

DOCTRINE OF GRACE

Introduction.

- A. Grace is the policy of God toward all creatures and the guiding principle of His plan. Jn. 1:14-17; IITim. 1:9
- B. Grace encompasses all that God has done to bring fallen, hostile, and sinful men into a just, perfect, and eternal relationship with Himself. Eph. 2:1-5
- C. While God's grace is not technically a part of the Divine essence, the display of grace cannot come at the expense of any of the attributes of God, particularly righteousness.
 - 1. God's love motivated Him to provide the potential for salvation for every member of the human race. Jn. 3:16
 - 2. However, God will not save anyone that refuses to believe in His Son, and will not hesitate to send every unbeliever to the lake of fire for all eternity. Jn. 3:36; Rev. 20:15
- D. Therefore, one cannot hope to insinuate that grace will overrule the principle of volition, or the fact that each person is responsible for his own volitional choices.
- E. Grace completely excludes human merit and makes it possible for sinful creatures to access Divine blessing. Rom. 4:4, 11:6
- F. Therefore, one must exercise faith toward the Word of God, both Ph₁ and Ph₂, in order to secure the grace benefit. Eph. 1:13; IThess. 2:13
- G. Bible doctrine is certainly a proper object of faith and is referred to as **the word of His grace**. Acts 20:32; Rom. 10:17
- H. While grace can be accepted or rejected based on the choice of each individual (Gal. 5:4; Heb. 12:15), grace that is rejected brings judgment; however, grace always precedes judgment. Jude 1:4
- I. Certain phrases show the importance and primacy of grace in the economy of God.
 - 1. **The grace of God/His grace** is used 29 times in the New Testament.
 - 2. **The riches of His grace** is used twice, Eph. 1:7, 2:7
 - 3. The consistent emphasis on grace by the authors of the New Testament, as seen in their salutations and benedictions. Rom. 1:7, 16:20; ICor. 1:3, 16:23
- J. While they are not precisely synonymous, the connection of **grace, mercy, and peace** to one another is noted in some passages. ITim. 1:2; IITim. 1:2; Heb. 4:16; IIJn. 1:3
 - 1. **Grace** is always first, indicating that mercy and peace are contingent on the grace of God, who has an active attitude of goodwill, kindness, or favor toward the believer.
 - 2. **Mercy**, which is grace in action, stresses the fact that God is gracious to those that fall short of his plan; this word emphasizes our need.
 - 3. **Peace** is the Ph₂ blessing of inner peace or a relaxed mental attitude, knowing that we are the objects of God's grace and mercy.

II. Vocabulary.

A. Hebrew vocabulary.

- 1. **יָנַח** (chanan), verb, to be inclined towards someone or something, to be favorable or gracious.
- 2. **חֵן** (chen), m.noun, grace, favor, goodwill.

B. Greek vocabulary.

1. χαρίζομαι (charizomai), verb, 23X, to do something that is agreeable toward another, to show favor or kindness, to give something graciously, freely, or willingly.
2. χαριτώ (charitoo), verb, 2X, to show grace or kindness; passively, it means to have been shown favor or kindness, to be favored. Lk. 1:28
3. χάρις (charis), f.noun, 155X, that which makes one joyful, grace, kindness or goodwill shown toward someone.
4. χάρισμα (charisma), n.noun, 17X, a gift, favor, or grace that one has received apart from any merit of his own, a grace gift.

III. Definition and description.

- A. Grace is defined as the exhibition of goodwill by an overt act of favor or kindness.
- B. The word may include the fact that the recipient does not deserve the kindness or act of goodwill; grace is not based on the merit of the one receiving it.
- C. Therefore, grace is the mental willingness to bestow overt blessings on those whose status or condition is such that they do not deserve the favor they are being shown.
- D. Human works and achievement can play no part in obtaining God's blessings or benefits if the source is truly grace. Rom. 11:6
- E. The principle that all believers must recognize is that grace always depends on Who God is and never on what we are.

IV. Grace exists in five general categories that include saving grace, living grace, dying grace, surpassing grace, and greater grace.

