was a reporter from the Daily Chronicle, pen in hand, taking notes about something she thought was newsworthy.

Do you have the picture? As the story unfolds, it happened like this. The group was from the projects, and they were part of a gang known as the "Gestapos." Constantly, they were under surveillance because it was said that they had an initiation rite that required new members to kill someone in a drive-by shooting or some other more ruthless way to prove they were "men." Now, one of the Gestapos had a younger brother named "Rick" whose nickname was Jeb. He was dying of a heart disease. Nothing but a transplant would suffice, and up until now, at least, no donors had been forthcoming. The operation would have been covered by welfare, but he was not on the top of the list, and he had taken a turn for the worse, and, apparently, would be dying any time within the next 24 hours.

The doctor seated on the other side is a heart specialist. He's the best transplant surgeon in the area. He had been called on to do the transplant should a heart be made available. The reason for the tension, I have to tell you, and the newsworthiness of the story is that the donor would turn out to be the doctor's only son, Arthur. The reason his heart was available is that he had been killed in a drive-by shooting earlier that day. The prime suspects, incidentally, were these young men standing on the opposite side of the room.

Now the question is: would this man give his son's heart

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to the very people who probably took his life? The doctor and his family are Christians. They had been in the chapel at the hospital praying all afternoon. If he should decide to give his son's heart to this lad, would he do the operation himself? I mean, would this man personally take the heart out of his own son and give it to someone who was possibly involved in his son's death? Who could ask anyone to do that?

The tension was building. If the doctor chose to will his son's heart to the gangster's brother, there was still the issue of the doctor's fee. The rest would be covered by Medicare, but the doctor's fee would be astronomical. Finally the tension reached its peak.

The doctor, weary and worn, called the mother of the dying boy to his side, and as the policeman and the gang members all gathered around and looked on, this is what he said. "I'll do it. I'll do the surgery. I'll give your son my son's heart, and it will be free, because *that is what God did for me.*"

The room erupted in cheers and jubilation. The doctor sat down and wept uncontrollably. "Jeb gets a new heart," they shouted, "and it will be free!" Softly, the policeman turned to the cheering family and whispered, "No, my friends, *it may be free for you, but it wasn't free for him.*" It cost the one who would do the surgery the life of his son. He was willing to give his son's heart to the very ones who took his life, but, beloved, it wasn't free to him. Then why did he do it?

It's called *grace*. Part of understanding the grace of God is coming to the deeper understanding that *though grace is free to you and to me, it was not free for God*. God, the perfect Father, let the ruthless mob take the life of His only Son, just so He could transplant His precious, sinless heart into the souls of the very people who crucified Him. "It's free!" we shout, and indeed it was to us. But *it wasn't free to Him. Unless and until we come to grips with what it cost the Great Physician to make that transplant, we'll never have a grasp of grace.*

The only way to really understand grace, beloved, is to take another trip to Calvary. Calvary is the definition of grace. Unless we come to understand, or at least we begin to understand, the price that God paid for your sins and for mine, grace can become something we take for granted. Why, when we talk

about it, what do we say, "Well, grace is free, it's paid for." Yes, it is. But we must understand that *it wasn't free to Him. And that's an understatement.*

CONSIDER WHO HE IS

Our journey will begin by asking ourselves to consider just who He is. Who is it we are talking about? We forget sometimes. We throw this word around. So let's not ever forget who paid the bill. Let's not ever forget who transferred our liabilities to His account and all of His assets to ours. It was the Living God. It was the Creator God who spoke the worlds when they came into being. It was the One, the psalmist said, who could just speak and the earth would crumble and be gone. It was the Solitary One, the One we were reminded of last week, that there was no need of angel or man to exist and to exist in utter perfection. It was the Holy One, the One who cannot look upon sin. It was the Victorious One, the One who has never tasted defeat and never will. It was the Omniscient One, the One who knows the beginning from the end and knew before He created us that this moment would come and that decision would have to be made.

