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Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

—John Newton*

*Stanzas 1, 2, 3, 5—*Hymns and Tunes*, No. 441

Stanza 4—E. E. White, *Singing With Understanding*, No. 295

Stanza 6—from *He's Everything to Me*, Plus 53, published by
"Sacred Songs," Waco, Texas.

Good News of the Kingdom

*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues,
and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Matt. 4:23.*

He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:2, 3). As something strange and new, these words fall upon the ears of the wondering multitude. Such teaching is contrary to all they have ever heard from priest or rabbi. They see in it nothing to flatter their pride or to feed their ambitious hopes. But there is about this new Teacher a power that holds them spellbound. The sweetness of divine love flows from His very presence as the fragrance from a flower. . . .

In the throng that surrounded Jesus there were some who had a sense of their spiritual poverty. . . . There were souls who, in the presence of His purity, felt that they were “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17); and they longed for “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Titus 2:11). . . .

Of the poor in spirit Jesus says, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This kingdom is not, as Christ’s hearers had hoped, a temporal and earthly dominion. Christ was opening to them the spiritual kingdom of His love, His grace, His righteousness. . . . His subjects are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness’ sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs. Though not yet fully accomplished, the work is begun in them which will make them “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).

All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus. . . . He bids you exchange your poverty for the riches of His grace. We are not worthy of God’s love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy, and is abundantly able to save all who shall come unto Him. Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness.¹

For Sinners Only

*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.
Titus 2:11.*

By disobeying the commands of God, man fell under the condemnation of His law. This fall called for the grace of God to appear in behalf of sinners. We should never have learned the meaning of this word “grace” had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do His service, and are obedient to all His commands; but He does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know naught of grace; they have never needed it; for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow this grace upon every one who hungers for it. To every one He presents terms of mercy, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift.

But God does not use His grace to make His law of none effect, or to take the place of His law. . . . God’s grace and the law of His kingdom are in perfect harmony; they walk hand in hand. His grace makes it possible for us to draw nigh to Him by faith. By receiving it, and letting it work in our lives, we testify to the validity of the law; we exalt the law and make it honorable by carrying out its living principles through the power of the grace of Christ; and by rendering pure, whole-hearted obedience to God’s law, we witness before the universe of heaven, and before an apostate world that is making void the law of God, to the power of redemption.²

Not because we first loved Him, does God love us; but “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8) Christ died for us, making full and abundant provision for our redemption. Although by our disobedience we have merited God’s displeasure and condemnation, He has not forsaken us; He has not left us to grapple with the power of the enemy in our own finite strength. Heavenly angels fight our battles for us; and co-operating with them, we may be victorious over the powers of evil. Trusting in Christ as our personal Saviour, we may be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37).³

At God's Appointed Time

*When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, . . .
to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive
the adoption of sons. Gal. 4:4, 5.*

In heaven's council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. . . . Providence had directed the movements of nations, and the tide of human impulse and influence, until the world was ripe for the coming of the Deliverer. . . .

The deception of sin had reached its height. All the agencies for depraving the souls of men had been put in operation. The Son of God, looking upon the world, beheld suffering and misery. With pity He saw how men had become victims of satanic cruelty. He looked with compassion upon those who were being corrupted, murdered, and lost. . . . It was demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted. A new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world.

With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. . . . But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. . . . At the very crisis, when Satan seemed about to triumph, the Son of God came with the embassy of divine grace. Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race. Notwithstanding the perversity of men, the signals of mercy had been continually exhibited. And when the fullness of the time had come, the Deity was glorified by pouring upon the world a flood of healing grace that was never to be obstructed or withdrawn till the plan of salvation should be fulfilled.

Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory.⁴

The Message of the First Advent

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Mark 1:14, 15.