A. Living grace or common grace.

1. Living grace refers to all that God must provide so one may remain alive in this physical world.
2. Living grace is not limited to believers; God graciously provides the physical necessities of life for unbelievers, those that are His enemies. Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17
3. The physical aspects of this provision include food, drink, shelter, clothing, transportation, employment, air, light, etc. Matt. 6:11,25-34
4. For the positive unbeliever, who will eventually hear the gospel and come to faith in Christ, living grace includes protection until they hear the gospel and believe.
5. For the believer, our living grace also encompasses the spiritual assets that God provides based on position in Christ and the I/HS. ICor. 2:12; Eph. 4:7ff
 - a. These are provided so the positive believer can advance as far spiritually as his positive volition will take him.
 - b. This includes all that is necessary to make the adjustments to God, including a local church, an adjusted pastor-teacher, the completed canon of Scripture, the fellowship of other positive believers, and the time necessary to finish our course.
 - c. Any number of biblical examples may be cited, including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Paul. Dan. 2:17-18, 3:24-25, 6:21-22; IICor. 11:23-28
6. Living grace is clearly not a promise of freedom from pressure and persecution; however, it does guarantee that we will not die before our time and that our enemies will not be able to keep us from making the adjustments to God. Jn. 8:59; Ps. 34:19; Job
7. While living grace will be tested from time to time, God is always faithful to provide what we **actually** need. Ex. 15:22ff, 16:2ff; ICor. 4:11; Heb. 11:37-38

8. Like Paul, we must come to the place in life where we have learned to be content with what God provides. Phil. 4:11-13; I Tim. 6:6-8
- B. Saving grace.
1. Saving grace encompasses all that God had to do to provide eternal salvation for fallen, sinful mankind. Eph 2:5,8-9
 2. The grace gift that God offered for the life of the world was His uniquely begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jn. 3:16-17, 6:32; Rom. 5:8
 3. All one has to do to access the blessing of eternal life is simply exercise faith in the gift that God provided; no works are allowed or accepted. Rom. 3:20,27-28, 4:2,4,5; Gal. 2:16
 4. Thus, faith in Christ provides our justification before God and is the basis for our Ph₂ status with respect to God's grace. Rom. 5:1-2
 5. In regard to our salvation, we were called by grace and justified by grace. Gal. 1:15; Rom. 3:24; Tit. 3:7
 6. The spiritual death of Christ on the cross, which removed the barrier of sins, was the highest manifestation of the grace of God as He gave His Son for those that were His enemies. Heb. 2:9; Eph. 2:4-5
 7. All men are candidates for the grace of God Ph₁ since all are sinners, and Christ died for all sinners. I Tim. 1:14-16
- C. Dying grace. *See doctrine*
1. Dying grace is comprised of all the special, unique blessings associated with the promotion to Heaven (physical death) of the positive believer that has completed his course.
 2. The manner of death is not an issue as to whether or not one is blessed with dying grace. Heb. 11:37
 3. It includes the spiritual stimulation that is associated with having a clear conscience with respect to MPR. 2 Tim. 1:3, 4:7
 4. It includes the fragrance of spiritual memories that attended a life spent on the glory road. I Tim. 1:4,5,16-18, 4:16-20
 5. Dying grace comes to those that have a proper perspective about this life, the priority of Bible doctrine, and the impending promotion into Heaven. I Tim. 4:7-8,18; I Cor. 5:1-8
 6. The believer that experiences dying grace continues to think the Divine viewpoint to the very end, applying doctrine until death., having passed the torch of doctrine to the next generation. I Tim. 1:13
 7. The believer that rejects or neglects the plan of God for his life will die the sin unto death instead of receiving dying grace. I Jn. 5:16; Heb. 6:7-8
 8. The case of the incestuous Corinthian demonstrates that the sin unto death may be averted by spiritual recovery. I Cor. 5:5; I Cor. 2:7-8
- D. Surpassing grace. *See doctrine*
1. The terminology is derived from Ephesians 2:7
 2. Surpassing grace refers to the eternal inheritance of the special blessings and rewards in Ph₃, which are above and beyond the normal blessings that all believers share by virtue of position in Christ.
 - a. The normal blessings include a resurrection body, eradication of the STA, no more pain, sorrow, tears, or death. I Cor. 15:51-53; Rev. 21:4