The Only True and Living God decided to die for you and for me. Not a good trade. Not a reasonable offer. All He had to do was blink His eye, beloved, and He could have created a new universe devoid of human existence or devoid of sin. He could have created a world of robots that only responded to His every move and never violated His word either. It would have been much easier than what He did. He could have created a system of works and allowed anyone who made so many sacrifices or attended so many meetings to be redeemed. He could have. He could have blanketed the world with nothing but good, destroyed Satan and left man with only one choice: obedience.

He could have, but He didn't. And He knew in eternity past that He wouldn't. Why? Because, beloved, there is an element in the nature of God called *love*. It is free, undeserved, sovereign and eternal. It demonstrates itself through mercy, by forgiving sin, and then through grace, by enabling righteousness in the life of a sinner. Because of that love, *He could not choose any other alternative*. He had to go to that cross and give us something we did not deserve, could not pay for, could not earn, and could not lose.

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He looked down at this world that was encrusted with sin. It was afire with rebellion. It was a sea of hypocrisy and literally dying in its own iniquity, and He loved it. He loved *you and He loved me* so much that it never entered His mind to do anything but call for the bill and pay it out of the storehouse of His own goodness. There is no other explanation for grace than the love of God. You can't explain it through human reasoning. Any other choice He made would have been more plausible.

To allow His own Son to die and transplant His heart into the hearts of we who are arrogant, self-righteous rebels who have denied His existence and laughed at His absolutes prior to conversion, seems to violate every tinge of human wisdom. But we aren't dealing here with human wisdom. Aren't you glad? We are dealing with a kind of love that even our theological tongue-twisters and Greek definitions cannot paint into the consciousness of our minds. This was the eternal God who needed nothing, giving everything, so that we who had nothing to offer, would have everything at His expense. What a gift.

If you can, imagine the king of a famous empire learning that the meanest, most vile criminal in the penitentiary is dying of an incurable disease, and he deserved to die. And then learning that the king's son had the only blood that could be used in a transfusion to save his life. The man's crime? He tried to assassinate the king. He had vowed one day, one way or another to bring him down.

Then imagine that king offering his own son's blood, *knowing that his son would die during the operation*. That's just a glimpse of grace. God, the Sinless One, dying for the sinner. God, the Holy One, dying for the unholy. God, the Creator, dying for the vilest of His creation. And He did it with no coercion and no mitigating circumstances that justified His behavior, as though it were reasonable or even sensible, from a human perspective.

The only factor governing His decision to save you and to save me was the desire of His heart to give us something we did not have. Doing so did nothing for Him. It did not add to His stature. It did not assure Him anything in return. But He *had to do it*. He loved us that much.

Beloved, that's grace. It is God giving all of Himself to the least deserving sinner who ever lived in exchange for nothing.

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Before you begin to categorize yourself, I must tell you this morning, *you are the least deserving sinner who ever lived, and so am I.* The Scripture says we all tie for the honor. *“For there is none righteous, no not one.”*¹

CONSIDER WHO WE ARE

That leads us to the next consideration. If that's who God is, then how would you describe the motley crew He died for? To understand how deserving we aren't, and that's the purpose of this study of grace, we need to realize what our view of righteousness is. It is nothing like God's. We view righteousness as *relative righteousness*. (Now I don't know if it's because we think our relatives are less righteousness or not.) But we compare our goodness with society, or often even more so, with those in society who have seriously violated moral or spiritual ethics, and determine that God really got a bargain with us, because we're above average. Now let me ask you. You don't have to raise your hand; you're not going to anyway. But don't you feel that way? Isn't that the way you look at the righteous? You look around at these guys who've done this and done that, and these people whose attitudes are this and that; and you look around and think, Boy, but for the grace of God, there go I. The problem is there is no such thing as *relative righteousness in the kingdom*. *There is no such thing as being above average. There are none who are righteous.*

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

(Romans 3:23)

Now let me give you an illustration. You can no more be partially righteous than you can fly without wings. To look at a giant airliner in the sky and see it flying overhead and say, “Wow, look at it fly,” and then jump two feet off the ground and say, “See, I can fly, too,” makes no sense, does it? Either you can or you can't. There's no such thing as “relative flying.” That plane can fly and you can't. That eagle can soar and you can't. That robin can fly and you can't. Why? You don't have wings. Beloved, sin clipped your wings. You were born a sinner, and you have sinned. The minute you did, you fell to earth. Someone who can jump four feet can't fly any more than someone who

¹ Romans 3:10

can jump two.

