



“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

Grace

Central Truth: God’s grace offers forgiveness to sinners.

L407. Date: September 1989. **Text:** Ephesians 2:1-10.

Topic: Grace: Of God.

Grace is a familiar theme and a great Christian doctrine. Some form of the word occurs almost two hundred times in the Bible. The first occurrence is Genesis 6:8: “*Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*” The last occurrence is Revelation 22:21: “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*” All in between is description, demonstration, or declaration of God's amazing grace.

God is gracious. He deals with us graciously. He is magnified in the expressions of His grace and we are benefited in the reception of His grace.

Grace — what a precious word! What a delightful experience it is to meditate upon it! John Newton was right when he wrote “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound. . . .” Someone has said that God's grace is “**G**reat in its revelation, **R**edeeming in its purpose, **A**marazing in its abundance, **C**ontinual in its expression, and **E**ternal in its accomplishments.”

Let us pass beyond an intellectual exercise as we study this subject. Let us worship Him who has graced us in Jesus Christ.

I. THE MEANING OF GRACE

Three primary words in the original Bible languages express the idea of grace. One Hebrew word carries the idea of “favor” and another means “loving-kindness.” The Greek word for grace has the root meaning of “joy” and refers to an act of favor based on love to one who is undeserving and

unlovely. Favor, undeserved favor based in love, and loving-kindness — that is what grace means.

Grace means that God is for us who in ourselves are against Him. It does not refer to His general attitude of good will but to an effective act. Grace is God's redemptive love acting in the salvation of sinners. The essence of divine grace is that it is free, undeserved, and unexpected.

Grace is summed up in the name of Jesus Christ. *“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17). God had been gracious to mankind before Jesus was born, but His greatest expression of grace was in giving His incarnate Son as the sacrifice for sinners. By the offense of Adam, mankind suffered in spiritual destitution and death. Then grace entered when Jesus came and the gift of God was extended to sinners. That gift was full and free forgiveness, pardon, and reconciliation to peace with God.

Grace is unlimited favor to the undeserving. It is a favor done freely without claims or expectation of a return. But grace is more than a favor done to a friend; it is good done to an enemy. Romans 5:6, 8, 10 shows that when we were weak, wrong, and wicked (even to the point of being enemies of God), Christ died for us, thereby reconciling us to God and saving us from our sins.

Form an acrostic of the spelling of grace. Let the sentence say, “Grace means *God's Riches At Christ's Expense*.” That's it! That is grace in its purest expression.

To whom does God extend His grace? Remove the “g” from grace and what you have left is race. God's favor is extended to the whole human race. That includes you and me! *“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men”* (Titus 2:11).

II. THE NEED FOR GRACE (Ephesians 2:1-3)

A. We need grace because we are dead in sin (verse 1). To be “*dead*” in sin means to be dead in relationship to God because of sin. God's law is that the soul that sins will die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he was separated from fellowship with God. That is spiritual death. We who are born of Adam's race also die spiritually when we come to the age of responsibility because we sin by an act of our will just as Adam sinned by an act of his will. So death passed upon us as it did upon him (Romans 5:12). The wages of sin is death for all people in all times and places.

One who is dead is helpless. He cannot change his condition. So one

who is dead in sin cannot leave his sin and make peace with God. But God moves toward him in grace (undeserved favor) and saves him out of his sin. Thank God for His grace.

B. We need grace because we walk in sin. “*The course of this world,*” which is controlled by “*the prince of the power of the air,*” marks our lifestyle just as it does others who are “*the children of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2:2). Living under the government of our spiritual father, the devil, we make sin our lifestyle. We walk “*in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings*” and kindred evils (I Peter 4:3). If God is good to us in that condition, it has to be on the basis of grace. We need grace because there is nothing in us to deserve God's help.

C. We need grace because we fellowship with sinners rather than saints. Like other “*children of wrath,*” we follow a lifestyle where other sinners walk. We have no desire for things of God or people of God. On the contrary, we are hostile toward them. But then God comes to us in love, shows us the error of our way, and calls us to Christ. That is grace. When He could fall on us in judgment, He ministers to us in love.

D. We need grace because of the wages of sin. To be “*children of wrath*” means that we deserve God's displeasure and dreadful judgment (Ephesians 2:3). It is awesome to think that God's wrath hangs like a great storm cloud ready to burst forth on sinners (John 3:36). But it is so. In the flesh, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, we can never please God. God must deal with us justly in judgment or mercifully in love. And He chooses to deal with us in mercy.