- b. It is clear that some believers will not receive much SG₃ based on their faulty doctrinal orientation, but will receive the normal blessings of Heaven. ICor. 3:15; IITim. 2:5,12
 3. Since Jesus Christ is the heir of all things, we share in His reward based on our input into the plan of God by producing Divine good. Heb. 1:2; Rev. 22:12
 4. Bible doctrine specifies exactly the works in which we are to be engaged, and also provides us all we need to be mature and prepared for Divine good production. IITim. 3:16-17
 5. All activities that are sanctioned by the Word of God, that are done in fellowship, and proceed from correct motivation, qualify as Divine good and will be rewarded. Matt. 6:1-4, 10:40-42; Jn. 15:4
 6. Works that are done after salvation that are not based on Bible doctrine, done with the wrong motive, or done out of fellowship are categorized as human good and are destroyed at the Bema seat. ICor. 3:12-15
 7. Surpassing grace rewards will be administered at the Bema seat, just following the rapture of the Church. IICor. 5:10; IThess. 4:17
 8. This is a judgment with respect to our Ph₂ works following salvation, the issuing of rewards, and has nothing to do with personal sins.
 9. The ultimate surpassing grace reward is the wreath (often erroneously referred to as the crown), the decoration that is given to those that stick with MPR to the end of their Ph₂. ICor. 9:24-27; IITim. 4:7-8
 10. While our Ph₂ deeds are the basis for our rewards, these blessings are based on the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Rev. 4:10
- E. Greater grace.
1. The terminology is derived from James 4:6, but must be understood in the overall context of James 4:1-6, which emphasizes the distinct problem of attempting to maintain allegiance with the cosmos.
 2. God has strict demands concerning His children, and believers must recognize that friendship with the world is viewed as spiritual adultery. James 4:4
 3. Greater grace, that which is abundant beyond the normal sphere of grace God provides, is given to positive believers that are faithful and do not seek or maintain fellowship with negative volition.
 4. Many believers choose to take the path of least resistance, thinking that the easy and opportunistic way in life is better than God's way.
 5. They pursue and sustain relationships with those that are negative, demonstrating arrogance that God finds repulsive.
 - a. The Greek term ἀντιτάσσω (antitasso—opposed) in verse 6 is a military term that means to set the face against someone and array for battle against them.
 - b. This reaches back to verse 4, which indicates that the believer that has the mental attitude **desire/wish/intention** to have relationships with those that are negative has stationed himself on the battlefield against God, Who will fight to win!
 6. Those that have the mental attitude willingness to compromise the standards of doctrine in order to maintain a relationship with the world are called **adulteresses**; a term designed to denote their treacherous unfaithfulness toward God. James 4:4

7. Believers that pursue the lust grid of the OSN, striving to get ahead at all costs, refusing to submit their plans and relationships to the straight and narrow of doctrine, refusing to separate from the cosmos, manifest a spiritual pride that puts them on a collision course with the Lord.
8. On the other hand, the humble believer that waits on God to provide earthly blessings and relationships with those that are positive comes under **greater grace**.
9. This type of believer does not concern himself with the approbation of the cosmos, demonstrating true orientation to God's plan by pursuing doctrine and MPR in the face of cosmic rejection.
10. This believer will experience the reality of greater grace and will be vindicated by God at the proper time. Prov. 3:34; Matt. 23:12; IPet. 5:5-6
11. The test in life is not to pursue personal vindication in time; allow God to provide it in His time or wait until Ph₃ for the vindication that really matters. *Doctrine of Vindication*
12. The willingness to put your own ideas, plans, choices, etc. on the back burner and defer to God's will and timing for your life manifests the quality of humility that was characteristic of the Lord during the incarnation. Matt. 11:29

- V. Various grace provisions, which constitute part of our Divine operating assets.
- A. Every aspect of salvation is based on the principle of grace.
 1. Our election. Rom. 11:5-6; IITim. 1:9
 2. Our calling. Gal. 1:6,15
 3. Salvation Ph₁. Eph. 2:8-9
 4. Rebound. IJn. 1:9
 5. The maturity adjustment. IICor. 13:9,11
 - B. Prayer is a grace provision that we are to exploit by coming to **the throne of grace**. Heb. 4:16
 - C. Right woman is God's grace provision to solve the problem of man being alone. Gen. 2:18
 1. Right woman is a **fellow heir of the grace of life** and should be treated accordingly. IPet. 3:7
 2. The husband is to live with his wife **according to knowledge**, stressing the fact that a man must learn the "how" of being a good husband, using his authority properly, knowing when to listen and when to lead. Gen. 16:1ff cf. 21:9ff
 3. It is a foolish man that does not recognize the grace provision of having a positive wife, whose level of Divine viewpoint can be a source of great help and comfort in the angelic conflict; however, the two must fight as a unit. Matt. 12:25; Prov. 14:1
 4. While the man's responsibility and authority are given to assist his RW in making the maturity adjustment, he should not use it as a means to exercise total control over her thinking, applications, relationships, etc.
 5. He must recognize, however, that failure to exercise his authority properly, being inappropriately lenient, will have detrimental effects on his RW, and bring him under discipline. *I know she's out of line, but...*
 - D. Children are a grace gift from God. Ps. 127:3-5
 - E. Our spiritual gift, which we received at the point of salvation, is called **χάρισμα** (charisma), a grace gift. Rom. 12:6; IPet. 4:10
 - F. God's grace was provided to Paul to make known the realities of the mystery dispensation, the Church Age. Eph. 3:1ff

