



Jeff Sweeten

Thus Saith the Lord
is presented by the

Park Heights Church of Christ

1300 E. Boynton St.
Hamilton
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Schedule of Services

SUNDAY

9:30 a.m. Bible Class
10:25 a.m. Morning Worship
1:30 p.m. Afternoon Worship

WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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AMAZING GRACE

By Jeff Sweeten

James M. Tolle once said, "It is high time that all who compose the Lord's church give to the wondrous sovereign grace of their Creator and God the attention, emphasis, and praise that it justly deserves." Who knows what brought about the spirit of this expression by Tolle, but the sentiment seems popular. There are many, especially in the Lord's church, that believe preachers have preached too sparingly on this topic, that teachers have rarely taught on grace, and that most Christians take it for granted to such a degree that it is rarely considered in worship, service, or personal prayer.

The fact that grace is pivotal in the Christian's life is a theme frequently alluded to in both Old and New Testaments. From the earliest beginnings of human sin and divine punishment, "*Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*" (Genesis 6:8). To argue that grace is a New Testament theology is to ignore the Old Testament from its very beginnings (cf. Genesis 3:15). In preparation for the New Covenant, the apostle John wrote, "*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17). Inexorably joined together, grace and truth run hand in hand in the Christian's life and one's relationship with God is vain in the absence of either.

Paul, who lived in good conscience (Acts 23:1) and excelled in sacrificial righteousness (Philippians 3:5ff), humbly owned the correct Christian spirit, claiming God's grace to be his crown (1 Corinthians 15:10). He could well echo Christ's admonition, "*when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'*" (Luke 17:10). A light of the world will never be in the black.

The grace of God, however, is not cheap. In divine specie, it cost God His only begotten Son and to argue that grace requires no human response exudes a nasty arrogance. Grace is foundational to Christianity but it is also conditional and transformational.

It is conditional in that one cannot access God's grace without having heard the Word of God (Romans 10:13-17), and actively pursued this grace (Romans 6:17-18). A fictitious grace that mysteriously drops from the sky absolves no more efficaciously than bird waste, meteor fodder, or distressed airplanes. Further, it is transformational in that one cannot attain or remain in the good grace of God without constant, honest, and selfcritical reevaluation (Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 6:1-8). Comfortable Christians often fall asleep at the switch, apathetic and oblivious concerning the train-wreck's torment that will define their eternity (1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 5:4).

In the end, what is most amazing about grace is its rejection in the face of such simple invitations. Nothing with which God has presented us is so difficult that we cannot obey (1 Corinthians 10:13). Nor is it so complex that we cannot understand just what it is that we **must** do (2 Corinthians 11:3). Pity the poor soul whose ignorance, apathy, or rebellion hinders God's Amazing Grace.