

Sunday, August 30, 2026 pm

SERMONS FROM SONGS

Grace Greater Than our Sin

#474, Hymns for Worship

Tonight, being the 5th Sunday, we want to examine another song we sing from time to time. This song was released around 1910 by Julia Johnston (1849-1919). Born in Ohio, she was the daughter of a Presbyterian preacher and grew up in Illinois. She wrote about 500 hymns, with this one being her best known by far. The hymn was put to music by Daniel Towner (1850-1919), who composed numerous tunes (~2000), including “Anywhere with Jesus” and “At Calvary” and “Trust and Obey.”

As the title suggests, this is a song about the grace of God. This is a subject we need to consider and remind ourselves of most often. For without the grace of God there is no salvation. Of course, grace is defined as unmerited favor meaning that God has given us blessings that we do not deserve and have not earned. It is the foundation upon which our salvation is found. Without the grace of God it does not matter what we believe or do.

The text upon which this song is based is Romans 5:20-21 which states, *Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I. Vs. 1 – The marvelous grace of God

- a. *Marvelous grace of our loving Lord* – the word *marvelous* is based on “marvel” which means something that produces wonder or be astonished. An examination of all that God for us shows how wonderful His grace is. Ephesians 2:4-9 emphasizes the greatness of His grace in sending Jesus to this earth to die for us.
- b. *Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt* – our text – Romans 5:20. In context Paul is emphasizing how thought Adam sin and death entered the world, but God’s gift of grace, Jesus Christ (5:15) abounded above that of sin and death. Through His grace we can find our salvation. Paul’s main contrast throughout this letter is the Old Law vs. salvation in Christ. In our verse he notes that “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” meaning that any sin committed can be forgiven by the greater grace of God. That is the main point. HOWEVER, let us not forget Romans 6:1-4 where Paul elaborates on this and notes that just because God’s grace is so great that is NOT license to sin. In fact, Paul reminds his audience that when they obeyed the gospel (accepted God’s grace), they put to death their old man of sin and are now a new creation.
- c. *Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured* – Luke 23:32-33 – the song reminds us that it is at the cross where God’s grace manifested its greatest glory. Romans 5:8 – God demonstrates His love in that Christ died for us. Romans 3:23-24 – all have sinned – we are justified by His grace through Christ Jesus.
- d. *There where the blood of the Lamb was shed* – John 1:29 finds John announcing Jesus as “the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Matthew 26:26-28 as Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper he declared that the cup represented His “blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” 1 Peter 1:18-19, Peter would later declare that our redemption was with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. More on His blood in our next verse.
- e. NOTE: Our current verse changed the last word from *spilt* to *shed*. Our previous hymnal (Sacred Selections) had the word spilt. Some have objected to that word because something spilled implies an accident. But while that is the usual meaning, the word can also mean to deliberately pour something out – for example: A “spillway” is found at dams when engineers deliberately direct water over such.

IN fact, Webster's dictionary¹ gives the 2nd definition as: To cause (blood) to be lost by wounding). When we speak of spilled blood on a battlefield, it is NOT an accident but intentional shedding of blood. There is also reference to archaic uses as "kill, destroy". My point is that I do not believe the word "spilt" was intended to imply an accident, but poetically to rhyme with guilt in vs. 1, the word spilt was chosen. For us this is now a moot point because our book has shed and that IS the clearer meaning, BUT if you are singing with a book that uses the former (original) word, it is a valid poetic word for Jesus' blood being shed on our behalf.