- G. The pastor-teacher is viewed as a grace gift from Christ to the Church as part of His spoils of victory. Eph. 4:7,11
- H. The willingness to make financial applications is called a work of grace. IICor. 8:6,7,19
- I. God's grace is provided in sufficient quantity to meet each test you face (IICor. 12:9), and there is sufficient grace for every thing you are called on to do. Heb. 12:28
- J. Our sufferings on behalf of the cause of doctrine are part of God's grace toward us. Phil. 1:29-30
- K. We have the promise that God's grace is available to provide anything and everything we may need monetarily in time. Phil. 4:19; IICor. 9:8

VI. Responses to the grace of God.

- A. God has clearly revealed that it is His directive will for all men to be saved and come to a full knowledge of the truth. ITim. 2:4
- B. Logically, therefore, He must provide the necessary grace in order for mankind to fulfill His will. Rom. 1:5
- C. The grace of God has brought salvation (as a potential) to all mankind and instructs us with regard to the issues of our Ph₂ behavior. Tit. 2:12
- D. We are to receive this grace and exploit it.
 - 1. We are to stand firm in it, taking a hard line against any other system that does not acknowledge or promote the primacy of grace. IPet. 5:12; Acts 13:43
 - 2. We are to grow in respect to the grace of God through the intake of the Word of His grace. IIPet. 3:18
 - 3. We are to derive our strength from the grace of God and not from some external, legalistic observances that do not advance believers. Heb. 13:9
- E. We are to recognize that all we are and all we have has come to us on the basis of God's grace. ICor. 15:10; Eph. 3:2,8; ITim. 1:12-16
- F. We are to conduct ourselves on the basis of grace (IICor. 1:12), demonstrating the grace of God in our speech (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6) and in our actions. IICor. 2:7; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-13
- G. Failure to exploit the grace of God, as manifested by a rejection of doctrine, is taught in the following figures.
 - 1. **Receive the grace of God in vain.** IICor. 6:1 In the case of the Corinthians, this failure was manifested specifically by rejection of their appointed communicator and their bad attitude toward Paul and company. IICor. 5:20-6:13
 - 2. **Nullify the grace of God/fallen from grace.** Gal. 2:21, 5:4 Both passages betray the problems with legalism that were infecting the Galatian churches, which were troubled by the Judaizers. Acts 15:1,5
 - 3. **Insult the Spirit of grace.** Heb. 10:29 The direct context is a wholesale rejection of the plan of God as manifested by ignoring the imperatives of Heb. 10:22-25, with an immediate application to those that fail to assemble consistently.
 - 4. **Comes short of the grace of God.** Heb. 12:15 This verse emphasizes the failure to pursue Ph₂ sanctification through the Word of God, as manifested by allowing the unseen root of bitterness to infect a local church with its poison.

- VII. Distortions of God's grace.
- A. Perpetuating STA activity in the name of grace is an erroneous approach that distorts the intent of grace; this is the "*I will just do it and rebound*" syndrome, which constitutes a license to sin. Rom. 6:1,15; IJn. 2:1
 - B. Religious reversionism, including the no second chance category, is a rejection of the true grace of God and demands judgment. Heb. 6:4-8, 10:26ff
 - C. The liberal perversion of the last days that classes sexual license, specifically focusing on the promotion of homosexuality, as a grace provision is strongly denounced in the book of Jude. Jude 4-7; IIPet. 2:1-6
 - D. One insidious distortion of grace is the concept of religious legalism, which distorts salvation, spirituality, or both into human viewpoint systems of works.
 1. Legalism stresses human ability, talent, effort, and subjective human standards of righteousness; this provides a system in which man does the works and man gets the credit. Rom. 4:4
 2. Under the reality of grace, man brings nothing and offers nothing; the merit resides in God, who does the work and gets the credit.
 3. Legalistic distortions destroy grace orientation among believers, establishing a system of righteousness based on personal strengths that is enforced mercilessly. Matt. 23:4
 4. Those that comply with the legalism are viewed as righteous by those that have added to the Word of God, while those that do not succumb to the legalism are viewed as out of sync with the truth.
 5. Any type of legalism establishes a purely human viewpoint system of righteousness within a local church, not clearly established within the parameters of Scripture, which is quite detrimental to believers no matter which side of the issue they take.
 6. Legalism is a form of power lust, building your righteousness on the real or perceived unrighteousness of others, and can lead to hypercritical meddling in the affairs of others. Matt. 23:5-7
 7. This instills a fear of man rather than a fear of God, as they use their heavy-handed tactics to attempt to bully those that hold to grace and freedom in Christ. Jn. 9:22
 8. This includes all ancient and modern legalistic traditions of men including washing of hands, baptism, circumcision, types of food, holy days (holidays), alcohol, smoking, dancing, television, music, amusement parks, movies, playing cards, participating in activities that do not compromise doctrine or attendance in class, dating, gambling, clothing, and more.
 9. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ made no secret of their intolerance toward the errors of the Pharisees, who were the leading purveyors of legalism during the first century, as they elevated man's ideas to the level of Bible doctrine. Matt. 3:7-11, 23:1ff
 10. They were consistently being rebuked by Jesus Christ, both implicitly and explicitly, for their legalistic standards of righteousness that promoted their unjust criticisms of others without all the facts. Jn. 7:24
 11. Legalism attacks our legitimate freedoms in Christ, our freedom of volition, attempts to read the intent of our hearts, and seeks to impose another, non-biblical standard of righteousness in place of the true righteousness that comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit and application of Bible doctrine. I Tim. 1:5
 12. Beware of those that forbid certain activities without any biblical documentation to state that a particular activity is sinful. Col. 2:16,18,20-23

13. Often legalism is presented under the guise that such activities may not be wrong but you are somehow a better believer if you avoid them.

VIII. Concluding observations on grace.

- A. Grace is the guiding principle and policy of God's plan; it is the starting and ending point of His economy, and characterizes all His dealings with the human race.
- B. Our number one priority, our most pressing responsibility (MPR), is to grow in grace and knowledge, enabling us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and mind. IIPet. 3:18; Matt. 22:35-37
- C. While the adjustments to God's plan are based on the principle of grace, it is true that the maturity adjustment demands our cooperation with God's grace and the production of Divine good works. Eph. 2:10; ITim. 6:18; Heb. 13:16; James 1:21-22, 2:14,17,20,24
- D. This is known as justification by works; however, all Divine good production will be rewarded with surpassing grace. ICor. 15:58
- E. Old Testament believers operated under the same principles of grace to make the adjustments to God, as documented by the lives of Abraham and David. Rom. 4; Heb. 11
- F. God's grace does not demand that temporal prosperity be the same for every believer, as illustrated in the extremes found in Hebrews 11:32-40.
- G. Some have distorted grace into a formula that godliness produces temporal wealth (ITim. 6:5); however, the Word of God makes it clear that not all believers enjoyed great wealth, perfect health, or other types of prosperity. Gen. 13:2, 26:12-13; Matt. 8:20; ICor. 4:11; IICor. 11:27
- H. In spite of the distortions, certain passages clearly teach the principle that God rewards our faithfulness with various forms of temporal prosperity, which does not always consist of money or the details of life. Mk. 10:28-30; ITim. 4:8
- I. The Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme example of grace.
 - 1. He is the ultimate expression of God's grace toward the human race. Jn. 1:4,9-11,14,17
 - 2. He manifested His total orientation to grace as seen in:
 - a. The willingness of God the Son to endure the limitations of humanity during the time of the incarnation under kenosis. IICor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-6
 - b. The humility of His humanity, as He always relied on the Father for guidance, and refused to act of His own accord, or in His own interest. Jn. 4:32-34, 5:17-19, 7:14-18
 - c. His view of Himself, and His service to others. Matt. 11:29, 20:28; Jn. 13:4-5
 - d. His teaching was characterized by this reality. Lk. 4:22
- J. His entire First Advent epitomizes grace orientation under the hypostatic union and forms the example for grace giving. IICor. 8:9
- K. The last verse of the book of Revelation, which completed the canon of Scripture, emphasizes the issue of grace. Rev. 22:21
- L. Rejection of God's grace always results in His judgment; however, God's grace always precedes His judgment. Matt. 21:32-43, 23:34-39; Acts 7:51-53

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth...For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

Jn. 1:14,16