

No One Like Him

A
Study
of
God's
Perfections

Men of the Word
2022-23

Grace

Wednesday,
April 19, 2023

I. Definition of Divine “Grace”

A. What grace means.

- **The grace of God refers to His disposition to show favor and bring wellbeing to those who deserve the opposite.**
- God’s grace is a particular expression of His goodness.
 - God’s goodness is that quality of His essence that makes Him profoundly generous to His creatures.
- But fundamental to grace is God’s disposition to display favor to those who are *utterly unworthy*.

grace

[grās] • noun

*underserved, unmerited,
unearned, favor.*

- Whereas God's goodness is His disposition toward all creation, God's grace is directed specifically toward His image-bearers for the purpose of *salvation*.
 - Theologians sometimes speak of God's *common grace* as that which is displayed to all mankind and God's *special grace* to those He saves.
 - But it is best to recognize that God's *goodness* is displayed to all (Matt 5:45) but His *grace* is displayed to select individuals.
- God's grace is always personal in nature; anyone who experiences it is unworthy of it; and it always brings the unworthy recipient into good standing with God.

Grace

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Gift

Grace is “God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him.”

—*Jerry Bridges*

“Grace is free sovereign favor to the ill-deserving.”

—*B. B. Warfield*

“Grace is the voluntary, unrestrained, and unmerited favor that God shows to sinners and that, instead of the verdict of death, brings them righteousness and life.”

—*Herman Bavinck*

B. What God's grace does not mean.

- That God is gracious does not imply that God must show grace to all men equally to maintain perfect gracious.
 - If God was *obliged* to give every sinner grace, grace would no longer be a gift; it would be *owed*.
 - When God does not pour favor upon the sinner, He acts in accordance with perfect justice.
 - To assume that God must be gracious to all men equally not only minimizes the nature of sinners' inherent depravity, but it cheapens God's grace by reducing it to obligation.

“Those who don’t receive a particular expression of grace have no right to be angry at God for passing them by. Their anger shows that they are expecting God to do something he has never obligated himself to do, for to do it would be grace, and grace is never owed. So, even though it is human nature to complain and be angry at God when others receive a blessing that we do not receive, such attitudes are totally inappropriate.”

—Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 354



- That God is gracious to some and just with others does not imply that God experiences inner tension between these perfections.
 - There is never a moment when God suppresses His justice to be gracious, or His grace to be just.
 - In His perfect existence, He is always all of Himself.
 - His demonstrations of grace are in complete harmony with His righteous character.
 - He never sacrifices being perfectly God in order to be gracious to those whom He wills to be gracious.

II. Biblical Testimony to God's Grace

- **Exodus 34:6–7** – “Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.’”
- **John 1:14** – “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

- **1 Peter 5:10** – “After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.”

A. God’s grace is undeserved by its recipients.

- **Romans 4:4–8** – “Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ‘BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.’”

- **Romans 6:23** – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- **Romans 11:6** – “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”
- **Ephesians 2:8–9** – “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Grace



Earned

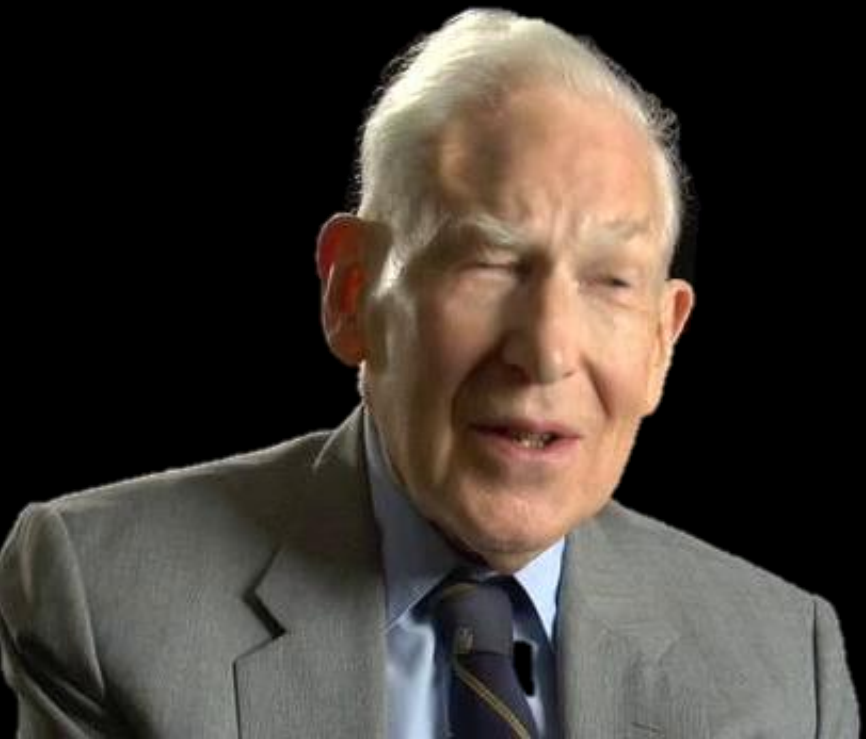
B. God's grace is sovereign in its expression.

- **Exodus 33:19** – “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.”
- **Ephesians 1:5–8a** – “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.”

- **2 Timothy 1:9** – “who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”

“God does not owe it to anyone to stop justice taking its course. He is not obliged to pity and pardon; if he does so it is an act done, as we say, ‘of his own free will,’ and nobody forces his hand.”

—J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 132



“Grace . . . is God’s infinite power working gently in order to bring us to himself. We do not mean by ‘gently’ that it is not equally infinite with other exercises of power, such as the creation of the world. But we draw attention to the fact that the effect upon the recipient is always benign and welcome. God saves no man to his harm. And God saves none against his will. Grace makes the sinner willing. It is a secret exercise of omnipotence on the hidden man of the heart coaxing and alluring him to salvation and glory by Christ. It is always effectual but it is never brute strength.”

—Maurice Roberts, *The Thought of God*, 21

C. God's grace is centered in Jesus Christ.

God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

- **John 1:14** – “And the Word become flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- **John 1:16–17** – “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”
- **Acts 15:11** – “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

- **Romans 5:15** – “But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.”
- **2 Corinthians 8:9** – “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”
- **1 Peter 1:10–11** – “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

D. God's grace is necessary for salvation.

- **Acts 14:3; 20:24, 32; etc.** – The gospel message is called “the word of His grace” and “the gospel of the grace of God.”
- **Acts 11:23** – “Then when he [Barnabas] arrived [in Antioch] and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord.”
- **Acts 15:11** – “But we believe that we [the Jews] are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [the Gentiles] also are.”

- **Romans 3:24** – “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”
- **Romans 5:17** – “For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”
- **Romans 5:20–21** – “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- **Romans 6:23** – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- **Ephesians 2:5, 8–9** – “. . . by grace you have been saved For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

“Rock of Ages” (Augustus Toplady, 1776)

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands.
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
simply to the cross I cling;
naked, come to thee for dress;
helpless, look to thee for grace;
foul, I to the fountain fly;
wash me, Savior, or I die.

- **Romans 5:1–2** – “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”
- **1 Corinthians 15:10** – “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”
- **James 4:6–7** – “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
- **1 Peter 1:13** – “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“Grace, ’Tis a Charming Sound” (Philip Doddridge, 1740)

Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace first inscribed my name
In God’s eternal book;
’Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,
Who all my sorrows took.

Grace taught my wandering feet
To tread the heavenly road,
And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.

Grace taught my soul to pray
And made mine eyes o’erflow;
’Twas grace which kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.

Grace all the works shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in Heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.

O let Thy grace inspire
My soul with strength divine
May all my powers to Thee aspire,
And all my days be Thine.

III. What Grace Demands from Us

A. Remember that you were *saved by grace*.

“It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of grace with their souls. . . . Oh the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fear of perishing forever! They bring afresh into my mind the remembrance of my great help, my great supports from Heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I.”

—John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*,
4–5





“When we look at the ungodly, we are not to hate them – but to pity them, mourn over them, and pray for them. Nor have we any right to boast over them; for, by nature, and of ourselves, we are no better than they.

—John Newton, “A Word in Season”

B. Acknowledge that you need grace just as much today as ever.

- **1 Corinthians 15:10** – “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”
- **2 Corinthians 12:7–9** – “Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

“When we put our foot upon the threshold of glory, and pass through the gates of pearl to the golden pavement of the heavenly city, the last step will be as much taken through the grace of God, as was the first step when we turned unto our great Father in our rags and misery. Left by the grace of God for a single moment, we would perish. We are dependent as much upon grace for spiritual life as we are upon the air we breathe for this natural life.”

—Charles Spurgeon, “A Testimony to Free and Sovereign Grace”



C. Magnify God for His grace.

- J. I. Packer: “Once a person is convinced that his state and need are as described, the New Testament gospel of grace cannot but sweep him off his feet with wonder and joy” (*Knowing God*, 132).
- **Ephesians 1:5–6** – “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”
- Rather than entrenching a man in his sinful practices, rightly magnifying the greatness of God’s grace makes a man willing to leave his sin behind out of attraction to what is infinitely more glorious.

4. Extend grace toward others.

- If we truly understand the nature and extent of the grace poured out upon us, we will be quick to shower it upon others.
- **Colossians 4:6** – “Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”



- **Matthew 18:21–35** – “Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’”

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“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.”

—1 Peter 5:10



Sola Gratia

— grace alone —

“The very center and core of the whole Bible is the doctrine of the grace of God—the grace of God which depends not one whit upon anything that is in man, but is absolutely undeserved, resistless and sovereign. The theologians of the Church can be placed in an ascending scale according as they have grasped that one great central doctrine, that doctrine that gives consistency to all the rest; and Christian experience also depends for its depth and for its power upon the way in which that blessed doctrine is cherished in the depths of the heart. The center of the Bible, and the center of Christianity, is found in the grace of God; and the necessary corollary of the grace of God is salvation through faith alone.”

—J. Gresham Machen

