

GRACE PT. 1



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EPHESIANS 2:8

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Many times people will use this verse when arguing that there isn't anything we need to do other than believe to be saved because as you can read here, the Bible says that we are saved "by grace through faith". But we must understand what the Bible means when it talks about "grace". To do this, it is important that we define the terms properly - "grace" being the topic of this lesson.

I was reminded recently of the importance of defining terms in the scripture as I was watching a "debate" between someone who was (I believe) a Roman Catholic and someone from the Church of Christ. The topic of discussion was "sola scriptura" – and whether the scriptures are the sole authority, or whether the church is also the authority. It was interesting watching this conversation because they were going in circles. It was almost like watching Abbott and Costello – like "who's on first?"

The reason for the confusion was that when the Catholic gentleman would say 'well the church decides what is scripture', he was thinking of the Pope and the bishops in Rome when he says the word "church". And then the person from the Church of Christ would say 'What do you mean the church determines what the scripture is?' - *he* was thinking of the "church" as the body of believers. They were using the same word, but because they had two different definitions of what that word meant, their dialogue was going nowhere.

So in this lesson let's start by defining the word "grace", so that we don't fall into the same kind of confusion when trying to understand what the Bible is telling us about grace.

DEFINITION OF GRACE

In our English Bibles the word grace is translated from the Greek word: **cháris**. It is the root of some of our words like charity, charisma, charismatic, etc. And in the King James version, the word cháris is translated as:

- grace (130x)
- favour (6x) - the NIV uses the word 'favor' more times than the KJV
- thanks (4x)
- thank (4x)
- thank (with G2192) (3x)
- pleasure (2x)

So we see this word in the scripture about 150 times total.

It is interesting to note that when looking for the definition of grace in Webster's dictionary, the first definition given is:

unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification.

And what is interesting about that definition is that it is more of a theological belief, masquerading as a definition than it is an actual definition of the word grace. You see a similar thing happen when you look up other biblical terms, like "baptism" in the dictionary. You will get one denomination's particular belief of what baptism is. And that's what we see here when we look up "grace".

But when you go to the other definitions of grace, you'll get a more standard – generic definition of what the word actually means, which is:

approval, favor, mercy or pardon, a special favor, privilege, an act or instance of kindness, courtesy, or clemency, a temporary exemption or reprieve.

And of these words, the NIV uses the word "favor" in the place of "grace" more often than the KJV. Many times when you hear people talking about grace they will call it 'unmerited favor', but normally in our everyday conversation we don't use the word favor in that way. The dictionary defines the word favor as:

friendly regard shown toward another especially by a superior, approving consideration or attention, partiality, leniency, a gracious kindness, aid, or assistance.

To summarize: keeping in mind all the words in those definitions, we get a broad range on the meaning of the word "grace", but generally speaking it is a kindness, or a mercy. Grace and mercy can be seen as two sides of the same coin. Mercy is when you *don't receive* a bad thing that you deserve, whereas grace is when you *do receive* a good thing that you *don't* deserve. So you can see how those two terms relate and are similar.

Hopefully now we have a baseline definition of grace, and we see that it has to do with goodness, favor – and one of the key words there was "assistance". And when I hear the word assistance, that lets me know that grace doesn't *necessarily do it all*, as some people think when they say 'saved by grace alone...', because there is an aspect of grace that is an **assistance**.

BIBLICAL GRACE

What I want to do now is take a look at some **biblical** instances where grace comes into play. So maybe we can learn from what the Bible is actually saying and how the **Bible** defines grace.

If we look in the book of Genesis, we're going to see the first appearance of the word grace in the Bible. This is in Genesis chapter 6 and the account of Noah. It is interesting that just like we read in Ephesians (that you're saved by grace through faith), we see here in Genesis 6 by example, that by grace Noah was saved - through faith. We're going to start at verse 7. This is God speaking.

Genesis 6:7-8

⁷ And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Again, this is the first time that the word grace is used in the Bible - "Noah found grace". And if you want to see how faith was also a part of Noah's salvation, you can go to Hebrews 11:7 where it lets us know that it was by *faith* that Noah built the ark. But if we keep reading here, we'll actually see where the next verse shows us that it was by faith as well.

Genesis 6:9

⁹ These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

So there it is - without actually saying the word 'faith', when it says that Noah walked with God, we know from the Bible that the "walk" was the *walk of faith*. We could go into that further in another lesson. But what I want to do now is look at the **grace** that Noah found, and see what that actually was. What exactly was the grace that Noah found?

Genesis 6:10-14

¹⁰ And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

¹³ And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

What did we just read here? We just read the grace of God. When the Bible says that Noah found grace, *how* did he find grace? He found grace when God made Himself known to Noah by speaking to him. Secondly, God told Noah, 'this is what I'm going to do'. And finally, God told him - 'this is what *you* need to do to be saved'. Basically, God said 'Hey Noah, I'm God. I'm going to destroy the earth. And the way that you can be saved is - listen to me and do what I say'. *That* is the grace of God. That is the grace that God showed Noah.

That is what biblical grace looks like. It's not some religious magical thing - it is simply God's goodness, which we don't deserve. Keep in mind, God was repented that He had made man at all. No one *deserved* to live. Before there was any mention of Noah, God had already said 'I'm going to destroy the earth'. Then we read that Noah found grace. God graciously gave Noah **a way** to be saved.

So the account of Noah being the first mention of grace, we now see **how** he was saved by grace through faith - it was because Noah believed what God said. And since he believed, he **did** what God told him to do. And by doing that, he was saved - by grace through faith.

As we continue in this lesson, hopefully we will begin to see how it is that God shows His grace towards us.

