

Understanding God's Grace

Part 2 Shouts of Grace

Key Scripture

“Commit thy way unto the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the Light and thy judgement as the noon day... And the LORD shall help them and deliver them... and save them, because they trust in Him.” Ps. 37:5, 6, 40

Portion for the Journey

Have you despaired to think that you will ever be able to please God? Have you felt you can never measure up to His righteous demands or calling? Israel was called to an impossible task and the LORD encouraged Zerubbabel that they would be completely successful—not by might of man or by man’s power but by His Spirit. He instructed Zerubbabel to shout “grace” to the mountain of obstacles that stood in his way. What power is in this word “grace” that can remove mountains? The Word makes it clear that no matter how great our sin, our failures, our weakness, trouble or despair, God’s grace is sufficient to meet our every need. We need to study the Biblical concept of His grace in order to fully comprehend and receive His grace in our lives!

Some words can become so overused that we fail to appreciate their true meaning. Grace is one of these words! It can be used to describe a smooth and beautiful way of moving, a refined quality in a woman, polite or fair behavior, a period of time one gives before a deadline or repayment of a debt or a short prayer before a meal. At some point, I was taught that God’s grace is like mercy, so we are not being given the punishment that we deserve. It has been said in the case of the prodigal son, mercy allowed him to return home but grace prepared a banquet for him. Thus we see that mercy is a component of grace but far from descriptive of grace’s true meaning and power to release and transform us so that we can become Christ-like. None of these meanings comes close to describing the power of God’s grace toward mankind to save and transform sinners into the image of His Son. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth so we can understand the true power of God’s grace to grant us His love and total acceptance. Zech. 4:7; Isa. 40:4

Definitions of Grace: The word ‘grace’ is used 170 times in the Bible and 122 are in the New Testament.

1. “hanan” (Strong’s #H2589) The primitive root of a word family in the Hebrew, meaning “to show favor, to have mercy, to have affectionate regard, kindness, beauty, pleasantness, attractiveness, loveliness, well-favored, to feel sympathy or compassion. Chanan means ‘to act graciously or mercifully toward someone, to be compassionate, to be favorably inclined. to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior.’

2. “chesed” (Strong’s #H2617) To bow down, to bring deliverance from our enemies, affliction, perversity, adversity. It includes the concept of enablement daily guidance, forgiveness and preservation.”

3. **“charis”** (Strong’s #G5485) Charis is the divine influence upon the human heart and its reflection in the individual’s life. Charis is a favor done without expectation of return. It is the absolutely free expression of the liberality and loving kindness of God and its only motive is the bounty and benevolence of the Giver’s unearned and unmerited favor. It is that which causes joy, pleasure, gratification, favor and acceptance. Charis stands in direct antithesis to “erga” (#2041) which means “works.” The two are mutually exclusive of one another. God’s grace not only forgives the repentant sinner but fills him with joy and thankfulness. Charis changes the individual without destroying his individuality. Charis, when received by faith, transforms man and causes him to love and seek after righteousness of God. The word ‘grace’ carries with it shoutings of great joy. It contains a triumphal song of victory over all of Satan’s schemes over death and eternal separation from God. God’s grace is always associated with great abundance and bountifulness that come from the immeasurable richness and generosity of God. When we speak of grace we must know that it is without limit or measure. Rom. 1:17; 5:17; Eph. 1:7; 3:20-21; 2 Cor. 9:8, 14; Eph. 2:8,9

4. Chrestos (Strong’s #G5543) another Greek word for grace, means ‘to furnish what is needed, useful, profitable, good as opposed to bad, kind obliging, gracious, as in a yoke that is gentle and easy.

Key Elements of Grace include knowledge of God’s love for us, His favor, trusting Him and resting in His promises to work it all as He has promised.

