

The Grace of God

Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Grace depends on the essence or character of God. It is what God can do for the imperfect man while he remains consistent with His own character. This is illustrated by the doctrine of propitiation.

Propitiation means to satisfy which is God's view of the cross. God the Father is satisfied with the work of Christ on the cross on behalf of the sinful man. Thus, God blessed the believer with salvation, spiritual assets for the Christian life, and eternity in heaven based on Christ's perfect work, not on human work.

The divine policy of grace is the precedent for the Christian way of living. God supplies the apparatus for assimilating doctrine as the basis upon which believers give. God also supplies the material resources from which the believers give. The result is living and giving that reflects His plan. Grace orientation is the bona fide motivation and attitude for giving (2 Cor. 8:9).

Grace is the antithesis of legalism. Legalism is man's attempt to observe a strict standard of behavior and thereby gain the approbation of God. Even if the standards are true, man's work cannot make him acceptable to God. Legalism is the enemy of grace, and the futile effort to earn the favor of God. God has provided everything for our salvation. Man responds in a totally non-commendable manner that is by faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

God manifests His grace toward men in two major types: toward mankind and toward believers. Toward mankind: the common and saving grace. Toward believers: the living, logistical, super, and surpassing grace. Common grace is so called because it is common to all mankind. Its benefits are experienced by the whole human race without discrimination between one person and another. The order of creation reflects the mind and the care of the Creator who sustains what He has made.

The eternal Son, through whom all things were made, "upholds the universe by His word of power" (Hebrews 1:2-3; John 1:1-). God's gracious provision for His creatures is seen in the sequence of the seasons, of seedtime and harvest. Thus Jesus reminded His hearers that God "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

Another aspect of common grace is evident in the divine government or control of human society. It is true that human society is in a state of sinful cosmic system. Were it not for the restraining hand of God, indeed, our world would long since have degenerated into a self-destructive chaos of iniquity, in which social order and community life would have been impossibility.

Saving grace is the grace by which God redeems, sanctifies, and glorifies His people. Unlike common grace, which is universally given, saving grace is bestowed only on those whom God elects to eternal life through faith in His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. It is to this saving grace that the whole of the Christian's salvation is owed: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself.

God's regenerating grace is dynamic. It does not only saves but also transforms and revitalizes those whose lives were previously broken and meaningless. This is graphically illustrated by the experience of Saul the persecutor who was dramatically changed into Paul the apostle, so that he was able to testify: By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.

All is thus ascribed to the grace of God, not merely the Christian's conversion but also the whole course of his ministry. The theme of saving grace will now be developed under a number of customary theological heads or aspects, as preeminent, efficacious, irresistible, and sufficient. Sufficient grace always means that it is God who takes the initiative and implies the priority of God's action on behalf of needy sinners.

That is the whole point of grace: it does not start with us, it starts with God; it is not earned or merited by us, it is freely and lovingly given to us who have no resources or deserving of our own. Everything that we have received and everything that we will receive are from the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sufficient grace is grace that is adequate for the saving of the believer here and now and hereafter to all eternity. As with the other aspects of special grace, its sufficiency flows from the infinite power and goodness of God. Those who draw near to Him through Christ He saves "fully and completely" (Heb. 7:25). The cross is the only place of forgiveness and reconciliation, and it is fully so; for the spiritual death of Christ for us that cleanses all our sins and unrighteousness (1 John 1:7, 9), and He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Moreover, as we face the trials and afflictions of this present life the Lord's grace continues to be unfailingly sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:9). Under the concept of grace, the greatest thing that God can do for the saved person is to make him exactly like His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29).

Experiential sanctification: This is the Christian way of life, the spiritual advancement or momentum of believers through the consistent intake of Bible doctrine, which results to continual progress in the process of maturing spiritually (Eph. 4:11-16). Ultimate sanctification: The final stage of sanctification promotes all Church Age believers to a state of perfection and glorification in eternity.

All receive resurrection bodies like that of Christ when He rose from the grave, which is free of the old sin nature and purged of all human good works (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 1 John 3:2). Every believer has tasted the grace of the Lord at least once (1 Peter 2:3). This refers to the point of salvation, when the believer receives at least forty grace gifts from God, which are unearned and undeserved.

Disorientation to grace is the believer's greatest occupational hazard (Gal. 5:4). Falling from grace is not loss of salvation, but rejecting grace and accepting legalism or some human system of false sanctification. God is constantly waiting to pour out His grace to every believer (Isaiah 30:18-19) but He could not unless they are properly adjusted to God's justice. There are three adjustments to the justice of God: Salvation, Rebound and Spiritual Maturity.

The believer must constantly adjust to the justice of God by rebound from time to time in order to avail the blessings and spiritual resources. Isaiah 30:18-19 speaks about tremendous blessings that God is waiting to pour out upon the believers who reach spiritual maturity. The Christian way of life expresses grace in many ways, in different applications and settings.

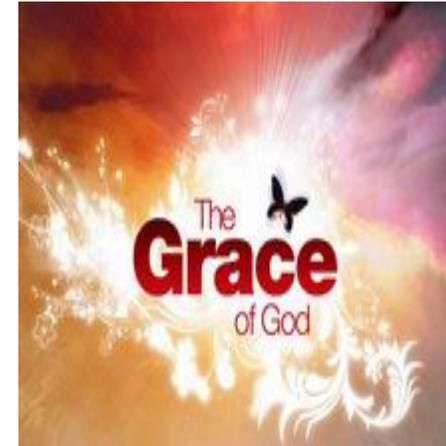
.Grace is expressed in: prayer (Hebrews 4:16), suffering (2 Corinthians 12:9-10), spiritual growth (2 Peter 3:18), spiritual stability (1 Peter 5:12), grace giving, spiritual service, and divine good works (Eph. 2:10) of the believers. Grace is sufficient for enduring all sufferings.

Through grace God is able to bless the believer in the midst of crisis, pressures, hardships, adversity, and pains (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Grace is the perfect plan of God for the imperfect man. A perfect plan can originate only from a perfect God. If imperfect man can do anything creditable or meritorious in the plan of God, the plan is no longer perfect. Grace which excludes human merit protects the perfection of God's plan.

A plan is like a chain, which is stronger than its weakest link. Grace excludes human merits, human ability, human good, and therefore, the plan of God has no weak links. Human works cannot accomplish the plan of God. Human virtue always falls short of God's absolute standards.

Man cannot earn his salvation or his forgiveness of sins or earn the favor of God to bless him. Human good, when assumed to be man's approach to God, expresses arrogance because it rejects grace. No amount of sacrifice done under the control and power of the flesh is acceptable to God. The arrogance of the believers who reject the doctrine of eternal security, assumes his sins as greater than the plan of God.

The arrogance of the believer who succumbs to pressure and adversity assumes his sufferings as greater than the grace provision. The arrogance of the pseudo-spiritual believer assumes his human system as greater than the power of the Holy Spirit and the Christian way of life. The arrogance of the believer whose emotions dominate his thinking assumes his feelings and experiences as more valid than Bible doctrine.



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