So let's look at another place in the Bible that shows us a little bit more about the grace of God. We are going to the book of Titus, which is another letter written by the apostle Paul, who also wrote what we previously read in the book of Ephesians. In Titus 2:11-14 we read:

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Looking at Paul's mention of God's grace here - in addition to bringing salvation and appearing to all men, *what did the grace of God do?* **It came *teaching* us**, and that is a primary way that God's grace is extended to us. Just as we saw when the grace of God came to Noah, what did this grace do? It spoke to him and informed him of what was happening, what was to come, and what he must do.

Once again, grace is not some mysterious thing, but it is His goodness towards us. The grace of God comes teaching us who He is, what He is doing, and what we must do to be saved.

THE APPEARANCE OF GRACE

Now that we have seen how grace operates in the Bible, let's now look at the appearance of grace that Paul referred to in Titus 2:11. The question might be asked, where exactly did this "grace of God" appear to all men? If we begin in John 1:14, we will see this grace of God and whether it follows the same pattern. Let's see what it looks like and what it does.

John 1:14

¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth..

So there it is. Jesus, who *is* that Word made flesh - He dwelt among us, *full* of the grace of God and truth.

And this is actually one of my favorite scriptures, because it reminds me of Psalms 85, where it says that 'mercy and truth have come together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other...' (Psalm 85:10). We can see all of that in Jesus; so much goodness came together *in Him*. But here in verse 14 it says that **He was full of grace and truth**.

John 1:15-17

¹⁵ John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. ¹⁶ And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

Note: Verse 14 told us that He was full of grace and truth, and here in verse 16 it tells us that we have received of His fullness - and grace for grace.

¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

One could say that grace was *personified* in Jesus Christ. And in the same way that we saw with Noah, grace through Jesus Christ operated by revealing who God is, what He is doing, and what we must do to be saved. We will see the first part (revealing who God is), told to us in verse 18.

John 1:18

¹⁸ No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

So there we see one aspect of how grace came - letting us know who God is. That's what Jesus did. He declared to us the Father - that through Him we might know the Father. And then if we want to look further, we can go to John 17, verse 3 and we will see that this aspect of grace (knowing God) also leads to eternal life.

John 17:3

³ And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

So once again we see that when the grace comes, it primarily lets us know who God is. We also see this in the conclusion of the book of John:

John 20:31

³¹ But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

WHAT GOD IS GOING TO DO

Now that we have seen the way that grace appears by giving us knowledge of God, we will continue in this lesson focusing on how God's grace tells us what He is going to do. Let's begin in John 5:28-29.

John 5:28-29

²⁸ Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

²⁹ And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

This is one of the most important teachings of Jesus' ministry - the resurrection of the dead. This teaching of the resurrection is also directly connected to another important thing that God is going to do: Judgement.

Jesus being full of the grace of God, tells us of this judgement in Matthew 25:31-46 when He says that the Son of Man will come, dividing the sheep from the goats. The sheep He will bring into His kingdom, but the others will be sent into the fire. This judgment is similar to what God said when He told Noah that He's going to destroy man from the earth.

However, it is interesting to note that in Noah's day, God made His judgement on mankind *before extending His grace* to Noah. But now through Jesus, ***grace is extended to us before His judgement.***

That leads us to the final aspect of God's grace in this lesson, which is what we must do to be saved.

HOW TO BE SAVED

Earlier we saw Noah being told that the way to be saved was to build an ark. For us today, Jesus lets us know how to be saved from His judgement in the book of Mark, chapter 16. This was one of the last instructions given by Jesus.

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

In that scripture, you can see both the sheep and the goats. But we also see the grace of God telling us what we must do to be saved.

In summary, the grace of God came teaching us who God is. The grace of God came teaching us what God was going to do, and here we see the grace of God through Jesus telling us what we must do to be saved: **believe the Gospel and be baptized by faith**, according to the scripture.

- **Believing:** "Belief" in and of itself won't save you. You can believe many things, but what Jesus tells us we must believe, is the truth of the gospel.
- **Baptism:** Does baptism save you? well... (1 Peter 3:21). Is there anything special in the water? well... no. Then what makes baptism any different than swimming laps at the YMCA? The difference is, when we do it in obedience to what God has said, there are promises attached to our obedience. Similarly with Noah, does building a boat necessarily save you? Is there anything special about building a boat? No, people build boats all the time - in fact, they built the Titanic and that was actually their doom. But when you do it according to God's instruction, God has promises associated with doing it His Way.

This is and always has been *the Way* that Jesus established for *our* salvation. Hopefully we now have a better understanding of what grace is, how it operates, and what we must do to accept the grace of God.

Imagine if Noah would have believed, but not obeyed. Even though God graciously informed him of the destruction that was coming and what he must do - **Noah's belief would not have saved him without obedience**. It was only after accepting God's grace by DOING what God commanded, that Noah had a place of salvation.

For us, by believing and being baptized according to the scriptures (Acts 2:38), we can receive the promise of the Holy Spirit and eternal life. Those are promises that God has made to us through His grace. If you are someone who has not accepted that grace (whether it is because you don't know God, or you haven't done what you need to do to be saved)... then you have not been saved by the grace of God.

The gospel is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that He came, that He died, that He was buried and rose again so that you can be forgiven of your sins. If you believe this, but haven't fully accepted His grace by *doing* what He said is necessary for salvation... prayerfully consider contacting us at www.hisway.life/contact and we will help you in any way possible, to fully come into the grace of God.

In the next lesson we will go further into understanding the phrase "saved by grace through faith", by focusing on the *context* of Ephesians 2:8.