

On Any Given Day, Grace Is the Greatest Gift of All

“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” (Eph. 2:8-9, NIV).

When someone gives you an unexpected gift, how do you react? For example, if someone blesses me with a Christmas present, and I have nothing for them in return, I feel the need to reciprocate. I apologize and then rush to purchase a gift in return.

At least that’s what I did in the past. I didn’t feel worthy unless I could respond to their kindness. Reciprocating with a gift, one I often couldn’t afford, put a strain on my holiday budget. Instead of appreciating the love behind the gift, I was embarrassed.

But I’ve learned buying a gift out of obligation doesn’t leave you with a contented feeling. More than likely, you’re overwhelmed with expectations. Instead of accepting the unexpected gift with grace, we often stutter, “But I didn’t get you anything,” or “You shouldn’t have.”

Accepting the Unexpected Gift

Before rededicating my life to Christ in my 40s, I never felt “good enough.” I had trouble accepting help and compliments from others. Feeling a need to prove my worth, I became an overachiever. My achievements and my need to be accepted defined my identity.

I’ve learned, however, that striving for perfection and performing for accolades only wears you out. You can only hide behind a mask for so long. While others might not see behind the mask, God does. He sees our insecurities, understands our

fears, and knows our hearts. And He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

Letting go of our burdens and accepting His rest requires us to realize and accept our need for His grace. Free. Undeserved. Unearned. Without accepting His greatest gift, how can we learn to rely on Him for everything we need?

Our Identity in Christ

William Temple, an English Anglican priest, said this about our identity in Christ. “My worth is what I am worthy to God; and that is a marvelous great deal, for Christ died for me. Thus, incidentally, what gives to each of us His highest worth gives the same worth to everyone; in all that matters most are we equal.”

“In all that matters most.”—Those words remind me what does matter most in this world: a relationship with Jesus Christ. He took our sin and nailed it to the cross. His 33 years on earth led to that day, a day when grace was born with the death of our sins.

God’s gift of salvation is one of pure love. He longs for us to join Him in heaven. Although He gifted mankind with free will, He would never force us to accept His gift. Instead, He desires us to freely return His infinite love.

God’s Amazing Grace

“Amazing Grace” is one of the most beloved hymns of the last two centuries. Recently, on social media, I asked friends to share their favorite hymn or contemporary Christian song. Not surprisingly, “Amazing Grace” was the No. 1 cited by those who responded.

The song’s history is as remarkable as its popularity. Penned in 1772, its composer, John Newton, converted from slave trader to abolitionist after a storm at sea. The realization

of life's uncertainty on earth led him to turn from his sordid past.

Life is uncertain. We don't know what the future holds. But God's greatest gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, is the answer. When we choose to focus on Him and His completed work, we receive the grace we so desperately need. {eo}

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