As Jesus traveled through Galilee, teaching and healing, multitudes flocked to Him from the cities and villages. Many came even from Judea and the adjoining provinces. Often He was obliged to hide Himself from the people. The enthusiasm ran so high that it was necessary to take precautions lest the Roman authorities should be aroused to fear an insurrection. Never before had there been such a period as this for the world. Heaven was brought down to men. Hungering and thirsting souls that had waited long for the redemption of Israel now feasted upon the grace of a merciful Saviour. . . .

The gospel message, as given by the Saviour Himself, was based on the prophecies. The “time” which He declared to be fulfilled was the period made known by the angel Gabriel to Daniel. . . . “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks” (Dan. 9:25), sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years. The commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, as completed by the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (see Ezra 6:14; 7:1, 9, margin), went into effect in the autumn of 457 B.C. From this time four hundred and eighty-three years extend to the autumn of A.D. 27. According to the prophecy, this period was to reach to the Messiah, the Anointed One. In A.D. 27, Jesus at His baptism received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and soon afterward began His ministry. Then the message was proclaimed, “The time is fulfilled.” . . .

The time of Christ’s coming, His anointing by the Holy Spirit, His death, and the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles, were definitely pointed out. . . . “The Spirit of Christ which was in them” “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11). . . . As the message of Christ’s first advent announced the kingdom of His grace, so the message of His second advent announces the kingdom of His glory.⁵

A Spiritual Kingdom

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. John 18:36.

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. The gospel of the grace of God, with its spirit of self-abnegation, can never be in harmony with the spirit of the world. The two principles are antagonistic. . . .

But today in the religious world there are multitudes who, as they believe, are working for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ as an earthly and temporal dominion. They desire to make our Lord the ruler of the kingdoms of this world, the ruler in its courts and camps, its legislative halls, its palaces and market places. They expect Him to rule through legal enactments, enforced by human authority. Since Christ is not now here in person, they themselves will undertake to act in His stead, to execute the laws of His kingdom. The establishment of such a kingdom is what the Jews desired in the days of Christ. They would have received Jesus, had He been willing to establish a temporal dominion, to enforce what they regarded as the laws of God, and to make them the expositors of His will and the agents of His authority. But He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." He would not accept the earthly throne. . . .

Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. . . . Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the Word of God. . . .

Now, as in Christ's day, the work of God's kingdom lies not with those who are clamoring for recognition and support by earthly rulers and human laws, but with those who are declaring to the people in His name those spiritual truths that will work in the receivers the experience of Paul: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).⁶

Unlike Earthly Kingdoms

And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? Mark 4:30.

Christ found the kingdoms of the world corrupt. After Satan was expelled from heaven, he erected his standard of rebellion on this earth, and sought by every means to win men to his standard. . . . His purpose was to establish a kingdom which would be governed by his own laws, and carried on with his own resources, independent of God; and so well did he succeed, that when Christ came to the world to establish a kingdom, He looked upon the governments of men, and said, "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?" Nothing in civil society afforded Him a comparison. . . .

In striking contrast to the wrong and oppression so universally practised were the mission and work of Christ. . . . He planned a government which would use no force; His subjects would know no oppression. . . . Not as a fierce tyrant did He come, but as the Son of man; not to conquer the nations by His iron power, but "to preach good tidings unto the meek;" "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" "to comfort all that mourn" (Isa. 61:1, 2). He came as the divine Restorer, bringing to oppressed and downtrodden humanity the rich and abundant grace of Heaven, that by the power of His righteousness, man, fallen and degraded though he was, might be a partaker of divinity. . . .

Christ taught that His church is a spiritual kingdom. He Himself, "the Prince of peace," is the head of His church. In His person humanity, inhabited by divinity, was represented to the world. The great end of His mission was to be a sin-offering for the world, that by the shedding of blood an atonement might be made for the whole race of men. With a heart ever touched with the feelings of our infirmities, an ear ever open to the cry of suffering humanity, a hand ever ready to save the discouraged and despairing, Jesus, our Saviour, "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). . . .

And all who are members of the kingdom of Christ will represent Him in character and disposition.⁷