

## Grace: A Lifetime Guarantee

“Thanks be to God for His Indescribable Gift”  
2 Corinthians 9:15

Shopping is a favorite pastime for many women, including me. But lately the Internet makes it almost too easy; rather than hassle driving, parking lots and long lines I sit comfortably at home, day or night, shopping at my convenience. Furthermore, I never feel obligated to buy because I took up a salesperson’s time.

But online shopping isn’t without drawbacks. Though placing an order is as easy as pushing a button, receiving it is another matter. Not only must I wait for delivery, but also pay the shipping costs. And shopping from afar can be risky. More than once my hopes were dashed to realize what I bought was nothing like what I expected. In such instances, not only is the initial shipping cost irretrievable, there’s an additional expense to return the item.

Much of this changed recently when I stumbled onto a great online shoe business. I’m not one to risk buying shoes without trying them on, but this company guaranteed free shipping both ways. Therefore, if the shoes didn’t work out, it wouldn’t cost me anything. Since there seemed to be nothing to lose, I placed an order.

I was thrilled when my shoes arrived. They came in a flash, and furthermore, they fit. With such positive reinforcement, I ordered again. And again, and again...

So now I’m an enthusiastic patron of this company. Though not every purchase has worked out, returns are slick and haven’t cost me anything. There are no gimmicks or penalties if I change my mind, buy the wrong size, or just don’t like the style. Such a risk-free policy affords the freedom to try new designs, colors and brands so why shop anywhere else?

Based on my experience, other such businesses just aren’t like this. Maybe other companies believe they can’t afford to provide such service, or that consumers would abuse it. But the no-risk policies of my new favorite cyber-business don’t appear to have harmed it (in 2007 the company generated \$800 million in sales). Their strategy is to invest more in customer service than in advertising, so they rely primarily on positive consumer feedback to promote sales.

This shows how word of mouth is the best advertising. The enthusiasm of a satisfied customer is contagious, and the truth radiating from an unbiased testimonial can’t be matched by any ploy generated from a corporate marketing campaign.

Similarly, God uses word of mouth to spread the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Partakers of His grace, we’re grateful for how it changed our lives. Maybe we felt empty and worthless before His redemption gave our lives true worth. Or maybe we felt stained by guilt before the eternal waters of forgiveness washed our sins away. Or maybe we feared death before knowing the hope of happiness forevermore in His presence. The list stretches from Heaven to earth but it’s tied together with a common thread: He met us and freely saved us, even before we could appreciate it. We lost nothing but our guilt, condemnation and useless old life. And we gained the fullness of eternity forever. It’s better than the greatest earthly treasure and certainly more enduring, and this fuels our zeal to share it.

Thus God uses people to share the Gospel, but also to spread His Word that grows us spiritually. The apostles were commanded by Jesus to make disciples throughout the world (Matthew 28:19); human authors were divinely inspired to write the Scriptures; pastors and teachers are gifted by the Spirit to share truths of the Bible with the church.

For though saved by grace, we nonetheless depend on grace for everything needed for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). But this isn’t burdensome; His yoke is light (Matthew 11:30). Not saddled with guilt or compulsion, we’re lifted up on wings as eagles (Isaiah 40:29-31). Because God’s nature doesn’t compel by force, but persuades with kindness (Romans 2:4). He desires not our misery but our happiness, and showers us with unmerited favor.

The more we appreciate grace, the more grateful we become. Our resultant exuberance is infectious, bubbling out as testimonials that win souls. So we share with the words from our lips, and also with His Word written on our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:2). Others see our changed life, the peace and joy they don’t understand, but that they desperately want. This serves as our bait, as we become fishers of men.

Still, the enemy tries to hide grace from the world, deceiving many that something this great is too good to be true. For many may think that people will take advantage of something that stands strong though they may stumble and fall. Certainly some fail, like the prodigal son who left home to pursue wanton living (Luke 15). But not only did he not find happiness, he even believed his father could consider revoking his sonship (Luke 15:18). Like many (including his older brother), he reckoned grace too good to be true, so imagine his surprise to receive his father’s welcome at his homecoming! Did he think, “Why didn’t I return sooner?” Or maybe more aptly, “Why did I ever leave?”

But we too were once lost, though now found. Knowing that grace has brought us safe thus far and grace will lead us home, we stand in awe at how amazing it is.

*By Mary Nixon*