

# Grace That Is Greater Than All Our Sin

**Introduction.** “Grace Greater Than Our Sin” was penned by Julia H. Johnston (1849-1919). This lady had a gift for writing. Her words found their way into Sunday School lessons for the David C. Cook Publishing Company, and she even authored several books during her lifetime. But it was her incredible talent for composing lyrics that truly left an impact. Of the 500 hymns she wrote inspiring believers worldwide, “Grace Greater Than Our Sin” remains a standout.

Daniel Brink Towner composed the music for Johnston’s lyrics. In fact, this man’s legacy includes more than 2,000 hymns that have stirred numerous lives throughout the years. In 1911, “Grace Greater Than Our Sin” made its debut in Towner’s publication “Hymns Tried and True.”

Over the years, “Grace Greater Than Our Sin” has become incredibly popular and well-loved. Because of its powerful message, it’s been included in numerous hymnbooks and continues to be sung in churches all around the world.

One reason why this hymn remains so relevant is that it beautifully captures the essence of God’s abounding grace. In today’s fast-paced world, where people often feel overwhelmed by their sins and shortcomings, the song provides a soothing reminder that God’s love for us is unconditional. It tells us that no matter how far we may stray away from Him, God, through His forgiveness, will always welcome us back with loving arms.

In Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul takes them (and us) from the depths of despair and Satan’s snare to the heights of greater hope and infinite glory. We’ll spend the next several minutes giving a brief explanation of this rich passage.

## ***I. Our Condition Enslaved in Sin (vv. 1-3)***

### **A. Dead.**

1. “Dead in trespasses and sins” means spiritually dead. Dead to spiritual stimuli and spiritual influences (Proverbs 21:16; Isaiah 59:10; 1 Timothy 5:6).
2. This means someone is separated from God and severed from Christ (1 John 5:12). They’re detached from the Spirit of life.
3. Warren Wiersbe states the condition bluntly and correctly. “The unbeliever isn’t sick; he’s dead! He doesn’t need resuscitation; he needs resurrection.”

### **B. Disobedient.**

1. Sin begins with disobedience. And all disobedience to God’s Word is sin. Whether it’s sins of omission or commission, sin is unrighteousness and lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Sin’s an affront to a holy God (cp. Proverbs 6:16-19).
2. The text reminds us that sin’s disobedience is triggered by the influence of the world, Satan’s schemes, and our fleshly lusts (Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 John 2:15-17).

### **C. Depraved.**

1. The sinner is in a wanton, warped, and wicked state. Paul describes it as one where we act out fleshly passions due to evil desires, hedonistic yearnings, and the enticement of carnal pleasures.

2. When you're deep in it, it sure seems like fun — think how the young man Joseph would've felt cheating with Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7-13). But it's not a pretty picture. That's why sin is called "deceitful" in Hebrews 3:13.

D. Doomed.

1. This is the sentence of condemnation of those separated from God, without hope, and walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air."
2. This is the consequence of a life that's lived without the authority of God. One day, the power of God's Word will judge mankind in its unrighteousness (Hebrews 4:12-13; cp. Jonah 3:4).

## **II. What God Did About It (vv. 4-7)**

A. He loved us.

1. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). That's His nature, character, and personality. God's love is demonstrated in both His mercy and His grace (Romans 5:8).
2. Grace is often defined as "unmerited favor." Mercy involves kindness, good will, compassion, and pity. It's been said that grace gives us what we don't deserve. Mercy withholds what we do deserve.
3. Ken Green once expressed it this way: "Mercy withholds the punishment we rightly deserve. Grace not only withholds that punishment, but offers the most precious gifts instead. Mercy withholds the knife from the heart of Isaac. Grace provides a ram in the thicket. Mercy runs to forgive the Prodigal Son. Grace throws an extravagant party for him. Mercy pays the penalty for our sin at the cross. Grace provides unsearchable riches as an inheritance. Mercy closes the door to Hell. Grace opened the door to Heaven."

B. He made us alive.

1. The words "rich" and "riches" describe the abundant wealth and unlimited supply of God's blessings. In fact, Ephesians 1-3 extensively discuss the riches that we have in Jesus Christ.
2. We were spiritually dead, but now we are spiritually alive. The words of the New Testament make us alive (John 6:63). Those words teach us to be resurrected to "walk in newness of life." Paul uses the symbolism of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection to compare it to our baptism "into Christ," when we were "baptized into His death" (Romans 6:1-6).

C. He exalted us.

1. "He raised us up to together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 3:1-3; Philippians 3:20).
2. As Colly Caldwell explained we are "figuratively enthroned, sharing his dignity in the spiritual realm." We enjoy His fellowship, partake of His blessings, and share in His righteous reign (Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 5:10).

## **III. God's Work in Us and Through Us (vv. 8-10)**

- A. God's grace changes us, ennobles us, and dignifies us. But it also reminds us that we can't take credit for our salvation. Without the gift of God's grace, we would be lost.

- B. However, His grace doesn't annul our faith, nor nullify becoming the divine product of His workmanship.
1. Over the last several years, there has been a revival of doctrines that have strong connections to Calvinism.
    - a) Some have charged that preaching today doesn't emphasize grace enough. They say there's too much importance placed on obedience. Furthermore, if obedience is overemphasized, it follows that we have made too much of the work of the church and how we worship.
    - b) This "philosophy of preaching" leads to fundamentally distinct teachings about sin, forgiveness, fellowship, and worship. This isn't a discussion about one or two phrases that some Christians are uncomfortable with. These are concepts that present a radically different view of the nature of God, man, grace, and faith.
  2. We're created in Christ for "good works." We're saved to serve (cp. Matthew 20:28). We're made to minister (Romans 15:27; Philemon 13; 1 Peter 4:10). From God's standpoint, we're incapable of saving ourselves and therefore need grace. From man's standpoint, because we've been blessed with grace, we conduct ourselves in a righteous way (Titus 2:12).
- C. His mercy, love, and grace should challenge us to "not become conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2), but to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

**Conclusion.** Alister McGrath once wrote about his aunt. He said, "She died some time ago, having lived to be eighty or so. She had never married. While clearing out her possessions, we came across a battered photograph of a young man whom my aunt had loved. The relationship had ended tragically. She never loved anyone else and kept for the remainder of her life a photograph of the man she had loved.

Why? As she aged, she knew that she'd have difficulty believing that, at one point in her life, someone had once cared for her and regarded her as his everything. It could've all seemed a dream, an illusion, something she had invented in her old age to console her in her declining years — except for the photo. The photo reminded her that she'd really loved someone once and was loved in return. It was her sole link to a world in which she had been valued."

The unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, like that photograph, reassure us that something that seems too good to be true — something that we might even be suspected of having invented — really did happen.

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