- Grace is the power of God available to meet our needs without any cost to us. It is received by believing rather than by human effort. ~Joyce Meyer
- Grace is always based on who He is and what He has done. Grace is never based on who you are apart from Him, and never on what you can do. Grace is the key to our relationship with Him. ~Kay Arthur
- Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits on the undeserving. ~A.W. Tozer
- Grace is the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. ~Berkhof
- Grace is not merely unmerited favor, it is favor bestowed on sinners who deserve wrath. Unmerited favor would show kindness to a stranger. The Spirit of Grace would be to bless and show love to one’s enemies. Luke 6:27-36
- Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more and there is nothing we can do to make God love us less. Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love. ~Philip Yancey

Working definition of grace: Grace is unmerited favor but that is only the beginning of grace. Where mercy carries the implication of not getting a deserved punishment, grace blesses far beyond all one can comprehend. Grace is the lovingkindness and power of God poured out upon a person who has not earned it to save from sin and bring into His eternal Kingdom. Grace works in our hearts to allow God to accomplish in and through us that which we don’t deserve Him to do and could never do on our own. Grace takes us far beyond deserving death into a place of adoption by our Heavenly Father.

What does the Word tell us about grace? As we study the Word and look at the usage of the word “grace” in context that we can truly come to understand its meaning in our life.

Grace in its fullest sense is not found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament provides a progressive revelation of God's plan for salvation but God's grace was not fully revealed until Jesus. The Old Testament did not use the word 'grace' in very many instances and these words did not fully portray the meaning of grace. The word "grace" is only used 7x in the NASB in the OT. The Hebrew words for grace were most often it was translated "favor" and spoke of God's favor toward man or man's favor toward another person. The first example of God's grace is in the account of Noah, in which it says, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Noah and his family were saved from the destruction of all mankind through the building of an ark. This grace is no different from the grace that saves each of us because we are told that it was by faith. It is said that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah who would bring salvation. Salvation in the Old Testament is the same as in the New Testament -- through faith the Savior through God's grace. Gen. 6:8; Heb. 11:6,7; 1 Pet. 1:10-13; Ps. 130 (entire ch); Isa. 45:22-25; Gal. 3

The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Old Testament shows us the Law and man's inability to meet God's requirements to be holy and perfect. The first five books of the Bible have over 613 commands. God knows the commands He has given us are impossible for us to meet. The Lord says that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. What? How can we love others as God loves them? We can't even remember all of the laws, much less keep them. Jesus said that with man, these requirements would be impossible. Without the Law, we would not understand how impossible it is to meet His holy standards of perfection. If we did not have the law we could not apprehend how lost we are apart from His grace. The law allows us to see ourselves as sinners without hope. It is this utter conviction of our eternal lostness that leads to deep repentance for our sins. The Law is given to cause us to stop trying to be righteous by our own efforts and receive the free gift of His grace. Jesus said that these things would be impossible for man, but with God nothing is impossible. He tells us that His commands are not burdensome! God desires to walk with us and help us each step of the way. We do not need to be like the rich young ruler who walked away sad because he could not meet the command Jesus gave him to sell all he had and follow Jesus. John 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:21; 1 Tim. 1:9; James 2:10-13; Rom. 7:24; 8:2

Man Made religion: All religions require that man must do something to be accepted. Religion emphasizes what we must do for God, instead of what God can do for us. Religion tells us to try harder. It focuses on a form of behavior without the presence of divine life. All religion is based on performance. God is not impressed by performance. He is impressed by our faith. Only Christianity is based not on what man can do for God, but upon God's unconditional love and desire to share what He can do for mankind. Buddhism requires man to follow the eight-fold path; Hinduism seeks to weigh out their good deeds over their evil deeds and achieve Karma. The Pharisees sought to hold fast to manmade traditions and rules. Muslims must follow the Code of the Law and only have absolute assurance of heaven if they die in a war against infidels. Heb. 11:6; Col. 2:23

The first Adam failed to meet God's requirements and through him sin entered the world. All who are born since Adam have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Mankind was hopelessly lost and cut off until Jesus came as the second Adam. He did not come to eliminate the perfect Law of God, but to fulfill it. Only through Jesus' fulfillment of the Law are we able to meet the just demands of a Holy God to find forgiveness for our sins.

