

James
War and Peace: Learning to Deal with Conflict, Part 4
James 4:1-10
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Well, it's our joy to return, this morning, to James 4. And I say, "It's our joy." It hasn't been, because it's been fairly painful, over the last few weeks. But, this morning, we come to a part of this passage that is a refreshing breath of fresh air. As I thought about that this week, I couldn't help but think about an incident that many of you have heard me share from my own life. When I was a senior in high school, I almost drowned on a canoe trip on the Black Water River in Florida. And I still vividly remember that event. Having sunk for the third time beneath the water, unable, on that third effort to break the surface, I looked up through the murky water and saw the hand of my friend stretched out toward me. And I remember reaching up through the water and grabbing with a couple of my fingers to a couple of his fingers, and the wonderful joy, the overwhelming sense of relief that came into my soul with the first gasp of fresh air. I can tell you that that's how James 4:6 is going to feel to you, today.

For the last year, we've been studying James' wonderful letter. James is both practical, and he's extremely pointed. He is absolutely relentless, as well. For four and a half chapters, he has strongly rebuked and exhorted us. It feels like he hasn't yet paused to even take a breath. He's held the standard so high, that at times, it's easy even for genuine Christians to wonder if they're in the faith. But today, we come to a passage that provides great hope. To this point, in the book of James, there has been precious little encouragement. But today, the draught ends. We come to what many have called as one of the most encouraging passages in all of Scripture. And it's buried in the middle of this relentless letter that, frankly, sounds a lot like some of the prophets of the Old Testament.

For the last couple of weeks, we've been examining James 4:1 - 10. It's a paragraph about arguing and fighting and sinful quarreling. In this passage we're also given hope. You see, in this paragraph, James outlines for us three practical steps for dealing with sinful conflict in our lives; three imminently practical steps to resolve the fighting and arguing that is a part of our lives. And the three steps he's giving us, here, don't have to do with resolving the issue in which we're disagreeing; but, rather, understanding the real problems that lie behind the conflict; and dealing with conflict, not at the level of the argument or the disagreement, but at the heart.

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We've already discovered two of the practical steps that he gives us for dealing with fighting and arguing and quarreling that's so often a part of our lives.

The first step is: identify the true source of conflict. You see that in verses 1 - 3. We looked at that extensively. The true source is bound up in the word in verse one: "pleasures," and again in verse 3: "pleasures." It's a word that means "to crave", "to lust after", "to want something". You see, the true source of the conflict in our lives is not the person with whom we're arguing. It's not the issue over which we're arguing. Instead, it's our own sinful hearts because we crave something to satisfy our own pleasure. And when someone gets in the way of what we want, then arguing and fighting erupts. So, if we're going to deal with our sin of arguing and fighting, we have got to identify the true source: it's the pursuit of our pleasure.

The second step that he gives us in is in verses 4 and 5. We saw this last week. We need to magnify the real sin behind conflict, magnify the real sin. And in verse 4, he gives it to us in one word: "spiritual adultery". "You adulteresses." Last time, we traced James' logic, because at first glimpse, that seems to be a logical leap. But here's what he's saying: arguing shows that we are living for the pursuit of our pleasure, and living for pleasure is friendship with the world, and friendship with the world is spiritual adultery. So, in other words, if there is a pattern of arguing in our lives, it shows a heart guilty of spiritual adultery.

A quarrelsome and argumentative spirit is merely a symptom of a spiritual cancer that is raging within the heart. You've got to understand the true source of conflict. It's the pursuit of our pleasure. And you've really got to magnify the real sin: it's spiritual adultery. You love God too little; and you love your pleasures and the sinful pleasures of the world too much. If you want to truly deal with arguing and fighting that's a part of your life, you have to start at your heart. Identify the true source. And secondly, magnify the real sin.

Now that brings us to the third practical step, which we'll begin to look at together today. It is: apply the right solution, apply the right solution to conflict. What, exactly, is the right solution? Well James, here, gives it to us in a single word. It's the word "grace." Notice chapter 4:6: "But He gives a greater grace." Every word in that brief sentence deserves our careful study. Every word is like a diamond that, when you hold it to the light, and with each small turn, you see a different facet of that stone; and each different facet radiates a brilliance of its own. Let's look carefully at each of the facets of that statement.