III. THE MINISTRY OF GRACE (Ephesians 2:4-9)

A. Grace expresses the love of God. Because He is “*rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*” we received help rather than harm (Ephesians 2:4). He has loved us with an everlasting love. It was sufficient to cause Him to send His only begotten Son to be our Savior. We see God's love manifested in that while we were in the very act and state of wicked rebellion, Christ died for us all (Romans 5:8). Grace is God's act motivated by His love. “Thank You, dear God, for loving us as You do.”

B. Grace confers life to sinners. Even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, God has raised us up to life in Christ (Ephesians 2:5). We can testify to the truth of Jesus' promise, “*He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life*” (John 5:24). We believe and we have received eternal life. That is one of the great blessings conferred by God's grace.

C. Grace overflows in present blessings to believers. Someone criticized the Christian faith as being only “pie in the sky by-and-by.” Not so! Ephesians 2:6 testifies that we are already raised up together with Christ and we already are sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Lifted out of our old life, we are now enthroned with Jesus in heaven. That is a present reality, not a future prospect. What a fellowship we have with the Son of God in such a sacred atmosphere! And that is only one of the blessings of God by His grace.

D. Grace gives hope for the future. God intends to show in the future the tremendous generosity and surpassing richness of His grace. He will do it through the kindness and goodness He has shown to us through Jesus Christ. However good the past may have been, in the experience of God's grace, the future is even better. One day Christ shall appear, and we will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4). It is all by grace.

E. Grace provides assurance to believers. Your salvation is by God's grace. There is no need to fear. If it were by works, one might wonder whether he had done sufficiently well and fear he had not. But since it is totally by grace, without any mixture of works, he can rest in peace that God has done all that is necessary to save him eternally. We are justified by his grace and made heirs of God. Who could ask for more assurance than that? Thank God for His grace.

IV. THE FRUIT OF GRACE (Ephesians 2:10)

Grace has an effect in our lives. It is not intended just to save us from hell and take us to heaven. God's grace purposes to produce fruit through us to the glory of God. *“We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

God's grace makes it possible for us to bear spiritual fruit. As the vine feeds the branches and enables them to produce fruit, so God enables us (John 15:1-8). We become new creatures at our conversion experience, and are thereby enabled to bring forth fruit for God.

In fact, the goal of grace is to make us fruitful. Our conversion is to bring glory to God as well as good to us. Jesus has chosen us and ordained us that we should go and bring forth fruit (John 15:16).

What type of fruit do we produce which glorifies God? The Bible speaks of our glorifying God by singing, speaking, living, and growing. We glorify Him by what we are and by what we do. And that is made possible by His grace.

V. THE BLESSINGS OF GRACE

The epistle to the Ephesians lists seven great blessings which come to us by the grace of God. Think about each of them. We are accepted before God (1:6). We are forgiven of all our sins (1:7). We are saved eternally (2:5-8). We are given hope (2:7). We are enabled to serve God effectively (2:10). We are able to bless other people and help them grow (4:29). We are able to enjoy the grace of God as it is with us all (6:24). Can you add other blessings to that list?

No wonder Robert Robinson wrote in his beautiful song, “O to grace how great a debtor/Daily I’m constrained to be!” We are debtors to God who has dealt with us in grace. How lost and hopeless we would be if He had not dealt with us so.

“It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” (Hebrews 13:9). That means you can be confirmed, made stable, and strengthened by the grace God has shown to you. Such a thing is “good” in that it is noble, beautiful, and appropriate. The grace God has shown toward you should not encourage careless living or presumption. It should make you strong in the Lord. It should establish you, strengthen you, and settle you. That is the natural response of a grateful heart that has experienced the gift of God's grace.

1. What is grace?
2. How is grace related to mercy and love?
3. In what sense did grace and truth come by Jesus Christ?
4. Why do we need God to deal with us in grace?
5. What does Titus 2:11 say about the scope of God's grace?
6. What blessings does God give you today because of His grace?
7. How does the doctrine of God's grace give you assurance?
8. How is grace related to Ephesians 2:10?
9. How can your heart be “established with grace”?
10. How has this study magnified God in your eyes?