



Further Study

Of all the important doctrines found in the Word of God that are the hardest for me to comprehend and understand, the doctrine of grace would be without question number one. How can you explain it? I believe the main reason so many individuals struggle with this truth is because everything in our lives is based upon performance. Paul described it like this: "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh"? (Galatians 3:3) The problem with performance is that we have a tendency to rely upon what we can do and what we can accomplish without the help of anyone else.

Suppose someone told you that you only have one month to live. How would you prepare yourself to meet the Lord? Would you pray more, read your Bible more, memorize more Scripture, do more good deeds, give more money to the church, witness more, repent more? In reality, if you answered yes to any those things mentioned above, you are a performance based Christian. While all of them are well and good, the fact remains that none of them separately or collectively can earn or merit the goodness and grace of God. None of them will cause God to show you special favor because you did them in the last thirty days. So, in light of that simple illustration, are you living by grace or by performance? "Christ has become of none effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

WHAT IS GOD'S AMAZING GRACE?

First of all, to understand what God's grace is, we must keep in mind that grace has absolutely nothing to do with performance. In fact, it is the opposite of performance. You see, all of us are legalistic by nature. We equate performance with acceptance. Even Peter, when he was put to the test in Matthew 19:27, failed miserably when he started comparing his merit points with others to find the favor of Christ.

To drive the point of grace home to Peter more, Christ gives the Parable of the Vineyard and the workers in the very next chapter (Matthew 20). All workers were paid the same amount of money although they worked different amounts of times. Why? Because they were paid according to the graciousness of the householder. It had nothing to do with the quality of work or the amount of the work. This truth must have been a shock to Peter after his statement in chapter 19.

Secondly, to properly understand God's grace, I believe we must go deeper than the common definitions and illustrations of grace that we have all heard all of our lives. All of us know that grace is; "the unmerited favor of God". We also know the well known acronym, "God's "Riches "At "Christ's "Expense.

Let's take the subject of grace a little deeper to try to understand it more.

1. Grace is a Partial Distributing of God's Character to Us. God invented grace. Grace was His idea (Ephesians 1:5-12). Grace is part of God's character. It is also an attribute of God. Interestingly, even when Jonah despised God's grace because it had been granted to his enemies (Jonah 4:1-2), God continued to show the same grace to Jonah (Jonah 4:4). David sinned by numbering Israel which was contrary to the command of Joab. According to 1 Chronicles 21, God allowed David to choose his own judgment from three choices:

- a. Three years of famine in the land.

b. Three years of defeat suffered at the hand of his enemies.

c. Three years in the hand of God Himself.

Amazingly, David chose to fall into the hand of the Lord because he knew that above all, God was a God of grace and mercy. "And David said unto Gad, let me now fall into the hand of God; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man" (see 1 Chronicles 21:11-13).

2. Grace Was Fully And Completely Defined For Us On the Cross. While grace was described in the Old Testament, it was not fully defined until the New Testament. Grace, redemption, and the cross can never be separated. Note the following verses of Scripture:

a. There is a remnant according to the election of grace (Romans 11:3).

b. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world according to His grace (Ephesians 1:4).

c. Our redemption is according to grace (Ephesians 1:7).

d. We are drawn to Christ by grace (Galatians 1:15).

e. The gospel is called the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24).

f. The Scriptures are called the Word of His grace (Acts 14:3; 20:32).

3. Grace Is Always Expressed In Many Different Forms. Below is a partial list of some common terms and phrases concerning grace:

a. "Common Grace": Graciousness and favor shown to all of God's creation (Matthew 5:44-45).

b. "Saving Grace": Grace needed for salvation (Acts 15:11).

c. "Securing Grace": Grace to keep us secure in our salvation in spite of sin (Romans 5:1, 2).

d. "Sanctifying Grace": Grace to become more mature and Christ-like in our faith (Acts 13:43; 1 Corinthians 15:10).

e. "Serving Grace": Grace to show kindness and generosity to those who desperately need it (1 Peter 4:10).

f. "Sustaining Grace": Grace given during times of trial and difficulty (Hebrews 4:16; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

4. Grace is Pure:

To a chemist, we would say that grace is an element, not a compound. In Biblical terms, grace is never a mixture of God's benevolence and human effort (See Romans 11:6). Grace is always entirely a work of God, unprompted by man.

J.I. Packer said this about grace: "In the New Testament, grace means God's love in action towards men who merited the opposite of love. Grace means God moving heaven and earth to save sinners who could

not lift a finger to save themselves. Grace means God sending His Son to descend into hell on the cross so that the guilty ones might be reconciled to God and received into heaven (See 2 Corinthians 5:21).

To make the slightest contribution to our salvation is to completely rule out the possibility of God's grace. The reason is simply. Any contribution on our part would always be extremely exaggerated. That is our nature.

5. Grace is Sovereignly Given:

One of the hardest truths for us to comprehend is the truth that God dispenses His grace sovereignly. That simply means that He does so according to His own will and desire (See Romans 9:15-16).

6. Grace is Only Distributed To The Humble:

Grace is the goodness of God given on behalf of sinners who humbly acknowledge their own deficiency and their total dependence upon God's grace for forgiveness and salvation.

WHY DO WE NEED THIS AMAZING GRACE OF GOD?

See Romans 3:10-12; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:23

CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

John 1:14, 17, 18

Leviticus 20:10

Deuteronomy 22:22

John 8:2-11

1 Timothy 1:15