The sentence begins with a simple conjunction: “But He gives a greater grace.” This little word, “but” is one of the greatest words in our Bible; because it often marks the contrast between our sin and God’s grace! Reminded of the book of Romans. You remember that in Romans, 1:18, Paul begins his indictment of all humanity to show us our sinfulness. And he begins to track through the way our sinfulness expresses itself, the way our depravity expresses itself. And he does that, from 1:18, all the way through 3:20. But then, in chapter 3 of Romans, and verse 21, he writes this:

But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even *the* righteousness of God [that comes] through faith in Christ for all have sinned ... [but we are] justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

I think of Ephesians 2. In Ephesians 2, one of my favorite chapters, Paul does the same thing. He begins in the first three verses by highlighting just how terrible our sinful condition was. And he paints it in the darkest of colors. But in verse 4, he begins by saying, “But God.” “But God!” Martin Lloyd-Jones, who is one of my favorite preachers, preached an entire message on those two words: “But God.”

... being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

The occurrence in James 4 of this little conjunction: “But” is no less significant. Because the word, “But” is a word that marks a distinct contrast with what has been said before. Now in the immediate context, it’s a contrast with our sinfulness. In verse 1, with our quarreling and arguing; in verses 1 - 3, with our occasionally living to pursue our pleasure and the satisfaction of it; in verse 4, our spiritual adultery.

But in the larger context, this statement of 4:6 follows a long series of difficult commands. Let me remind you of what James has told us we must do. As I’ve gone through the first part of this book, you probably have felt bruised and bloody, as I have, from James’ relentless attack on our sinful hearts. Listen to what he’s commanded us:

In 1:2 - 12, James says, “Accept and rejoice in your trials.” In 1:13 - 18, he says, Refuse temptation. Say ‘No’ to temptation. From verse 19 of chapter 1, through the end of the chapter,

he says, “Respond properly to the Word of God.” Then you come to chapter 2. And the first 13 verses of chapter 2, he tells us that “we must all reject all forms of prejudice and partiality.” In 2:14 through the end of the chapter, we come, really, to what is the core and heart of his letter, where he told us that we must live in a “consistent pattern of obedience that reflects the reality of our faith.” Chapter 3:1 - 12,: “We must exercise some self-control over our tongues,” the most difficult thing to control. Chapter 3:14 - 18, he says, “You need to become biblically wise. You need to become spiritually mature.”

And then when we come to verse 1 of chapter 4, we learn that we need to stop quarreling, stop arguing, and stop fighting. So, when we come to James 4:5, just before verse 6, he tells us that God is a jealous God, who will tolerate no rivals for our affection. So, the immediate context of these words is the declaration by James that God demands our absolute, undivided allegiance.

Now, when you and I look at all of those commands, when we look at all that I’ve just taken you through, we are left hopeless because we have sinned in every one of those areas. There isn’t a single one of those examples that I just gave you that you and I have not violated before God. We are totally guilty before God. That’s the context of verse 6: “But He.” You see, God responds to our sin. He responds to our lack of undivided allegiance to Him, and He responds in mercy and in grace! I love those words. Mercy, of course, is God’s goodness responding to our misery. And grace is God’s goodness responding to our guilt. God demands perfect obedience. He demands undivided allegiance. “But God!” This little word, “but” reminds us that there’s hope.

Notice the second facet of this gem of divine grace: “But He gives a greater grace.” This is, of course, a reference to God. The same God who issued all the commands that we just reviewed comes to our aid. The same God who is jealous over our spiritually adulterous hearts shows us grace. The same God who says His name is “Jealous” now tells us that His name is “Grace.” Turn with back to Exodus 34. I want you to see that God can be both of these at the same time. He declares Himself to be. Exodus 34: Of course, the context, here, is the people of God are at Sinai. And in Exodus 34:12, God says this to the people:

“Watch yourself, that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. But *rather*, you are to tear down their altars, smash their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their Asherim.” [God says, “I want your absolute, undivided affection and loyalty.”] Verse 14,

“for you shall not worship any other god, for ... [YAHWEH], whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

God is jealous over your absolute affection and loyalty to Him. His name is “Jealous.” And yet, I want you to turn back to the previous chapter, Exodus 33 because this revelation occurs in an interesting context. In Exodus 33, you’ll remember verse 13, Moses asked this of God: He says, “If I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways.” The word, “ways” is a Hebrew word that means a “well-worn rut.” It describes a predictable pattern of behavior habits, if you will. “God, reveal Your habits of behavior to me. Tell me what You’re like. Tell me the ruts that You run down.”

