

God's Crazy, Lavish Grace

God's grace is radical. Extreme. Counterintuitive. He pours it out on the undeserving. God lavishes His grace on those not seeking it. He even generously extends it to those who hate Him and persecute His people.

Saul of Tarsus fit that description. In the years immediately following the death and resurrection of Jesus, Saul was the archenemy of Jesus' followers. He did everything "possible to oppose the name of Jesus" (Acts 26:9). He went from synagogue to synagogue to punish Jews who "belonged to the Way" (Acts 9:2). He traveled from city to city to arrest them and put them in chains. He zealously and violently sought them out and put them to death.

Yet even while Saul breathed out murderous threats against the believers, God wooed him with His grace. Years later, in his letter to the Christians in Galatia, Saul (Paul) acknowledged God had "set me apart from birth and called me by his grace" (Galatians 1:15). God worked in Saul's heart and mind long *before* his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. While Saul worked strenuously to stop the Gospel message of Christ, God's grace flowed all around him, preparing him for a life-changing meeting on a dusty road.

While Paul zealously tried to annihilate the Church, God pursued him. While Paul had his heart set on destruction, God had His heart set on Paul. And the same is true in our lives. When we were still running hard away from God, He pursued us with His grace. Doesn't that just bowl you over?

Before God created the heavens and the earth, He chose to love you. He desired to make you His own, even before there was time. And He put a plan in place to make it possible. Before you ever knew you needed a Savior, the Father determined Jesus would be your eternal hope. Then with His lavish grace, He wooed you.

Throughout Scripture, God is the Initiator. Even in the Garden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sin entered the world, God sought the sinner. (See Genesis 3:8-9.) While we were still His enemies, God proved His love to us in the most radical way. *But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8, NLT).*

We do not deserve salvation. We are not worthy of a relationship with God. Yet He chooses to love us. He lavishes His grace on sinners and makes salvation possible through His own sacrifice. By definition, God's grace flows from *His* heart. It's based on *His* bounty, *His* character. We do not merit His grace. We cannot earn it. Yet in His loving-kindness He woos us to Himself and freely pours out His grace through the death of His Son.

Then after our conversion, on the born again side, God still woos us. Through times of rebellion, complacency, grief, and struggle, God gently draws us back to Himself

with cords of love. He calls us from our wanderings. He longs to protect us from pain of our own making. His crazy, lavish grace refuses to let us go.

This post is adapted from Kathy Howard's new Bible study Lavish Grace: Poured Out, Poured Through, and Overflowing. Lavish Grace is a 9-week journey with the apostle Paul that helps readers discover God's abundant grace for their daily lives and relationships. You can find out more about Kathy, her speaking and writing, and find free resources at www.KathyHoward.org.