It's that preposterous to think that because your sins are a little less obvious than someone else's, you are more righteous than they are. There is no relative righteousness. You only have God's righteousness to compare yourself with, not the guy down the street who makes you look like a saint. I'll give it to you from the Scriptures one more time. These are just three of multitudes of references. Look for the words: all, none, not one, everyone.

They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy:
there is [how many?] none that doeth good, no, not one.

(Psalm 14:3)

Seems like He's making a point.

Every one of them is gone back: they are together become filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

(Psalm 53:3)

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

(Romans 3:12)

Get it? None. Nada. Zero. That means that when it comes to being worthy of being redeemed, now listen to me, when it comes to being worthy of being saved, you are no more deserving than a serial killer on death row. The gravity of his sins, where society is concerned, is greater, so the price he owes society is greater; but from a vantage point of eternity, he's no greater a sinner than you are. In fact, you and I may be the greater sinner in a sense. Because you parade around church on Sunday morning as deacons or elders or teachers or preachers or committee chairmen, and your heart may be so filled with lust, you couldn't think a clean thought if you drank Drain-O. You may look like a saint on the outside, and inside you still harbor bitterness toward your mother or your father or your first wife or your last pastor.

You, beloved, are, apart from God, rotten to the core. And if you can't buy that, you'll never understand grace. The only difference between you and that guy on death row is circumstances and choices, but your heart is no better than his in God's eyes. You are a sinner. You can't fly and never will, apart from something called "Amazing Grace."

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So with that introduction we come back to the cross. And we'll take a cross-section, if you will, of the incredibly undeserving recipients of the grace of God found at the foot of that cross. I want us to identify the group or groups we belong in. You're going to say, "Wait a minute. I wasn't there." Yes, you were. You were there and so was I. We were all represented by one or more of the groups or individuals who passed in and out of Jesus' Calvary experience. Unless we can admit to it, beloved, we will never understand grace. We killed Him. He died *for us*, and He died *because of us*, but He also died *by our hand*. We killed Him. Our sins nailed Him to that tree. We sentenced Him to death, tied Him to the electric chair of eternity, and pulled the switch. And what did He do? He loved us!

We not only sentenced Him, we watched it as though it were some kind of a spiritual sideshow. We killed Him, and immediately, even before it was done, He forgave us. Beloved, return with me to Calvary for just a few moments, and let's look at what we did, and let's look at what He did, and let's marvel for the rest of our lives at this incredible grace of God. We should never be able to go to that cross and take grace for granted, because every time we see Him die and hear Him whisper, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," we ought to be reminded, it wasn't free to Him.

We killed Him. We were there. Which group were you in? Or maybe you were a part of more than one? Had grace not intervened, and Jesus come to live inside of you, which group would have most typified your attitude toward Jesus Christ? What would it have taken for you to vote for His crucifixion?

There were at least seven groups represented at that cross. Each one of them had a slightly different perspective on who He was and on what they should do based upon who He was. I would like to ask you to walk with me to the foot of the cross and see which group or groups you may identify with. The purpose of this visit is to remind us, beloved, that we were there.

The most obvious was Judas. He was the one who did the dirty deed. He it was, who sold the King of kings for a few days' wages. To him, spendable money was more important than spiritual riches. Given a choice of being the custodian of God's riches or man's, he chose that which could be corrupted,

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destroyed, and eaten by moths. When it was all over, it cost him his life...both physical and spiritual. I don't need to remind you what happened to him. The incident has some hidden treasures in it. We read in Matthew 27,

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. [That's your problem fellows, not ours.]