And then in verse 18, Moses asked something else. Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” So here, Moses is asking God, “I want You to declare to me what’s true about You. Teach me what You’re like;” and “Let me see some visible display of who You are.” God responds in verse 19: “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you.” [There’s that visible display.] “And I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you.” [There’s explaining His ways.]

And he adds to this, “And I will be gracious on whom I will be gracious.” [He already lets us know that His grace is a sovereign grace. He decides on whom to bestow it, and when. There’s no claim on Him. It’s His own decision.] It’s in that context, then, in verse 5 chapter 34, we read this: [in response to Moses’ two requests, here’s what happens.] Chapter 34:5, “The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him.” [There’s the visible display; some visible expression of the glory of God that Moses doesn’t describe for us.]

And then, verse 6 says, “He proclaimed this:” So here is God teaching Moses His ways, His predictable patterns of behavior His habits, if you will. He said, “It’s My habit to be ‘compassionate and gracious, gracious.’” The God who is jealous, in the same context says, “He is gracious.” The jealous God who demands our allegiance must give us grace, both for forgiveness and for the power to obey Him.

Augustan, the great theologian of the fifth century, understood the connection between God’s empowering grace and obedience. In his confessions, which, if you haven’t read, I strongly encourage you to read. Basically, it’s a three hundred-page autobiography in the form of a

prayer to God. The entire book is of one long prayer, tracing God's work through his life. In that book, in his autobiography, he writes this:

“Give me the grace, Oh Lord, to do as You command. And command me to do what You will.” [Listen to what he says, again.] “Give me the grace to do as You command.” [Augustan said,] “Listen, God: If You don't act, if You don't, in grace, empower me, I cannot obey You. Oh, Holy God, when Your commands are obeyed, it is from You that we receive the power to obey them.”

Some of you, who are familiar with that period of history, know that Augustan's archrival was a British monk, by the name of Pelagius. Pelagius read this statement in the confessions and absolutely hated it because he saw it as an assault on human goodness, on human freedom, and on human responsibility. Pelagius' favorite saying was this: “If I ought, I can; if I ought, I can.” Augustan, on the other hand, argued exactly the opposite. Augustan said that man has no capacity to obey God, including even the command to believe in Christ; and that, if we are to have any hope of obeying God, then God Himself, must act and empower us to do it. “But God.”

God does act. James wants us to know that He acts in grace, because it's His character to be gracious. Scripture tells us, by the way, this is true of all of the members of the Trinity, as you would expect. It's true of the Father, 1 Peter 5:10: He's called the “God of all grace.” It's true of the Son. In Acts 15:11: “We are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus.” It's true of the Spirit. Hebrews 10:29 calls Him the “Spirit of grace.” You see, God the Father is the fountain of grace. God the Son is the channel through which God's grace arrives in our world. And the Holy Spirit is the applier, or bestower of grace, personally, individually. “But God.”

Notice the third facet of this amazing saying: “But He, [that is, God] “gives” a greater grace.” He “gives.” You know, God's giving of grace started to us when there was no world, no universe, no time, and no space. In fact, there was absolutely nothing but God. There was nothing but God. You see, it was grace and grace alone that lies behind God's eternal choice of us. In 2 Timothy 1 Paul writes to his young son in the faith. And in verse 9 of chapter 1, he says this: “[God] ... saved us ... called us with a holy calling,” [there's the effectual call that we studied a few months ago.] “not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace” [listen to this] “which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”

God's grace began in your life before you were ever created. It began in your life before there was anything but God. God began to show you grace by graciously choosing you to be His own. And then, as Galatians 4 says, "When the fullness of time came," [after the world was created; when the right time came] "God sent His Son into the world." And when God sent His Son into the world to die as our substitute, that too, was pure grace. Hebrews 2:9 says, "It's by the grace of God that Christ tasted death for us." And then, fast forward the reel to today to your life and my life. In time, in our lives, when God interrupted our lives, and as Ephesians 2:5 says, "made us alive," when He granted us repentance and faith, when He declared us righteous, when He adopted us into His family, when He set us apart for Himself, that moment in time, that event that we call "salvation" that too, was all of grace!

