

## The Truth about Grace

I'm convinced that the greatest inconsistency in the church today concerns the grace of God. Our souls must be intensely guarded in this one vital area. Every doctrine and every precept should come under the government of grace. If you detach a particular spiritual truth from grace, you cease to propagate the gospel. Grace is the main rule of our new and better covenant.

God's grace places everyone on a level playing field. No person is a cut above any other – whether Christian or not. By grace we were saved, and by grace we are being sustained. One of the biggest traps any of us can fall into is the belief that in some way we as Christians are better than (or superior to) the unbeliever. This supercilious and condescending attitude is denying the obvious truth that everyone has sinned (**Romans 3:23**). The apostle Paul had some strong words to say in this regard. In **Romans 2:1**, he condemned idol worshippers, homosexual practices, and violent people. But then he surprised his Christian listeners when he turned on them and in effect said, *"You are just as bad, and you have no excuse!"*

Paul was emphatically stressing that we have all sinned and there is no way apart from Christ to be saved from the consequences of our sin. If it wasn't for Jesus dying on the cross, your sins would still be held against you. It is by grace that you can stand in God's presence without guilt or condemnation. It is by grace that you do not reap your just rewards for breaking His commandments. It is by grace that you are not judged for your rebellious attitude. We, as believers, must totally rely on the grace of God, and in so doing, treat everyone with the same consideration and loving-kindness that we've been dealt.

**Colossians 1:21-22** *"This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now He has brought you back as His friends. He has done this through His death on the cross in His own human body. As a result, He has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are now holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault."* No one is ever good enough to save himself or herself. If you want to live the abundant life in Christ, you must depend totally on God's grace.

If you were to really cling to the grace of God in every situation, how differently would you view yourself? But more importantly, how would you view other people? And as a result, how would you treat them? Grace is God's mercy in action. So, how forgiving are you to those who have hurt you? Do you show kindness to those who challenge you, and are you compassionate to those who are in need? The more you understand grace the more gracious you will become.

Grace is unmerited favour from God - favour that extends far beyond what we deserve. Grace is relying fully on the intrinsic nature of the One dispensing it. It does not expect anything in return. And the party on the receiving end is never worthy of what grace has to offer. Grace cannot be earned or bought with good works. It is released only when the person it is meant for cannot afford to pay the cost, or needs to obtain clemency for their wrongful actions. Grace always says, *"This one's on me. Let me pay the price - whatever the cost!"*

God puts no limits on the number of times we can obtain mercy, but we must come to Him first in order to

obtain it. In **2 Corinthians 12:9** the apostle Paul quotes the Lord directly and states, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”* The original Greek simply says, *“My grace is enough for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.”* Paul knew he needed God’s power to accompany his ministry, but God knew that the best way for this to materialise was for Paul to be kept in a place of frailty. When he was weak, he was strong in Him!

In a time of crisis, too many of you still build walls to retain what little human strength you have instead of letting go and relying totally on the grace of God. You stubbornly refuse God’s avenue of escape - His amazing grace! Note, failing is no longer an issue because Jesus took care of that on the cross. Failing grace, however, remains the primary issue. To stay down after having failed is to fail the wonderful grace of God. And we must recognise our need for His grace and mercy when asking for His help. Grace greatly affects your prayer life!

Israel was devastated by times of intense rebellion and sin. Yet when the people repented and returned to God, He delivered them (**Nehemiah 9:28-31**). The miracle of God’s grace should inspire you to say, *“What an awesome God I serve – full of grace and mercy!”* If there is a recurring problem or difficulty in your life, continue to ask God for help, but be willing to make changes. On its own, God’s grace cannot adjust your behaviour because your free will is involved. So receive the grace of God and then make the necessary changes. You can correct the situation on your own (after receiving God’s grace).

Sometimes the very grace that God has showered upon us makes us neglect Him. We are often tempted to rely more on the blessings God’s grace has brought into our lives, than on the source of those blessings. For instance, we can rely on prosperity for security rather than on God, the source of our prosperity. So it’s helpful to ask yourself this... *“Have God’s blessings made me thankful toward Him, and have they drawn me closer to Him? Or, do they make me feel more self-sufficient and neglectful of Him?”*

God has showered His loving kindness upon us and this is also called His **abounding grace (Ephesians 1:7-8)**. This is His voluntary and loving favour given to those He loves. We can’t earn it, nor do we deserve it! No religious, intellectual, or moral effort can gain it. It comes only from God’s mercy and His great love. Without God’s grace none of us would be saved (or being saved). And in order to receive it, we must first acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves; and that the only way we can receive this wonderful favour is through faith in Christ. God’s plan has always been to offer salvation to the whole world, however, grace must be present for this to come about.

If you do not understand grace, or if you do not appreciate it fully and cling to it completely, you may hinder God’s plan for the salvation of others. Maybe your haughty view toward the unbeliever is a stumbling block, preventing them from receiving salvation. You see, God has an answer for every negative because there’s sufficient grace for us all! Yes, there is more than enough grace - grace for every weakness and every imperfection we (or others) may have; and the grace for every defect and blemish in our character. God’s grace has a paramount mission and a great purpose, and that is, to change every negative to a positive! If you have a negative in your life, lean on the grace of God!

Whatever the problem, the overcoming grace of God has the answer! Grace desires to release the power of God in order to change every negative situation to the positive. And that amazing grace is operating right now! Remember, there is always sufficient grace to go around - more than enough! There is an ample supply of God's grace!