

The Grace of God

by Denver Cheddie

The grace of God is one of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Without grace, Christianity does not even exist. Yet I am amazed how many Christians do not understand this most fundamental concept.

I once heard a Christian lady talk about how hard it is for a Christian to go to heaven. According to her, all it takes is one sin and you might fail to make it. This person does not understand God's grace. She does not understand why Jesus came to earth in the first place.

The word grace comes from the Greek word *charis*, which means kindness. Grace can even be defined by the acronym God's Riches at Christ's Expense. Through grace, we have salvation, forgiveness of sins, a relationship with God, access to God's throne, the ability to endure trials, and sustaining power in our Christian walk.

Saved by grace

Acts 15:11

But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved.

Ephesians 1:7

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God

Titus 3:7

That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. These scriptures teach that by God's grace, we receive salvation, forgiveness of sins, justification. But what does all of this mean?

Suppose you are speeding on the highway and you get pulled over by a police officer. Then he decides that he is not going to give you a ticket and instead lets you off with a warning. Is that grace? The answer is NO.

Yes grace provides forgiveness of sins, but that is not all there is to it. Many Christians know all about going to God for forgiveness, but they don't understand the basis for that forgiveness.

If on the other hand, the officer told you that he must issue a ticket because you were breaking the law. Then he proceeds to issue the ticket to himself and he pays the fine on your behalf, then that would be closer to the grace of God.

Yes God forgives our sin, but someone had to pay for it. And that is why Jesus came to earth. He paid the penalty for our sins, so that we don't have to pay for it ourselves. He paid our fine for us. That is the basis on which God forgives our sin. So forgiveness and grace cannot be separated from the person and work of Jesus Christ. That's what Romans 3:24 talks about. Our relationship with God must be based on redemption that is in Christ Jesus. There is no other way to have a relationship with God.

Romans 3:24

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:
When someone is truly saved by grace, it will be evident to others.

Galatians 2:9

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.

Grace vs law

John 1:17

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:4

Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

Romans 5:20

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Romans 6:14-15

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Galatians 5:4

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Do you know of anyone who thinks the 10 commandments are the main teachings of the Bible? Well that is totally wrong. According to the above scriptures, the grace of God is diametrically opposed to the law of Moses. God never intended for man to live by the law. The law was incapable of making man holy, and it only brought condemnation. God only gave the law to keep sinful man in check (1 Timothy 1:9).

That's why keeping the commandments and being good are not going to save you. Our instincts tell us that we need to be good to please God and go to heaven. However, God's word tells us that it does not matter how good we are, all it takes is one sin to ruin us permanently. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). End of story.

However it is only through grace, that we can actually be forgiven of our sins.

It is important for Christians to be good and to do good. However, we must understand that those things will not save us. There is a subtle difference between being good because we want to do good, and being good because we are trying to please God. Galatians 5:4 tells us that if we are trying to be justified by good works, then we are fallen from grace.

When it comes to salvation, it is either grace or works (law). It cannot be both.

This is why salvation through Jesus Christ is presented to us as a free gift (Romans 6:23). We cannot earn it. Jesus paid for it for us, and offers it to us freely.

Frustrating the grace of God

Galatians 2:21

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Hebrews 12:15

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled

It is possible for us to frustrate the grace of God. One way to do that is to try to achieve justification by good works or law keeping. Another way is to allow things by bitterness and unforgiveness into our hearts (Hebrews 12:15).

Grace for trials

2 Corinthians 12:9

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

God does not just save us by his grace. Through his grace we are given strength to endure trials. Through grace, we have the strength of God during our times of weakness.

Grace calls to ministry

Ephesians 3:7

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Grace does not just call us to salvation, but our call to ministry is also by the grace of God. His gifts are distributed according to his grace. We are saved solely on the basis of Christ's atonement on the cross and through no merit of our own. Similarly, we are not called to ministry on the basis of how good we are, how faithful we are or how deserving we are. Even that is through God's grace. Just to clarify, if God did not call you to be a pastor, no amount of faithfulness will change that. However, if God did call you to be a pastor, then lack of faithfulness can limit how freely that gift and calling operates in your life.

Grow in Grace

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If we were saved by grace and not good works, doesn't it follow logically that our subsequent spiritual growth cannot be measured by how good we are, but also by grace? God's grace does not just forgive your past sins. It is also a framework through which your entire Christian life is lived. The entire book of Galatians is written to people who were saved by grace, but then reverted to law keeping to try to achieve maturity.

Peter talks about growing in grace. The most mature Christian is not the one who was saved the longest, or who prays the loudest, or cries the loudest in church. I know one person who is considered to be a spiritual giant in one particular church, and to be honest, I am not sure that person is even saved.

Spiritual growth is measured by how much we understand that grace of God and how much we know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is not based on how gifted you are. Essentially the most mature Christian will be the most aware of how insignificant he/she is, except for the grace of God. Paul called himself the least of the apostles.

The late Keith Greene wrote

Nothing lasts except the grace of God

By which I stand in Jesus

I know that I would surely fall away

Except for grace by which I stand

The most mature Christians know that any good they do comes through the grace of God, and without that grace, they will certainly fall away.

God's grace is what saves us and what keeps us saved.

Conclusion

Our salvation is totally based on God's grace. Our entire Christian walk is entirely based on God's grace. If you consider yourself a Christian but are not fully cognizant of the grace of God, then I urge you to study the scriptures that I outlined in this article. Do you think you are a Christian because you are good? Then according to Galatians 2:21 and Galatians 5:4, you are fallen from grace and you have made Christ's death of no effect. I know it sounds paradoxical. Think about it. How good do you think you have to be to earn God's salvation? The answer is, it is not humanly possible. That is why we must trust in Jesus Christ. Of course we should be good, but not in order to be saved. If your Christian walk is based on anything other than the grace of God, I urge you to prayerfully consider what I have written in this article.

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