Of course, all of us know Ephesians 2:8 - 9: "For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that [that is, the entire act of salvation] not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one can boast." We understand that, don't we, that God's grace started in eternity past. It brought Christ to the earth. And in our own lives, it interrupted our lives and brought salvation to us.

But listen! God's grace doesn't merely extend into eternity past. God's grace for you and me extends into eternity future! We're very familiar with Ephesians 2:8 - 9. But listen to verse 7: "In the, so that in the ages to come He made us alive, so that in the ages to come, He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." God will spend eternity lavishing us with grace.

To quote Newton: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing His praise [praise for His grace!] than when we first begun."

But look again at James 4:6. Notice the Greek word for "gives" is translated in the present English tense. It's also in the present tense in the Greek. But we could translate it a little differently. We could say it this way: "He is 'giving' greater grace." It means it's "constant". It's constantly occurring. And it's now! You see, not only did God show us grace in eternity past; not only in sending Christ; not only at the moment of salvation; and not only will there be grace in eternity future; but right now, today, God is constantly giving us an ongoing supply of grace. Because not only were we chosen by grace and saved by grace, but we have an ongoing need for grace, to live out our Christian lives. And God is continually giving us a supply of grace.

John Blanchard, commentator on the book of James, tells the story of an artist an artist who submitted a painting to an art exhibition; and the painting was of Niagara Falls. But the artist failed to give the painting a title. And so, as the organizers of the event saw this painting without a title, they decided, until the artist could make it to the painting, himself, that they would give it the title of their own. They looked at that painting at the mighty Niagara pouring over millions of gallons a second, water. And they named it with these three simple words: “More to Follow.” Blanchard writes, those surging waters had poured down for countless years, and had been harnessed to bring to light and heating, power and comfort to multitudes of people, yet there was more to follow. So, it is with the grace of God. You see, grace from God flows to us as a mighty, spiritual Niagara, rushing over our souls every day. And Annie Johnson Flint writes:

“He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater.
He sendeth more grace when the labors increase.
To added affliction, he addeth His mercy.
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we’ve 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.”

But He gives.

Briefly, look at the fourth facet as this gem of divine grace: “But He gives a greater grace.” “Greater,” of course, is a comparative. But it immediately raises the question: “Greater than what?” Greater than our sin. Greater than our sin of quarreling and arguing and fighting; greater than our willingness to live at times to pursue our cravings and our pleasures; greater than our acts of spiritual adultery against God; greater, even than God’s jealousy! God’s grace is always greater than our need. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:14, “The grace of our Lord was more than abundant.” We understand “abundant.” But it’s more than abundant! It’s rich! It’s lavish! It’s

bottomless! It's extravagant! It's inexhaustible! God's grace is greater. It's greater than the guilt of our sin!

I've been reading the prophet, Isaiah. And I love the way Isaiah puts it in the first chapter of his prophecy, verse 18: "'Come now,' [he says to Israel, and to us, as well] 'Let us reason together,' says the Lord, 'Though your sins be as scarlet,'" [You see, in the ancient world, the darkest stain that they could produce was from the darkest dye that they produce; and that was scarlet.] And he says, "'If your soul is stained the absolute darkest that it can be stained, they'll be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool!'" Listen, I don't know what guilt for sin you bear, this morning. I don't know how you stand before God, in terms of how you have sinned, and how much guilt you have amassed before Him. But I can tell you this: The grace of God is greater than whatever guilt you have amassed, you have accumulated.

