



WOW: Word Of the Week

LAVISH

June 7, 2023

In a recent WOW, I sought to expand our understanding and appreciation of grace by focusing on God's generosity. Generous, gracious God, "gracing" us. To treat another with grace reveals a generous spirit. Any obligation God felt to act on our behalf is the result of who He is.

This week, another facet of grace. In my quick look at generosity, I mentioned a synonym: abundance. Think with me. If God is under no external compulsion to bless us, even the smallest details of our lives proclaim God's lavish abundance. God's grace is not seen only in big gifts. God's unbelievable abundance may be most visible in the little things. We sing, "Count your many blessings." Can we do that? Is it possible? Can we remember how much we have received, how much we have been given, our virtually innumerable blessings?

God's promise and provision of eternity with him would be enough. A roadmap for the journey is an added blessing. Basic physical needs met would be enough, but God's blessings flow forth in abundance. Physical blessings and spiritual blessings.

Be patient with me as I share a quick word study. What connects abundance with this week's WOW: lavish? The original Greek word, *perisseuo*, means to overflow or abound. (Overflow would be a great WOW, wouldn't it?) In Eph. 1:8, older translations (for example, KJV, ASV) translate "to abound," but ESV translates "to lavish." I like that description of God's overflowing abundance, God's generosity, God's grace. The Bible says that we have redemption and forgiveness "according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us." Lavish abundance. Connecting the two words duplicates the original word! Powerful!

Look again at Eph. 1. Every spiritual blessing in Christ. He blessed us in Christ. He chose us in Christ. He set us apart in Christ as his. He adopted us in Christ. He "graced us" in Christ – he has been more than kind to us, above and beyond. In Christ are redemption, forgiveness, his rich grace lavished on us, wisdom, insight. The list continues through Eph. 1: knowledge of him, hope, Holy Spirit, inheritance, incredible power, fullness.

God lavishly gives these blessings. Grace; lavish abundance – God sharing his great mercy and rich love, uniting us in peace, making us family, dwelling among us (a quick overview of Eph. 2.)

Do we see God's lavish abundance toward us? We often see only intermittently, but God's lavish generous grace is steady, constant. Amazingly, God continues to bless us lavishly even when we do not see or appreciate or feel gratitude.

God's lavish abundance calls us to be thankful, regardless, always. In the dry times, in the lean times, when we can barely go forward through the wilderness of the world, in discontent and questioning. God's love is unlimited. Why do we have faith famines?

God's lavish abundance buoys us in difficult days. Psalm 23 celebrates blessings. Psalm 23 also celebrates God's presence in the valleys and shadows. In every circumstance, God is moving us closer and closer to his presence, preparing a feast. Jesus used a different illustration: a father preparing a feast for a wayward son returned. Lavish celebration; a lavish welcome home.

God's lavish abundance calls us to contentment. Humanly, we tend to want more. Paul learned contentment in all of life's circumstances. Our lavish God calls us away from artificial gods.

God's lavish abundance is certain. As we tune in spiritually, God's lavish grace is less surprising, more dependable; even when God's timetable fails to meet our expectations. God lavishly pours out abundance on us.

God's lavish abundance calls us to imitate him. He blesses us so we can bless others. God makes possible a "blessing strategy." We lavishly share with others. We put in a good word for Jesus. We share mercy because we have received mercy.

In daily life, we easily overlook God's lavish abundant grace. In 2 Cor. 8:9, God's lavish grace is seen even though our word is not used. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor for you, so that you through his poverty might become rich."