New Testament reveals the Covenant of Grace. The NT makes over 213 references to God’s grace.

Whereas the Old Testament showed us the Law, now through the Covenant of Jesus Christ we see a revelation of grace. The Law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus. God’s grace will result in Israel’s seeing Jesus in His infinite beauty. His goodness enables them to repent. The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of Grace.” The COVENANT of JESUS CHRIST offers unconditional grace.

God’s Law and commands, are not meant to be burdensome. Our part is to believe in Him. His part is to do everything else. “This is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days, says the LORD; “I will put My laws upon their heart and in their mind I will write them.” Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:29

Contrast between the Law and Grace:

The Law	Grace
The Law Demands	Grace Bestows
The Law Commands but gives no strength to obey	Grace Promises and performs all we need to do
The Law burdens, casts down and condemns	Grace comforts, makes strong and glad
The Law appeals to self to do its utmost	Grace points to Christ to do it all
The Law calls for effort and strain and urges us toward a goal we can never reach	Grace works in us all God’s blessed will while we rest in Him and trust in His promise of victory and success
The Law is for the self-righteous to humble their pride	The Gospel of Grace is for the lost, to remove their despair.

Jesus is the fullest expression of God’s grace. Jesus came full of grace and truth. The grace of God was upon Him. The grace of God is portrayed in the life of Jesus. As we meditate on Jesus’ life, words and manner toward mankind, we can begin to comprehend God’s abundant love and grace toward mankind. Luke 2:40; John 1:14,17; Eph. 2:4-9; Rom. 3:24; 4:4; 5:1-2

Grace takes us far beyond the understanding that we are all sinners who are deserving of death and eternal damnation. God’s mercy keeps us from the Lake of Fire and eternal separation from His presence. Mercy keeps us from getting what we deserve. Grace gives us far more than we can possibly even think or ask. It is the provision of God’s free, undeserved gift that results in God pouring out His love and blessing on those who never earned it. It is the triumphant song of salvation from death, sin and all of our enemies. It is the powerful promise of victory that causes us to be reborn and then progressively transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. It brings us into relationship with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords...the Most High God. It takes us from the depth of despair and sets us in the heavenly places to reign with Him as sons and daughters of the King. 1 Cor. 5:21

Who is to receive God’s grace?

God’s grace is meant for all people: The Word makes it clear that His promises of salvation are for everyone. “There is none righteous, no not one.” Romans 3:10; Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved.” Rom. 10:13; All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out.” John 6:37; Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” 1 John 5:1; Isa. 64:6, Eph. 2:7-10; John 3:16; 1 John 5:9-13 (NASB77)

Praying for grace upon others: Many of the prayers recorded in the New Testament ask for grace and peace. Acts 14:26, 15:40. Each of these passages uses the phrase “recommended...to the grace of God for the work...” and “...recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.” In the Greek, the word ‘recommended’ is “paradidomai” (Strong’s #3860) and it means ‘to give into the hands of another. To give over into one’s power or use, to deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of or manage. To deliver one to be taught or moulded.’ In Acts 20:32 said, “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace...” The word “commend” is paratithemi (Strong’s # 3908) which means ‘to place beside or near, to set before, to deposit, to entrust, to place oneself or another into the keeping of another, commit to one’s charge.

God’s grace reached us while we were yet sinners. God reaches us while we are sinners, totally undeserving of His intervention. Eph. 1:5-6

