



Dear Friends,

Many years ago, I studied George Orwell's classic novel "1984" for my HSC. It's a story about life in a totalitarian state. The state's citizens were only permitted to use Newspeak, a list of words sanctioned by the government. Using other words was outlawed. To ensure that citizens only used Newspeak, the government ordered that forbidden words be deleted from past documents – texts, newspapers, media – so that they could no longer be referenced or retrieved.

The thinking behind the outlawing of words was that, if people stop using the prohibited word, the concept expressed by the word disappears. So, for example, if you do have no word for freedom, the concept of freedom no longer exists. Orwell recognized the potency of words to describe, shape and change reality.

I thought of George Orwell's "1984" after reading Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:10:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

After reading these words, I meditated on the word, "grace." Grace is a word I would never want to see expunged from the English language. It conveys much about the God we worship and how he treats us and sees us.

I mediated on what "grace" communicates of God and his ways in my prayer journal:

God's grace. What a beautiful word. Grace. Gift. Undeserved mercy. Unmerited love. Generosity. Overflowing abundance. Benevolence. Kindness. Forgiveness. Wasteful extravagance.

My meditations reminded me of a song by rock band, U2, called "Grace." Here are some of the lyrics from that song:

*Grace, She takes the blame, She covers the shame, Removes the stain ...
Grace ... She carries a pearl, In perfect condition, What once was hurt,
What once was friction, What left a mark, No longer stings,
Because Grace makes beauty, Out of ugly things*

I especially love the line, "Grace makes beauty out of ugly things." That's what Jesus did for me at the cross. By grace, I've been cleansed of my sin. By grace, I've been released from sin's power. By grace, I am a child of God. By grace, I am declared righteous. By grace, I am made holy. By grace, I am heaven bound. "By the grace of God I am what I am."

As I continued to mediate on the verse, I was struck by how God's grace generates human activity. Christians often think wrongly that God's grace diminishes human agency and responsibility. The opposite is true. Paul says that God's grace was not without effect so that "I worked harder than all of them." That led me to pray:

Your grace is what I need daily. Grace to live. Grace to love. Grace to obey. Grace to serve. Grace to work. Grace to forgive. Grace to admit my sin. Grace to say sorry. Grace to take the first step toward another when a relationship breaks down. Grace to do what is right even when I don't feel like it. Grace to pray. Grace to give, Grace to be brave.

God's grace is, above all else, God giving himself to us in Jesus Christ, and sending the Holy Spirit to live with us so that Christ is always present to us. I cannot imagine life apart from grace because I cannot imagine existence without God and his love which makes ugly things beautiful.

God Bless,
Mark Adams