

DIVINE LOVE AND GRACE

Christ's Audacious Grace

John 1:14–17; Romans 8:1–2, 31–34



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Every Christmas we all receive two amazing gifts from the Creator. First, we receive a reminder of God's astonishing, unconditional love. Second, we receive a reminder of Jesus Christ's audacious grace. In this message, let's focus on the grace Christ demonstrated on the first Christmas day so long ago.

Jesus came to this earth, but we didn't deserve His visit. Jesus modeled mercy, but we don't deserve His pardon. Jesus set aside all His glory, took humanity upon Himself, and suffered a death that we deserved. Jesus extends forgiveness, doesn't hold our failures against us, and promises us eternal life. The grace Jesus gives stands in stark contrast to the tit-for-tat world in which we live. This Christmas, let's focus our attention on Christ's audacious grace.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Christ's Audacious Grace "In the Beginning" (John 1:1–4, 14–17)

It's easy for us to overlook Jesus' example of grace because we live in a world of such disgrace and unkindness. Though grace is supposed to characterize the people of God, very few nonbelievers look at the evangelical church as a place of grace. Instead, they often see legalism, infighting, and hypocrisy.

How can we get back to the foundational truth of Christ's grace? First, we must look at Christ's identity *before* He showed up in a manger several thousand years ago. It's interesting that the apostle John, unlike the other gospel writers, didn't include any of the details of Jesus' birth. Instead, He started at the beginning with "the Word," the Son of God, the Creator, dwelling in heaven with the Father and the Spirit. Then, the Word became flesh and moved into our dark, sinful neighborhood and demonstrated audacious grace.



Quotable

*The voices from
your past saying,
"You'll never
amount to much,"
are all silenced
by God's grace.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. Christ's Display of Grace and Truth (Romans 8:1–2, 31–34)

Grace is the shocking reality and central truth of the Christmas message. Each year, Christmas should remind us that God dispenses gifts, not wages. Jesus embodies the perfect combination of grace and truth.

From nursery school on, we learn that *we get what we pay for, there's no such thing as a free lunch*, and other karma-based philosophies. Then Christ enters our reality and extends grace when we deserve punishment and life when we deserve death.

And not only do we need Jesus to deal with our sin, we also need Him to deal with our mortality. From the cradle to the grave, sin and death dog our steps. Try as hard as we can, we cannot escape. Then Christ comes, proclaiming the truth that He has conquered sin and death, and He invites us to accompany Him in His triumph!



GETTING TO THE ROOT

When God Emptied Himself

Not only did God the Father demonstrate His astonishing love by sending His Son; Jesus revealed His audacious grace by leaving the perfection of heaven and entering our dark world as a helpless baby.

To plumb the depths of Christ's grace in the incarnation, we have to get to the root of the original Greek. In Philippians 2:7, Paul said that in His incarnation, Jesus "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant" (NASB). The New Living Translation says He "gave up His divine privileges." Paul used the Greek word *kenoo* to describe Jesus' voluntary resignation of His divine rights and abilities for a period of time.

The birth of Jesus was the most extraordinary evidence of God's love in human history. While Israel's high-born, well-educated elite advanced their status and pretended to seek God's favor, their Messiah quietly slipped into the world in the unassuming hamlet of Bethlehem, into the arms of a humble nobody named Mary. God not only became a baby, but He did it knowing that He would one day face death on the cross. And for every nanosecond of His earthly life, from conception to resurrection, He remained God. As a man, Jesus bowed to God the Father's will and emptied Himself of His own life so that those who believe won't have to face eternal death. And He asks us to follow in His grace-inspired, self-emptying footsteps each and every day of our lives.



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LET'S LIVE IT

This Christmas, remember that the baby in the manger is the guardian of grace and the announcement of bondage-breaking truth. Christ was willing to risk everything, leaving the comfort of heaven, to reveal His audacious grace. To Him, there are no “nobodies” or “has beens.” Every person has intrinsic worth and is the object of His love, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

Just as Jesus has given us grace, here are two ways we can extend His grace to others this Christmas.

1. Express your words of love to someone who hasn't heard you say that you love him or her.
2. Extend a touch of grace to someone who would qualify as “among the least.”

Are there people in your life you find hard to love or difficult to forgive? Why? Pray that God would help you show them love and grace this Christmas.



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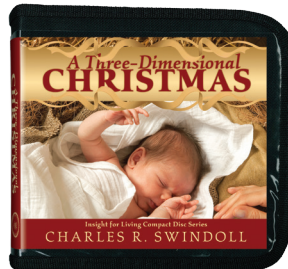
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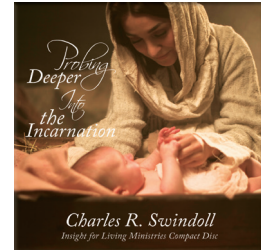
Tools for Digging Deeper



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