- **We are saved by faith in God’s grace through Jesus Christ:** God’s grace is freely given for all who believe. God’s grace gives us strong confidence in God’s ability to save us. God’s Word gives us faith and peace in the sureness of God’s ability to save!! It is by God’s grace that we are able to believe in His salvation. Acts 15:11; John 1:16-17; Acts 18:27; Rom. 5:17; John 16:13; Titus 2:11; Rom. 10:13; John 6:37; 1 John 5:1, 9-16; Isa. 64:6; Eph. 2:7-10; John 3:16
- **Faith is the key to unlock the door to God’s grace.** Faith is defined as the leaning of the entire human personality on God in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom and goodness. Faith means to totally lean on God. We are to “stand” with our eyes firmly fastened on Jesus promise of grace with faith in His power to save and to provide help in every situation. Jesus will bring us into perfect maturity when we set our hearts on Him in faith. We rest from our own efforts and trust Him. A life of obedience springs from a life of faith. Rom. 4:1-5; 5:1-2
- **God’s grace gives us access to His Throne.** In the Old Testament, the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies only one time a year with great fear and trembling. When Jesus died the veil was rent and we are now given free access to God’s Throne of Grace. He wants us to boldly approach His throne in time of need. In times of fear, despair, danger or temptation, run to His Throne! Heb. 4:15-16; Eph. 3:20-21; Zech. 3:1-8
- **We are justified by His grace:** To be justified means to be declared “righteous.” The Greek word “dikaioo (Strong’s #G1344) means to be righteous, declare righteous, to be acquitted, to be vindicated. Rom. 3:21-24
- **Grace gives us the power to overcome the flesh and put to death evil tendencies in our lives.** James 4:6-7
- **The same grace that saves us will also sanctify us.** Sanctification is the work of God where we are renewed in the whole man and enabled more and more to die daily to sin and live unto righteousness. We are perfected by God’s grace and not by our own efforts. Sanctification is the process of working God’s righteousness within us and bringing us into conformity with Jesus Christ. It gives us the power to overcome evil tendencies and live a holy life. Holiness means that we are separated to God and engage in activity that is befitting one who is separated to God. Holiness is a life that is absolutely beyond our reach. It requires a miracle from God of epic proportions. Our battle is to stop our own efforts and have faith that He will do what He has promised. John 16:13; Rom. 3:21-24; 5:17; Acts 20:32; James 4:6; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph 4:23; Col. 3:10; Gal. 1:6; 5:1

- **God's grace is the key to relationship with the Father.** The human heart longs for the intimate friendship that brought God into the garden to walk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD and he walked with God. Moses found grace in God's sight and it is said that he spoke with God face to face as a man would speak to his friend. Gen. 6:8,9; Ex. 33:12,13,16,17; Ps. 84:11
- **Grace is the power by which we live on a moment by moment basis.** Paul warned the Galatians not to forsake the grace by which they were saved to fall into works. It is commonly said that God will not give us more than we can bear. This is not true. God will certainly give more than we can bear on our own! He wants us to rely completely upon Him. Paul frequently spoke of excessive burdens, being in situations beyond his strength, beyond his ability to endure, beyond his own power. The LORD promises that He will meet every need. His grace is sufficient. 2 Cor. 1:8-9; Isa. 66:2; Ps. 34:18; James 4:6; 1 Cor. 1:25-31; Acts 17:28
- **It is the power of God upon us for service.** Acts 4:33; 11:19-24; 14:26; 1 Cor. 15:10; Col. 4:6; Acts 4:33; 11:19-24; 13:43; 14:26; 20:21,24
- **It gives us victory over death and an inheritance of life in His eternal kingdom.** Grace continues to work beyond death, by promising us resurrection and a place in His Kingdom. It assures us life with Jesus Christ for all of eternity. Acts 20:32; 1 Pet. 1:13; Rom. 5:21; Rev. 22:21

Grace Killers:

1. **Performance and Works:** Performance and works are often rooted in pride. Even though we know that we are saved by God's provision of a Savior, it is easy to fall into the pattern of performance by believing our relationship with the LORD and our service depends on what we do or fail to do. Jesus said that apart from Him, we can do nothing! Efforts to perform for the LORD kill the power of His grace in our lives. We must not allow ourselves to be saved by grace but to try to live by works. The symptoms of living by performance are hopelessness, sense of failure, unhappiness, despair, no joy in the Word, the heart is not in prayer but it is done out of a sense of duty. Even though our longing is for the Lord we feel ever further from Him. Call upon Him and believe His promise that through Him, we can do all things!! 1 Cor. 1:5-10; Gal. 2:21; Rom. 4:5

