

Growing in Grace

(As addressed to the Grace Women's Fall Retreat, by Char Pelfrey, 2011)

God's grace is so marvelous because it has nothing to do with us, with our merit, our works, our futile attempts at position and perfection. It has everything to do with Christ and Christ alone. Only He can extend grace and we praise Him for extending it freely!

Volumes have been written on the topic over the centuries. Grace is mentioned over 130 times in the New Testament alone but we see the first extension of grace to mankind from Genesis 3:15 when God responded to the fall with the promise of redemption and care rather than abandonment or destruction. His grace was extended through the covenant He vowed with Abraham providing a means for redemption for fallen man through His Son.

Warren Weirsbe gives a short, to the point definition of Grace. "It is God's provision for our every need when we need it."

God's grace is the ability and strength He provides to believers through the ministry of the Holy Spirit thereby empowering believers to remain faithful in obedience regardless of circumstances.

What a relief to know that we do not have to manipulate our way through the Christian walk alone. We do not have to manufacture the strength required to endure life's trials on our pilgrimage to Christ's abode in Heaven. God's grace is there for us no matter how we feel or what we think.

"Every good deed we do in dependence on God does just the opposite of paying Him back; it puts us ever deeper in debt to His grace. And that is exactly where God wants us to be through all eternity. Good deeds do not pay back grace; they borrow more grace." John Piper

Three easily recognizable types of grace exist in the New Testament... saving grace, serving grace, and sustaining grace. Let's define these briefly with scripture and definitions.

#1 **Saving Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast. Our ability to approach the throne of God with our prayer of repentance unto salvation is an act of mercy and grace from God.

#2 **Serving Grace** Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Our ability to serve Christ in a fashion pleasing to Him is a gift of grace.

#3 **Sustaining Grace** Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

II Corinthians 12: 7-10 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong. Our ability to endure trials by giving glory to God is an act of grace from God, allowing us to suffer while receiving strength through His grace and for His sake.

Grace is: God's Riches at Christ's Expense

Grace is God giving us what we did not deserve; Mercy is God not giving us what we did deserve.

Let's close with a moment or two of quiet time. Identify special moments in your life where you recognized the grace of God at work in your life. Thank Him for those times. Can you identify the three types of Grace at work in your life today or in the recent past? Thank Him for His supernatural provision to you personally. Father, thank you for the unmerited favor you have extended toward us.