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

(Matthew 27:3-5)

Once he saw what he had done, he was sorry; but the world who led him to betray the only hope he had, was unconcerned at his confession. They had watched his life and had capitalized on it. Here was one who claimed to be one of His, who, when tempted to compromise, would rather earn an extra dollar than please the heart of God. He was willing to bend the truth, take money that wasn't his, and alter the books, if need be, just to satisfy his desire for financial success.

Now wait a minute before you sentence Judas, look at your life before Christ came in. What were your reasons for living? People or things? Had God not come to you with His amazing grace, what would be your focus in life today? Or better still, even as a Christian with God's indwelling Spirit, given a chance, is money what motivates you? Given a choice between making one more deal, or seeing one more customer or patient or client, or spending time with God, what is your natural choice? Given a choice of supporting a missionary on the field whose ministry will touch and change the heart of dozens or even hundreds of people who will one day be in heaven with you, or buying a new car or a new stereo, which comes first?

You're right. You don't have to give up anything to be a Christian, but, folks, you have to be willing to give up everything to be a disciple. Your salvation was free; but it wasn't free to Him.

Or maybe you can identify with Peter, brash, outspoken Peter. "Those other guys..." he muttered, "they may betray

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you, but not me.” Mr. Sanguine you are. You always have the answers. You see what’s wrong with everyone else. You have these huge spiritual pliers that you think were given to you by God to pluck boards out of other people’s eyes. But when the heats on and God’s truth focuses on your heart, it’s filled with spiritual pride and that same arrogant brashness that makes you so visible in the church, makes you a fool. “I’ll never betray You,” you cry. Don’t ever say that. Beloved, rather say, “Except for the grace of God, I would curse and deny I ever knew You.” That’s the truth. You can live a victorious life today, in spite of your arrogance, but only because of grace. It didn’t cost you a nickel, but it wasn’t free to Him.

Or perhaps you can identify better with the other ten. They didn’t sell him out, and they didn’t curse and deny they knew Him. They just cut and ran when the heat was on. So long as Jesus was giving them free loaves and fish, so long as Jesus was talking about never getting thirsty again, so long as Jesus was healing the sick and casting out demons, He was their man.

But let Him disappoint them and not give them what they wanted, and they were gone. These weren’t men who experienced a sermon or two on Sunday morning, folks. These guys had eaten with Him, slept with Him, walked with Him, and talked with the Him. They lived with Him day after day. They heard the parables, listened to the principles, watched His sinless life, and said, “This is for me.” They left their careers, they left their friendships, they left their homes and followed Him...until the pain started, the rejections overcame, and the spotlight of fame turned to the spotlight of interrogation. Then, they said, “Whoa! We thought it would have been Him who would redeem Israel and change the world.” It was. But His purpose was going to change it from the inside out.

They wanted political change. They wanted economic change. They wanted acceptance. They didn’t get it. Do you? Even as a Christian, do you grasp that the kingdom is spiritual, the stakes are eternal, and the road to spiritual victory is paved with the very things that caused these ten close followers to run. When the heat is on, do you begin to doubt that God is who He says He is, and that His Word means what it says it does? Make no mistake about it. If you’d been there, you would have cut and run, too. Even today, if it were not for God’s amazing

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grace, what would we do? Deserve it? God forbid. Yes, it was free, not because of your worthiness, but because of your deprived condition. You see, it was free, but it wasn't free to Him.

Or maybe you identify with the chief priests and the scribes. They grew up in the church and were elected to all the committees. They went to the right schools, and knew more doctrine than the seminary professors, but they didn't know God. Left to themselves, they were willing to bribe and lie, to get rid of this kind of God who claimed to be worthy of worship, and who claimed that they were nothing. Then, when they did, even the issue of their paid traitor's repentance did not move them. They were more concerned with keeping the law by not wrongfully using the money. Their traditions meant everything. A relationship with God meant nothing. Was that you before God's amazing grace took control of your life?

Were you an affront to His Lordship? Were you parading around as a Christian leader without Christ? And even now, beloved, with His Spirit dwelling in you, *are you more interested in keeping the status quo, than in selling your soul for the Kingdom?* Are your goals still temporal in spiritual clothing? Are you more concerned with how you are viewed in the church, than how God sees your heart? Then don't fault these guys. They were fools, and they missed the King of Glory. But so would you have, if it had not been for God's amazing grace. He reached down, He touched you, He cleansed you, and saved you. And yes, it was free. But just say it with me one time, "*It wasn't free to Him.*"

Maybe you'd identify more with Pilate. He saw something in Jesus worthy of honor. He saw nothing in Him worthy of death. But take a stand at the expense of political expediency? No. Spiritually, it cost him his life. He was afraid to buck the crowd. He knew the difference between Jesus and Barabbas. He also didn't want to fight the system, so he became passive on the one issue in life where no man can afford to be passive. He did nothing and he died. He did nothing and Jesus died. Rather than lose a popularity contest, he refused to contest the greatest lie ever told, that Jesus was not God.

Now ask yourself this: even as a Christian, do you tend to do the expedient thing, rather than take a stand? Is your silence

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at the moments in life that are so important, the ultimate condemnation of your heart? Then that's what your whole life would have been like, beloved, had it not been for God's amazing grace. Had God not decided that in your worthlessness, He saw potential; that in your weakness, He saw strength; that in your rebellion, He saw renewal, your name might well be Pilate, too. And after 2,000 years have passed, he's still known as one of the greatest cowards that ever lived. That's us if it were not for God's amazing grace. What did it cost you? Nothing. But don't ever forget, it wasn't free to God.

Maybe you are like the soldiers who gathered at the foot of the cross and gambled over His clothes, as they mocked Him and scorned Him. These guys were professionals. They were so busy doing their job, just one more victim of the system. They were paid to kill. They missed the reason for living. They were so busy carrying out their daily duties, they didn't realize that they were killing God by what they did. That might be you, even as a Christian. With your guard down, you may still see your career and your daily tasks, even the daily grind, as so consuming that the things you do that kill the heart of God, don't even faze you anymore. Make no mistake about it, beloved, you'd have laughed and gambled, too, were it not for God's amazing grace. Deserve salvation? Dear God, aren't those words beginning to sound like blasphemy? Maybe it's because they are. You see, beloved, the fact that grace is free only makes us less deserving, not more. If we could pay a tiny portion of it, we would justify our worth. No, it is free, but say it one more time, "It wasn't free to Him."

And finally, maybe you best identify with the milling crowds. The general public, if you will, who stood at the foot of the cross. They knew little, if anything, about who Jesus was. To them, this was just like some B-rated movie or soap opera. This was an imposter who claimed to be God. They passed by. And the Scripture said, they laughed at Him, and their laughter covered up a need, until they didn't have to face the issues of sin, salvation, a Savior, and a cross. They made jokes about it. They treated it like a story line. They created little religious prejudices and applied them to Christianity as a whole. Ever done that? Have you ever tried to find lives that don't measure up and then say, "Well, that life proves the whole thing doesn't work?" Have

you asked for miracles, and when the miracles don't come, like that crowd you cry out, "He saved others; Himself He could not save?" Beloved, let me remind you while you're laughing, you miss the fact that had He saved Himself, He could not have saved others.

Don't kid yourself. Had it not been for God's amazing grace, you would be milling around that cross today, just like I would, tossing up one-liners about religious fanatics, with a smirk on our face and death in our heart. Even as a Christian, you may be one who takes the cross too lightly. You may be one who lived in sin and experienced salvation, and now that you are saved, you think that because of the security you have in Christ, you can compromise and get away with it, you can live with violations of truth and never get caught, and never lose power.