2. **Unbelief** is the opposite of faith. Unbelief will prevent us from inheriting the promises God has made for His children. Unbelief kept Israel from moving into their inheritance in the Promised Land. Unbelief is the root of all spiritual depression. Heb. 3:19

3. **Worry and fear:** Worry is usually related to our past, mistakes, failures that we think have affected us today and that our failures will affect our future. We must trust God's grace to redeem our past mistakes and direct our future. God is not pleased with fear or worry because these attitudes demonstrate our lack of faith in His provision and protection. Jesus rebuked Martha for being worried and bothered about so many things. The word for "worried" used here is "mertmnao" (Strong's #3309). This word means to be full and troubled with cares. It comes from the root "mertmna" (3308) which means care or anxiety, to draw in different directions, distract. It is the kind of anxiety brings disruption to the mind and personality. To be greatly troubled. It is said that there are over 365 "fear not's" in the Word. At least one for each day of the week! Ps. 27:3; 46:2; 56:4; 91 (entire ch.); 118:6; Prov. 3:16-25; 23:17; Isa. 35:4; 41:13, 14; 43:1-7; 44:8; Matt. 10:26-31; Rom. 8:15; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 13:6; 1 John 4:18; Matt. 6:25-34; Matt. 10:19; 13:22; Luke 12:22-26; Mark 4:19; Luke 21:34; Deut. 31:6

4. **The Debtor' Ethic:** In the Debtor's Ethic we feel the obligation or need to pay God back for what He has done for us. Grace or "gratis" means that we have received a gift without price or payment. We will naturally find great joy and gratitude for what He has done, but we do not offer gratitude in an effort to pay for the very gift we received free of charge. The debtor's ethic is a distortion of feeling that since God has done something good for us, we now need to do something good for Him. It is a feeling we can or should pay Him back for His gift. When we do this, it is no longer a free gift, it is a business transaction. Effort to repay God nullifies grace and we turn grace into a mortgage. True gratitude exults in the riches of God's grace as it looks on the benefits of all one has received and knows that we can never repay Him. It releases delight in the value of God's grace given freely to us out of His lovingkindness.

5. **Condemnation:** The enemy seeks to bring us into condemnation through his accusations. We do not need to fear our failures. Readily face our own impotence. Sink down before the LORD in utter helplessness and allow His grace to bring deliverance as we trust God to allow His grace to do it all. We should not be dismayed when we fall short of God's glory. We cannot be saved by our own righteousness and so none of the accusations of the enemy have any bearing on our salvation. We are not saved by our works, but by God's grace and His love. He can abundantly pardon. Forgiveness is for the guilty. Only God can justify the ungodly, but He can do it to perfection. He casts our sins behind His back, He blots them out. He says though they are sought for later they will not be found. He can make hearts made scarlet by sins as white as snow. He can remove our transgressions as from us as the east is from the west where they will never meet!! Rom. 8:1; 1 John 1:9; Isa. 1:18-20

6. **Cheap Grace:** Dietrich Bonhoffer coined the phrase "cheap grace." This portrays the idea of a man-made, man defined grace that is cheaply bought, affordable to man but of absolutely no eternal value. Cheap grace is a false doctrine that easily dismisses our sin through God's grace and gives permission to continue to sin because Christ will forgive us. It is described as a "supernatural get out of jail free card." This cheap grace was addressed by Paul, who made it clear that grace does not give us a license to sin. While we did not pay for grace, True grace gives us such a love for God that we will not want to sin, not for fear of retribution or punishment but because we do not want to do anything that will separate us from God's love.

7. **Unforgiveness:** Bitterness and offense nullify God's grace because we withhold from others the grace and forgiveness God has given us. The LORD has freely given us forgiveness for our sins and His desire is that we extend that same grace to others. Bitterness is a root that defiles many. It also opens the door to the tormenters to afflict us until we forgive and release the person from our debt.

What is the LORD Speaking to your heart?

Response to the LORD: