



GRACE

INTRODUCTION:

“I thank my God always concerning you for the *grace* of God which was given you in Christ Jesus” (I Corinthians 1:4). Grace is one of the most magnificent words ever used in the whole human language, not because of some special phonetic sound that makes it pleasing to the ear. The sound changes with every spoken language. The word “grace” is magnificent because of its meaning and purpose.

“Charis” or “charisma” is the Bible word from which we get our English word “grace.” Basically, it means “_____” but in Bible terms, it goes beyond the simple understanding that we would have about a gift such as a birthday gift or a Christmas gift. Such a gift is given because the person is related to us or they are a close friend that we like or maybe we drew their name out of a hat at the company party and are obligated to get them a gift, not so with grace.

Grace is a gift but it carries some very specific ideas as to what type of gift it is.

1. First of all, the gift is _____ (or favorable).. One theological dictionary defines grace as “making glad by gifts.” It is a “gift that makes glad.” The giver intends only good to come out of the gift that he has given (James 1:17).
2. Secondly, and most importantly, the gift is _____. Actually, it is the opposite of what is deserved (Romans 6:23). There is no relationship that the recipient has with the giver, which coerces the giver to be gracious (Romans 5:10). No work has been done by the recipient that would obligate the giver (Ephesians 2:8-9). What makes it a grace gift is one simple fact, love. God loves us and gives us His grace. What is this “grace”, this “gift” that He gives? Let’s see.

I. GRACE: DEFINED

- A. When the Bible speaks of “grace” it usually refers to our salvation. In fact, there are three basic connotations:
1. First, it refers to the _____ of salvation, i.e., it is God’s nature that He desires man’s salvation and He is impelled to bring incarnate Christ.
 2. Second, it also refers to the _____ of our salvation, i.e., to the actual gift we receive from God when He saves us. In this sense grace is the double cure of salvation, justification on the one hand and regeneration-sanctification on the other.
 3. Finally it refers to the _____ in which God saves us, i.e., the method or system God uses to bestow salvation upon us.

II. GRACE: THE NEED

- A. We need to first answer this question: “Why was grace needed?”
1. Throughout the Old Testament times there was a never-ending succession of sacrifices, offerings, feasts, holy days etc. All of these things were God-given mandates which God’s people had to keep and obey.
 2. The problem, simply, was this: _____!
_____!

Read Hebrews 10:1-4, 11.

- B. So mankind had a huge problem!
1. First of all we are all sinners; Romans 3:23 makes that abundantly clear.
 2. The other part of the problem is that the vehicle God put into place to deal with mankind’s sin (the law/sacrificial system) couldn’t bring salvation! So, how can mankind ever hope to be good enough in God’s sight? How can mankind ever hope to live in a perfect heaven as an imperfect being? The answer is simple: _____!
_____!
- C. Every person who has ever lived (other than Jesus) has sinned. As sinners we deserve death. Romans 6:23 begins with, “For the wages of sin is death...”

1. All of the animal sacrifices, all of the godly living and all of the good deeds can't bring about salvation. What hope do we therefore have? GRACE!

III. GRACE: THE PROCESS

- A. We must understand that “grace” is the exact opposite of the law. We could word a “Law Formula” like this:

**“Keep the _____ and escape the _____ –
Break the _____ and suffer the _____.”**

1. That seems fair. That is also condemning to us since we have all broken God's commandments. Grace is different. The rules are the opposite under grace! The “Grace Formula” would read like this:

**“Keep the commandments, but _____ the penalty.
Break the commandments, but _____ the penalty.”**

2. That doesn't seem logical. That doesn't even seem fair. Does this mean that grace is not fair? YES! That's the whole point of grace!
- B. The second half of the grace formula is wonderful for us sinners.
 1. We have all sinned, we've broken God's commandments, but we escape the penalty.
 2. But, the first half doesn't seem to make much sense. None of us have ever kept all of God's commandments. Why does the first half of the formula even exist? _____!

- C. Jesus *did* keep all of the commandments perfectly.
 1. In fact, the first half of the grace formula was never intended to apply to anyone *but* Jesus.
 2. Also, if we remove the first part of the formula, there's no basis for the second half. Since Jesus **did** suffer condemnation in our place, God can now say to sinners, “Even though you have broken My commandments, you may still escape the penalty you deserve.”

Read II Corinthians 5:21

3. Grace is all about Jesus “_____” with us. We deserve the penalty, we've sinned. He doesn't deserve the penalty because He did

not sin. But He takes our penalty. He trades places with us.

- D. Consider this as well: Not only is there a trading of “places” but there is also a trading of “_____.”
1. Here’s what I mean: When God looked down at the cross, He didn’t see the face of Jesus there but *our* faces. That’s why He poured out on *Him* the wrath that *we* deserved.
 2. Now for those that are “in Him,” under grace, when God looks at us He does not see our sinful faces but sees the pure face of Jesus; He does not see our sin but Jesus’ righteousness.

IV. GRACE: THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS

- A. If all of this sounds “too good to be true,” it is – as long as we try to understand it with a “law mentality.” But this is not law; it’s grace! This is indeed a gift that brings joy!
1. The problem that often plagues Christians is that we still act as if we’re under the law. Our “_____” does not match our “_____.”
 2. Man has always believed that salvation *must* come through human works, human merit, human achievement or human knowledge. Leon Morris said it well...

“...men at large almost invariably tend to think of salvation in terms of merit. All kinds of religions from the most primitive to the most cultural can be found to agree on this one point, that however salvation is understood, it is brought about as the result of man’s striving.”

- B. The Galatians had this same problem back in the first century.
1. The Judaizers were claiming that a person could only be saved by Jesus Christ if he kept all of the commandments of the law of Moses. We could say it like this...

“You are _____ *saved* by the grace of Jesus Christ but you are _____ *saved* by obeying the law.”

- C. We often share this problem as well.

1. The problem is: many Christians today act as if that is true. We will agree that we are “saved by God’s grace” but we also need to do works to keep that salvation intact. We like to mix “_____” and “_____.”
2. We often picture the judgment day as a time when God will have us stand before a huge scale. Our sins will be weighed on one side and our deeds on the other. The goal is to be at least 51% good so that the scales tip in our favor. This assumes that if we do something wrong (sin), we can do something right to make up for it. The more good we do the more sure our salvation.
3. Jesus, in Luke 17:7-10 tells a parable which completely rules out this concept...(read it)
4. Jesus’ application in verse 10 is very clear. We are merely God’s creatures. We are “unworthy slaves.” If we would (if we *could*) at this very moment render perfect service and obedience to Jesus until the day we died, it wouldn’t be “merit” it would simply be “that which we ought to have done.”
5. There is no such thing as extra merit, and no such thing as balance-scale judgment. We cannot use our good works to pay even the slightest sin-debt owed to God, since any good work that we as creatures can do is itself already owed to God. We cannot pay both our debts of obedience and our sin-debts with the same currency. This helps to explain why no one will ever be saved under the law system. Even one sin creates a debt of punishment that we ourselves can never pay with our deeds. This is why we must rely on the grace of God alone. It is our only way to heaven. Once again quoting Leon Morris...

“Salvation by grace is a characteristically _____ idea. It is a truth of revelation, not an idea common to man at large.”

CONCLUSION:

Grace is a doctrine that is unique to Christianity. Therefore it is and ever will be true that salvation is possible only through grace, and grace is found only in Christianity. It is indeed a gift that brings joy!