Romans 5:20: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more!" This morning, if you will turn from your sin; if you will repent, then it doesn't matter how bad the sins; it doesn't matter how frequently you have sinned. There's grace. God will give you new life in Christ. He will forgive your sins by His grace. God's grace is greater than the guilt of our sin. But God's grace is also greater than the power of our sin! I love Revelation 1:5, where Christ is described this way: as He who loosed us, "released us, from our sins in His own blood." In His death, we get the grace of Christ. And part of that grace is the grace, not only to overcome our guilt, but also to overcome the power of sin in our lives! If you're a believer, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, I don't know what sin you believe you are entrapped in, that you are enslaved to. But there is grace that is greater, enabling, empowering grace that can set you free from that slavery. You don't have to be a slave, anymore. Paul says in Romans that you have been freed, grace greater than the power of our sin.

God's grace is also greater than our trials. Turn to 2 Corinthians 12, 2 Corinthians 12, Paul writes about his trial. He calls it his "thorn in the flesh." Second Corinthians 12:7, He says, "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations" [that he'd received] "for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me. to keep me from exalting myself!"

Here's a trial in Paul's life. We don't know what this thorn was. We can conjecture. It may have been the leader of the revolt in Corinth: false teacher attacking and accusing Paul. Could've been a physical issue, perhaps. We can't be absolutely certain. But it doesn't matter for the point that he's making. Notice verse 8:

Concerning this [thing,” whatever this trial in his life; whatever this thing that that both God and Satan had brought, (Satan under God’s control); he said,]
“Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you....”

It was in college that I first read Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s comments on this verse. And I’ve read them many times since. Listen to what he wrote. He said,

“I have often read in Scripture of the holy laughter of Abraham, when he fell upon his face and laughed. But I do not know that I ever experienced that laughter, till a few evenings ago, when this text came home to me with such sacred power, as literally to cause me to laugh! I’d been looking it through, looking at its original meaning, trying to fathom it, ‘til at last, I got hold of it this way: “My grace,” says Jesus, “is sufficient for you.” And it looked almost as if it were meant to ridicule my unbelief. For surely the grace of such a One as my Lord Jesus is, indeed, sufficient for so insignificant a being as I am.” [And then he gives a couple of illustrations that came to his mind. Listen to what he writes.]

“It seemed to me as if some tiny fish, being very thirsty, was troubled with the fear of drinking the river Thames dry. And Father Thame said to him, “Poor little fish! My stream is sufficient for you.”

Put one mouse down on all the granaries of Egypt, where they were the fullest after seven years of plenty. And imagine that one mouse complaining that it might die of famine. “Cheer up,” says Pharaoh, “poor mouse; my granaries are sufficient for you.”

Imagine a man standing on a mountain and saying, “I breathe so many cubic feet of air in a year, I’m afraid that I shall ultimately inhale all the oxygen which surrounds the globe! Surely the earth on which the man would stand might reply, “My atmosphere is sufficient for you.” Let him fill his lungs as full as ever he can, he will never breathe all the oxygen, nor will the fish drink up all the river Thames, nor the mouse eat up the stores in the granaries of Egypt. [Listen to his application:]

“With such a Redeemer to rest in, how dare I, for a moment, think that my needs cannot be supplied! If our needs were a thousand times larger than they are, we would not approach the vastness of His power to provide.” The Father has committed all things into His hands. Doubt Him no more. Listen, and let Him speak to you, “My grace is sufficient.”

Or in the words of James, “My grace is greater.”

The final facet of this great promise is the most important word. “But He gives a greater ”grace”. What, exactly, is grace? “Grace,” defined theologically, is “God’s goodness to those who deserve, and have earned, only wrath.” Let me say that again: “Grace is God’s goodness to those who deserve, and have earned, only wrath.” You’ll sometimes hear it defined as “unmerited favor.” And that’s O.K., as far as it goes. But grace is really more than that. You see, it’s not merely “underserved favor.” It’s “underserved favor” to those who deserve exactly the opposite! But what is “favor?” Well, the dictionary defines favor this way: It’s the state of being held in friendly, or favorable regard.”

You see, in relationships, the word “favor” describes one person’s attitude toward another. If that person has a positive attitude, it’s called “favor.” It means “to approve,” “to like,” “to kindly regard,” “to show kindness toward.” Think about that for a moment. God has a positive disposition and attitude toward those who have earned eternal wrath. And He treats us as the special objects of His favor. He likes us! He shows kindness toward us. He kindly regards us! We are in the state of being held in friendly, or favorable regard by God Himself, the very One we have offended! That is grace!

