

God's Marvelous, Infinite, Matchless Grace

But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (James 4:6).

Grace is a very difficult concept to understand and even more difficult to comprehend how God can forgive all our sins completely, without works or expectation of return, and then totally forget them!

Grace refers to the essential character of God. He is a God of grace. From this, grace is the love and mercy of God in action toward sinful man. Our God is a God of love, mercy and grace. All that comes to us from Him is due to His gracious nature. If grace is God giving us that which we do not deserve, mercy is God withholding from us what we do deserve, as sinners - everlasting damnation.

I. **Definitions:** The love of God in action toward sinful men. The loving provision of God enabling the believer to both desire and do His will. The activity of God which puts at the disposal of sinning men and women all that is necessary for life, godliness, peace and delight (I Peter 1:3; II Peter 1:3). The provision of a person for persons for practical power and personal progress in God's plan. God's attitude toward the sinner (Romans 3:24; 5:2, 8, 9) resulting in the gift of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Greek word is **Χαρις** (charis) and simply means, *the unearned, unmerited favor of God*. A popular acrostic describes grace: **G R A C E** - God's Riches at Christ's Expense.

II. Three Aspects of God's Grace

- A. **Common** (general) **Grace:** Those gifts and benefits from God to all mankind regardless of their relationship to Him. All are blessed by the wonders and beauty of His creation. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain to both the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45; Titus 2:11). He preserves truth and morality among all people by restraining sin. He opens the minds of people to the goodness of God, thus preparing them to receive God's special or efficacious grace.
- B. **Efficacious Grace:** The expression of a special love to a special people (the redeemed). God gives this grace to save, sanctify, glorify, and maintain His children in Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, which moves men to believe in and receive Christ as Savior, in spite of their natural bent towards evil. Faith itself is a gift of God's grace (Philippians 1:29; Eph. 2:8-9).
Efficacious grace is effective involving the whole concept of the sovereign purposes of God. It is an act and not a process (Matthew 9:13; 22:14; Romans 1:1; 8:28-30; I Timothy 6:12).
Efficacious grace teaches us to 1) deny ungodliness, 2) deny worldly lusts, 3) to live soberly, 4) righteously, and 5) godly and then 6) to watch for the soon coming of Jesus Christ for His own (Titus 2:11-13).
- C. **Boundless Grace:** God's provision of grace in the believer's life is most adequate for success, blessing and victory in his Christian experience. As we humble ourselves and trust Him, He gives us more grace (James 1:6, 10; I Peter 5:6; Psalm 84:11). His grace is more than sufficient to meet our every need (I Corinthians 10:13; II Corinthians 12:9).

III. There are several different kinds of God's Grace offered to His children.

- A. Saving Grace - It is grace through faith in Christ that we receive salvation (Romans 6:23; 5:1-11; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10).
- B. Sanctifying Grace - This type reigns in the believer's life through righteousness unto eternal life (Romans 5:21).
- C. Sustaining or Strengthening Grace - (II Corinthians 12:9-10; II Timothy 2:1).
- D. Serving Grace - Every child of God truly born again will want to serve the Lord and as a result of this grace, each has the enablement to do it (I Corinthians 15:9-10, 58; II Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 3:7; Hebrews 12:28).
- E. Singing Grace - (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).
- F. Speaking Grace - (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 4:6).
- G. Suffering Grace - (II Corinthians 1:3-5; 12:9-10).

IV. The Believer's Response to Grace

Grace should never be considered "cheap." While it is freely offered to the recipient, it was very costly for the donor. We must understand that God doesn't owe us anything. He is not obligated to extend His grace to us. It is freely extended to us as guilty sinners who deserve only the severity of God's wrath - everlasting damnation (John 3:36).

A. We must Understand God's Grace

J. I. Packer in His Book, ***Knowing God***, states that there is a *deferential blankness* in the lives of so many believers with respect to grace.

1. Many only give lip-service to the concept of grace, indicating that it means little to them. It is as though they merely take God's grace for granted.
2. Others act as though it is beyond their understanding, simply indicating that they have not struggled with the concept of grace or have failed to grow in their personal relationship with the Lord. Human nature makes it difficult to believe that God offers grace when we cannot earn it or merit it.
3. Our ignorance is obvious when we express the belief in our innate goodness. We fail to recognize that we are fallen creatures from God's image and rebels against God's authority. We fail to admit that we are guilty and unclean sinners fit only for condemnation. As such, we turn a blind eye to all the wrongdoing about us, even tolerating it in others.
4. We must understand that by God's grace, we experienced a "...truly dramatic transition from the status of a condemned criminal awaiting a terrible sentence to that of an heir awaiting a fabulous inheritance" (J. I. Packer - *Knowing God*, p. 121). In this transition, God moved from being our Judge to becoming our Savior (John 3:16-18; Romans 5:8-21; Matthew 11:28; Titus 2:11).

B. We must Correctly Respond to God's Grace. The ***Gospel*** is the good news of God's grace, extending to undeserving sinners forgiveness and eternal life.

1. If God's grace has not changed our lives, it is an indication that we have not received it (Romans 6:1-14; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:1-13; 4:24).
2. Our response should be one of humility, gratitude, love, awe, worship, service and good works (Ephesians 2:10; 3:14-21; Titus 2:11). The Apostle John writes - "We love Him because He first loved us" (I John 4:19).
3. God wants His children to depend on His grace. Satan, our greatest enemy wants us to depend on ourselves. In Christ, we have enough grace to resist Satan's work in our lives (James 4:6-7). The grace of God is always available and always adequate for every need (II Corinthians 6:1; 9:8). God has promised: "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11; II Corinthians 4:15).

V. God's Grace Illustrated

"**Amazing Grace**" is one of the favorite hymns of the church and was penned by John Newton. He was a wealthy ship owner and trader who shamelessly dealt in human slaves from Africa. His quest for success led him into the deep pits of human degradation. Yet, the grace of God and mercy of the Lord preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed him to preach the faith he labored to destroy. He wrote: *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found, was blind but now I see.*

The grace of God is reflected in His forgiveness and mercy to the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:2). It is also reflected in God giving Jonah a second chance to obey Him (Jonah 3:1-2).

Zechariah 12:10 reveals that the day is coming when God will pour out His grace again upon the people of Israel at which time they will recognize that Jesus Christ was the One whom their forefathers pierced and be brought to personal repentance.