And the truth is the power is already gone, and so is the discernment to understand it. Why? Because you've joined the crowds at the foot of the cross, and even though that cross saved you, you treat it with either disdain or such little respect that no one in your family, or no one in your business, or no one in your world takes you seriously as a Christian. The milling crowd—the most foolish of all. They were in the presence of the one moment in history capable of saving them, and standing there, they mocked.

CONSIDER WHAT HE DID

And Jesus? What did He do? He prayed for them. He forgave them. And then, in the greatest act of love ever shown, He died for them. He died for you, and He died for me. The very ones who have sold Him out for a few pieces of silver; the very ones who, when the heat is on, cursed and denied Him; the very ones who, when disappointed, cut and run. The very ones who would stand on tradition at the expense of reality; who would remain silent for the sake of political expediency; who would get so busy doing our daily tasks that we never even realized we killed the King of Glory. The very ones who wander by that precious cross today, without so much as falling to our knees in utter awe and deep repentance, cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

He died for them. He died for us. And He called it grace. I

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know it was free, sovereign, eternal. But, remember more than that, beloved, it was undeserved. Not partially, totally. There was not one iota of goodness in you before grace came into your life. Had you been there, you would have killed Him, too. Maybe directly, by cursing and denying Him. Maybe indirectly, by simply ignoring Him, but you would have killed Him, too. We all did.

It was the fact that, not only are we not the most worthy in the world; we are totally without merit that made God's love so incredible. Romans 5:6-8, we read a week or two ago, but I want to read it again and ask you to look for one thing. There are three groups of people in this passage. I want to see which one we fit in when grace came down.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

Three categories, beloved, we forget which one we are in sometimes. Who did He die for? Christ died for the ungodly, while we were yet sinners, before we became righteous, before we had the capacity to be good men. While we were still nothing but despicable God-rejecters, Christ died for us. While we were still spitting in the face of God, overtly or indirectly, Christ died for us. While we were following the crowd, laughing at His Lordship, Christ died for us. While we were reveling in our theology or our traditions, He died for us.

Do you know what? If you were the only one who had ever been a despicable, rejecter of God, He still would have died for you. You say, "How do you know that?" It's all throughout the Scriptures, but just take II Peter chapter 3, verses 8 and 9, as a reminder. It says this, you remember,

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

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repentance.

(II Peter 3:8,9 NKJV)

Now let me remind you, beloved, after 2,000 years of waiting and watching this sin-laden world spit on His cross, mock His name, ignore His claims, and deny His existence, He could, at any moment, come again and bring righteousness and judgment to this world—and He will very soon.

What is He waiting for? The Scripture just told us. He is waiting because not every one who will has come. *And until the last sheep is in the fold, He will let the milling crowd laugh. He will let the politicians straddle the fence. He will let the religious hypocrites cling to their traditions. Even His supposed followers waffle and deny Him on occasions, but He will not come until the last one has come.*

I don't know, beloved, but you may be, or someone listening may be the last lost one. You may be thinking, I'm one of those in the crowd, or I'm just like Judas or Peter or Pilate. Maybe you've cursed Him or just ignored Him. But deep in your heart of hearts, maybe there's a rumbling of conviction that is calling you to walk up to that cross and look up. What do you see? God up there? God dying for you? He knows you don't deserve it. Oh, how He knows. The question is: "Do you?"

It is popular today to call men to salvation without calling them to repentance. Jesus is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,² not just to the safety of security. That's a part of it. But you are a sinner. You were born a sinner, and you have lived up to your heritage. You are as much a sinner as Adolph Hitler ever was. Do you believe that? It wasn't, beloved, Hitler's sins, grievous as they were, that made him a sinner. It was the fact that he was a sinner that made him sin.

And you, too, are a sinner, but you can repent today. You can come to the only one who can cleanse you and give you a new heart. You can come to the only One who can take that black, dirty heart of yours, wash it in His precious blood, and make it white as snow. If there's even one, beloved, come to Him, today. Ask Him to come to you. He will. All you have to do is ask. You say, "Well, that's too easy." Yes, it's easy. You see, He knew how simple it needed to be—so simple a child could

2 II Peter 3:9

understand it.