Now, in the context of James 4, what kind of grace, or undeserved favor do we need? We need two kinds. We need forgiving grace, forgiveness for our quarreling and our arguing; forgiveness for living to satisfy our pleasures; forgiveness for our spiritual adultery; so, we need forgiving grace.

But we also need sanctifying grace, grace that empowers us to live in obedience and a whole-hearted allegiance to our God. This is so crucial to understand. You see, grace, [listen carefully] grace is not a blank check to sin. In fact, Jude writes in his letter of “ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness.” Now we don’t use the word “licentiousness” very much. It’s a word, really, that we get our word, “license” from. You know what he’s saying? “There are people who take the grace of God and turn it into a license to sin!” There’re some

Christians, I think, who really seem to believe the hymn revision, “Free from the Law, Oh happy condition. Sin all I want with easy remission.”

That’s not the attitude, at all! Romans, 6, Paul says, “What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin, so that grace may increase? May it never be!” How can we, who died, still live in it! If you’re a believer in Christ, you died to sin. How can you keep on living in it as a pattern of life? You see, grace not only forgives; it also fortifies! Grace doesn’t excuse us from obedience. It “empowers” us for obedience!

The only way that you and I, in the context of James’ comments here, in James 4. The only way that you and I can ever stop committing spiritual adultery; the only way that we can stop living to satisfy our sinful pleasures; the only way that we can stop quarreling and arguing is through the enabling of divine grace! And next week, we’ll look at the only precondition. You see, there “is” a catch. “God gives a greater grace.” But there’s a catch. It’s not a work. It’s called “repentance.” We’ll look at it together next week.

You know, when we think of grace, all of us think of John Newton. John Newton was a sailor. He was a sailor who bought and sold slaves for a living during the 1700s. He was raised by a Christian mother, but when he left home, he quickly forgot everything he’d been taught. He went on to lead a life of rank selfishness and absolute unrestrained immorality. A man of filthy language, he boasted that brutality and rape was part of his daily life. To appease his conscience, he took pleasure in trying to convince others to turn from their Christian faith.

But a turning point for John Newton came during a storm, a severe storm, when John remembered a verse that he’d memorized as a child. (Parents, pour the Word of God into your children.) It was a warning from God, and Proverbs 1. It was this: “Since you rejected me, when I called, and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand; since you ignored all my advice, and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn, will laugh at your disaster when calamity overtakes you, like a storm.”

John Newton felt the weight of his guilt in the midst of that literal storm. He humbled himself before God. He asked for mercy, and God showed him grace. Newton eventually went into the ministry where he served God for forty years, telling others of the wonderful work that God had done for him. And we remember him most, of course, for the world’s most famous hymn: “Amazing Grace.” That hymn shows the reality, and it shows that he understood the reality that the Christian life is, from eternity past into eternity future, a life of grace! At the end of his life,

Newton put it this way: He says, “My memory is nearly gone. But I remember two things: that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior.” “but God gives a greater grace.”

Let’s pray together.

Our Father, our souls are so refreshed with this truth because as You lay out Your standard, we see how miserably, even as Your children, we do in keeping it. Father, we’re grateful for Your grace. Thank You for Your forgiving grace for our sin. But, Lord, thank You, as well, for Your empowering, sanctifying grace that gives us the capacity to obey Your will. And Father, I pray that You would lavish us this week with Your grace, both the grace of forgiveness, as well as the grace that sanctifies.

Lord, give us the grace that empowers us to serve, and even the grace that allows us to face the trials and difficulties of life in a way that honors You. Father, we’re reminded that without Christ, we are nothing; and we can do nothing. We desperately need Your favor. And we can claim it, not because of who we are; there is nothing in us that calls out for your grace. You will be gracious to whom You will be gracious. And so, all we can do is cry out for Your grace. Show favor to us, Oh God.

I pray for the person here, Father, who needs Your saving grace, because they are bound in their sin, with no hope, facing an eternity from Your presence in unending pain. Father, I pray that, today, they would turn and cry out for grace; turn from their sin to You and Your Son.

Lord, help those of us who have experienced saving grace to live in sanctifying grace. Thank You that we stand in grace.

We praise You in Jesus’ name, Amen.