

Week 1: What is Grace?

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Romans 5:6-8

Prepared by Pastor Dave King

What comes to your mind when you hear the word Grace? Perhaps a prayer done before meals? A name of a woman or an establishment? The truth is, Grace is a very important concept in the Bible. In fact, it is very foundational in our relationship with God is a very important characteristic of God. There are three ways in which grace relates to our lives:

WE LIVE OUR LIVES BY GRACE

First, our lives are lives by God's grace. We cannot live out our lives without His grace.

Our Fallen State. Though God created a perfect man in a perfect environment, man succumbed to the temptation of the serpent, the devil, thus causing him to fall from God's grace. Yet God did not abandon him in his fallen and helpless state. Instead, God planned a way out for Him and demonstrated His great love for man. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." We were undeserving of His love. We were the one who turned our backs on Him, though He made us. We were the one who broke His heart, though He gave life to us. Instead of giving us what we deserve, that is death because of sin, He showed mercy to us. Instead of leaving us condemned in our transgressions, He gave us what we don't deserve, eternal life – that's grace.

One person defined grace as "God's Riches At Christ's Expense."

Illustration: The Story of Amazing Grace (see article "Amazing Grace: The Story of John Newton")

Our Sinful Tendencies. But God's grace continues to be evident even after we experience new life in Christ. Though our sinful nature have been dealt with on the cross of Christ, living in this wicked and sinful world, we struggle with our sinful tendencies to sin and give in to temptation. In these difficult times of struggle, God's grace becomes evident all the more. Romans 5:20 says, "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more..." God's grace is demonstrated in His willingness to receive us back again and again whenever we come to Him and acknowledge our sins. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." That is God's grace at work.

WE SERVE OUR GOD BY GRACE

Secondly, we serve God by grace. As we journey in these 40 Days of Grace, we will be exploring five aspects of the Christian life. Using GRACE as an acronym, we identified these five areas of our life which is dependent on God's grace:

Giving. In 2 Corinthians 8:7, Paul calls us to excel in "the grace of giving". Why grace? Because whether we give our time in serving the Lord, or our talents and our treasures, it is still by the grace of God since they all come from Him on the first place.

Revelation. Unless God reveals Himself to us, we would never know Him. Our finite minds cannot comprehend Him apart from His revelation of Himself to us. And what better way to reveal Himself than by coming to this world and becoming one of us.

Adoration. Apart from His grace, we could not even enter, much more stand, in the presence of a Holy God. Moses declared that God is a consuming fire, as such, we would easily be consumed by His righteousness because of our sins. We are only able to enter His presence because of His grace. As Lamentations 3:22 declares, "Because of the LORD'S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail."

Community. Our ability to work together with people of different background, culture and personalities is because of His grace at work in our lives. It is our experience of God's grace that unites us and helps us see beyond our difference towards working together on a common goal of glorifying our God.

Fifth, Evangelism. It is very clear that before Christ's ascension to heaven, while His disciples were excited to the world that their Master is alive, Jesus told them to 'wait'. Why? He gave the reason in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." God's power, God's grace, without it, we can do nothing.

Indeed we can only serve God because of His grace and by His grace alone.

WE BEAR OUR TROUBLES BY GRACE

Finally, through the many problems we face in this world, we are able to endure and bear these troubles because of God's grace.

Paul had a very profound experience of being granted a glimpse of heaven. But this came at a price...to keep him humble. He made mention of his "thorn in the flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12:7. Though not specifying what it was, it was clear that it really troubled and tormented him. He said, "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

The same is true for us. As we live for God and serve Him, we would experience numerous obstacle, attacks of various kinds, hindrances from unlikely sources. There will times that you would feel like giving up. And times when you would tell the Lord, "I can't take it anymore." But God's grace will always be poured out in our lives. His grace will always be enough for us.