You couldn't earn a ten-trillionth of it if you worked from now to the end of eternity. If you could, it would be null and void. It wouldn't be grace if it wasn't free. But even as you lift your heart this moment to come to Him, vow in your heart that though you will forever sing "Amazing Grace" and marvel that it's free, never, ever, will you forget that it wasn't free to Him.

And dear, Christian friend, I ask you in posing this question: when did you last spend a day just marveling at the grace of God; sitting at the foot of that cross watching those seven groups pass by identifying yourself as they did?

You were a ruthless gang member; that is what you were to God. Maybe today you're a respectable banker or doctor or repairman. But you were part of the gang who killed God's Son in a drive-by, walk-by shooting. You know it and He knows it.

He had two choices: He could have called the police and put you away forever. Or, He had the option of taking the heart out of His own Son, and in the most delicate operation in history, allow that uncontaminated heart to taste the grime of sin for a season, yet, not give in to its deadly disease. And then place that heart in your body, the same body that participated in killing His Son. And what did He do? *He called you. He chose you. He loved you. He loved you so much that He called you to His side and said, "I'll do it and it will be free."* He did it and it was.

Now, in closing, beloved, in the light of that truth, what manner of men ought we to be? What manner of women ought we to be? Paul said,

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
(Romans 6:1,2)

For all of us, the reality of grace needs to be more real in our lives. What else can motivate us to godliness like grace? What else can motivate us to evangelism like grace? What else can motivate us to worship like grace?

Make no mistake about it. We didn't deserve it, and we never

It Wasn't Free to Him

will. We didn't need to deserve it, and we never will. Because a loving God, in eternity past, determined that it would have *nothing to do with what we deserve. We deserve hell.* It would, rather, have to do with who He is. He is love. And that love, when set free through His infinite mercy to forgive, possesses us with a divine enablement called grace that actually allows the likes of us to become like Him—pure, holy, unblemished, and free—all free.

And I'm going to ask you this week, every day, to pray back to God that one phrase. And reminding us as we close, yes, beloved, it was free to us, lest we forget, let's say it together. "*It wasn't free to Him.*"

Let's pray.

Our Father and our God,

Touch our hearts, this morning, with a fresh awareness of the price You paid, and what grace is all about. May we never again take it for granted. Yes it's free, praise God, it's free, but it wasn't free to You.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions for Further Study

1- Try to imagine the illustration at the beginning of the lesson. Now try to imagine that the doctor is God, and that He is transplanting the heart of His Son into the body of someone who is so evil, he deserves to die. Now conclude that this someone is you. How does that affect your concept of grace?

2- What do you think were some of God's alternatives *other than redemption?* What could He have done to clear the world of sin?

3- Why is "relative righteousness" an impossibility? Why do we constantly compare ourselves with other men and women rather than with the holiness of God?

4- Can you honestly admit *that you killed God?* Why is this so hard?

It Wasn't Free to Him

5- Look at Judas. What was his driving motivation in life? How did it end up? Why do you think he committed suicide?

6- Can you identify with Peter? He was bold, aggressive, self-assured. What did God have to do with Peter to take care of his spiritual pride? Have you ever told God, "They may disappoint you, Lord, but I won't"? Why is this so dangerous?

7- The other ten disciples were more passive, but no more supportive. What was *their problem*? Why are we likely to cut and run when the miracles cease? When we feel disappointed in how God answers prayer? What can we do about it?

8- The chief priests and scribes were religious activists. What was their problem? Did they kill Jesus?

9- The soldiers were committed to their tasks. How did this divert them until they missed the King of Glory?

10- Why are we so like the milling crowds who entered into the crucifixion without understanding it? How did Jesus pray for them?

11- Why do you think God is tarrying, and hasn't returned yet? What great encouragement can we glean from this?

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