II. Vs. 2 – Graces cleanses us

- a. *Dark is the stain that we cannot hide* – our sins are so terrible they cannot be removed without help. One of the ways sin is described, especially in the OT was as a stain.
 - i. Isaiah 1:18, *"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."*
 - ii. He would also say, *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.* (Isa. 64:6).
 - iii. Jeremiah much later *Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me," says the Lord GOD.* (Jeremiah 2:21-22)
 - iv. OF course the point is, you CANNOT hide your sins from God (and often from others) – Psalm 139:7ff finds David declaring that there is no place you can go to flee from His presence.
 - v. Hebrews 4:13 notes that there is no creature hidden from His sight.
- b. *What can avail to wash it away?*
 - i. We NEED the darkness of our sins removed.
 - ii. Are we searching for the answer to our forgiveness. While not directly related, Revelation 5:1-6 describes a scroll that none could open and they wept. But one declared that there was a Lamb who was able to open the scroll. Jesus is the answer.
- c. Look! There is flowing a crimson tide
 - i. Jesus, as introduces, is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.
 - ii. He cleansed us with His blood – Revelation 1:5.
 - iii. Hebrews 9:13-14 comparing the Old Law sacrifices to Jesus noted, *For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*
- d. *Whiter than snow you may be today*
 - i. The cleansing of our sins is so complete that it is as white as snow – Again Isaiah 1:18
 - ii. Psalm 51:7- David's repentance psalm, *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*
 - iii. Revelation 7:13-14, speaking of martyred saints, *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

¹ "Definition of SPILL." *Merriam-Webster.Com*, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spill>. Accessed 28 Aug. 2026.

- iv. *NOTE: In this let us not forget WHEN our sins are washed away – Acts 22:16 – as we are baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3-4 – it is through His death that we come in contact with His blood in the waters of baptism.*
- e. As our song reminds us, God's grace truly is greater than our sins. That is why we CAN be forgiven regardless of what we have done, if we genuinely repent and obey His commands.

III. VS. 3 – Infinite grace freely given

- a. *Marvelous, infinite matchless grace* – more descriptions of how great the grace of God is. The abundance of God's qualities leading to our salvation including His grace, mercy and love are recorded through scripture – Ephesians 3:17-21.
- b. *Freely bestowed on all who believe* –
 - i. Romans 6:23 – the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.
 - ii. Titus 2:11 notes that His grace has appeared to all men (available to all).
 - iii. Romans 5:15, back to our beginning text, Paul notes: *But the free gift is not like the offense (because of Adam's sin). For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.*
- c. *You that are longing to see His face* – the true believer in Jesus will desire, more than anything else, to see and be with Him. Even as Paul declared in Philippians 1:21-23, 3:8 everything he gave up he counted as rubbish to gain Christ. Consider 1 John 3:1-3 where he declares that in the end we will be like Jesus and therefore we purify ourselves.
- d. *Will you this moment His grace receive* – God's grace IS available to all, but only those who reach out and accept it will be saved.
 - i. Ephesians 2:8 speaks of our faith, an inclusive term of everything we are called to do to be saved – Romans 10:9-10, Acts 2:38, 22:16, etc. Hebrews 5:8-9 – Jesus became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.
 - ii. Will you *this moment* – this is not something to be off - For He says: *"In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* 2 Corinthians 6:2
 - iii. Acts 22:16 – Paul was told not to wait. Acts 2:40 - Peter exhorted them to be saved.

IV. Chorus – Grace that pardons and cleanses

- a. *Grace, grace, God's grace.* This is what the song constantly reminds us of.
- b. *Grace that will pardon and cleanse within* – this cleansing is not merely outward, but an internal cleansing. That is where our heart is – Romans 6:17 commended them because they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine. Romans 12:1-2 calls for us to present ourselves as living sacrifices and be transformed by renewing our minds.
- c. *Grace that is greater than all our sin* – and so we come back to the beginning reminding us how great God's grace is.

In this song, we are reminded of just how great the love, mercy and grace of God is. Far too many today look at their lives and declare their unworthiness. They do not deserve God's forgiveness they declare. And in one sense that is a very true statement. BUT, God's salvation is not based on our worthiness (earning salvation) – it is His great and marvelous grace. If God could forgive and save Paul (1 Timothy 1:15) and many other examples, he can forgive and save you too. And that also applies if as a Christian you have strayed back toward the world. Simply repent (turn back) and confess your sins as needed (1 John 1:9) and his grace is STILL greater than our sins (cf. 1 John 2:1-2 - *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*) This was written TO Christians. Are you walking in His grace? Think about it!