

The Gospel Of The Grace Of God

INTRODUCTION

In *What's So Amazing about Grace?*, Philip Yancey recounts this story about C. S. Lewis:

During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith.

They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death.

The debate went on for some time until C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. "What's the rumpus about?" he asked, and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace." After some discussion, the conferees had to agree.

The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. The Buddhist eight-fold path, the Hindu doctrine of Karma, the Jewish covenant, and Muslim code of law—each of these offers a way to earn approval. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.

1. In **Acts 20:24**, Paul speaks of the ministry he had received from the Lord Jesus: **“to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”**
2. The word **gospel** means “good news”, and **grace** means “unmerited favor”; so Paul was given the ministry to proclaim the good news...
 - a. That **God** has provided a way of salvation for sinners
 - b. And that **He** had done this without requiring merit on the part of sinners!
3. In this lesson we shall summarize the **“The Gospel Of The Grace Of God”** under three headings:
 - a. The **need** for grace
 - b. The **provision** of grace
 - c. The **reception** of grace

[Before we can begin to appreciate why the grace of God is good news, we must understand...]

1. THE NEED FOR GRACE

A. THE BIBLE DESCRIBES MAN’S TRUE CONDITION...

1. *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* - **Romans 3:23**
2. *“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”* - **James 2:10**
3. *“For the wages of sin is death...”* - **Romans 6:23**
4. *“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”* - **Isaiah 59:2**
5. *“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;”*
– **Isaiah 64:6**

B. WHAT THESE PASSAGES REALLY MEAN TO US...

1. **We must all plead guilty!**
 - a. Every accountable person has sinned
 - b. We can never demand entrance into heaven because we are somehow good enough

- c. Even the very best of us is without merit in God's sight!
- 2. **Our sins have alienated us from God!**
 - a. By our transgressions, we lose that precious relationship with God
 - b. We experience "spiritual" death, or separation from God; which if left unchecked, will result in eternal separation from God (i.e., hell)
 - c. While in this state of "spiritual" death, we are dead to God; our prayers are not heard - cf. **1 Peter 3:12**
- 3. **As sinners, we cannot accomplish the removal of our guilt on our own!**
 - a. We cannot run away from this guilt
 - b. We cannot work our way out of this guilt
 - c. That is where God's grace enters the picture. Through His grace, not only can He forget about our sins, He can save us from them
 - i. We sing about "Amazing Grace" – Yes it is!
 - ii. We sing "His Grace Reaches Me" – thanks be to God!

[So don't be self-deceived by notions of our own goodness. We are sinners in need of salvation! It is fair to say, then, that the **first** requirement of salvation is recognition of our true guilt. Once we acknowledge our sinfulness, we are in a position to appreciate...]

2. THE PROVISION OF GRACE

A. OUT OF LOVE, GOD HAS PROVIDED HIS SON...

- 1. Because God loved us, He sent His Son to die that we might have eternal life - **John 3:16; 1 John 4:9**
- 2. Because God loved us, He made His Son a **propitiation** for our sins - **1 John 4:10**
 - a. A "propitiation" is a sacrifice designed to appease
 - b. Therefore God has offered His Son as a sacrifice designed to appease Himself, which leads to a related point...
- 3. Because God loved us, He gave us a gift. It was a free gift, but still a costly one.
 - a. It is like the lady who went to the store to buy a sweater. She was on a tight budget so went to the clearance rack first. She found a sweater she liked and saw it was only \$8. She bought it and took it home. When she got home she put the sweater on and realized how smooth and elegant the sweater was. She then noticed it's original price was \$124. What she thought was a cheap buy was actually something quite expensive.
 - b. Often times we may treat Jesus' blood as a cheap buy. His grace, though a free gift to us, carried a high price tag – the life of Jesus Himself.

[But not only out of love, but...]

B. OUT OF JUSTICE, GOD HAS PROVIDED HIS SON...

- 1. To satisfy His justice, God provided redemption through the blood of His Son - **Romans 3:24-26***
- 2. God's grace therefore functions in this way:
 - a. God's justice requires an appropriate sacrifice for sin
 - b. Because He loves us, He provided His Son as a sacrifice for sin
 - c. God recognizes the death of Jesus on the cross as a suitable ransom for our sins, paid in full!

[So to satisfy both His justice and His love, God has graciously provided salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. What we cannot earn, God has provided! But the provision of grace is not unconditional (otherwise all would be saved). Therefore we need to consider...]

3. THE RECEPTION OF GRACE

A. RECEIVING GOD'S SAVING GRACE REQUIRES OBEDIENCE...

1. For Jesus is *"the author (or source) of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,"* - **Hebrews 5:9**
2. Freedom from sin comes when one is willing to obey from the heart - **Romans 6:17-18***
3. Such obedience involves:
 - a. Trusting in Jesus as the Son of God who died for your sins - **John 3:16** (quote)
 - b. Confessing your faith before men - **Romans 10:9-10***
 - c. Repenting of your sins - **Acts 17:30** (*"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent"*)
 - d. Culminating with being buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of your sins – **Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16** (quote)

B. HOWEVER, SUCH OBEDIENCE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH EARNING OR MERITING SALVATION...!

1. Salvation is by grace, and *"not by works of righteousness which we have done"* - **Titus 3:4-5a**
2. But by God's mercy, He saves us *"through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* - **Titus 3:5b**
 - a. When a penitent sinner, who trusts in Jesus, is baptized into Christ....
 - 1) He or she is united with Christ by baptism into His death, and therefore rises to walk in newness of life - cf. **Romans 6:3-8** (quote)
 - 2) He or she is *"clothed"* with Christ, able to enjoy all the blessings made possible by Jesus' death and resurrected life! - cf. **Galatians 3:26-27; Hebrews 7:24-25**
 - b. Through such a *"washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"*, one is truly *"born again of the water and the Spirit"*! - cf. **John 3:5**

- o When a pastor named Michael was still in seminary, he took a required course in "clinical pastoral education." Each seminarian was assigned to be a chaplain in a hospital or other institution, and one night each week was on call for emergencies. Late one night, the phone rang, and Michael was called to Alexian Brothers Medical Center in the Chicago suburbs. A 16-year-old girl had been driving at night with friends, and she had backed into a light pole. The pole had broken off and then fallen forward, crashing down onto the car. A 12-year-old friend in the car had been severely injured; in fact, she was brain dead when she arrived at the hospital. Michael walked with the 12-year-old's family as they went through the wrenching process of realizing the truth and allowing the life support to be removed. The following morning, Michael visited the hospital room of the 16-year-old driver. Physically, she was recovering well, but emotionally, she was distraught knowing that her actions had killed her friend. "I'm going to be like a daughter to her parents," she told Michael. "I'm going to go over to their house every day and baby-sit for them. I'll wash dishes for them every night. I'll go over there every week and mow their lawn." Michael gradually helped her realize the truth that no matter what she did, she could never replace their daughter. She could never do enough to make up for her actions. All she could do was ask for forgiveness and

hope that the parents would find it in their hearts to forgive her. The parents who lost their daughter, amazingly, did forgive this girl. She was set free from trying to pay back a debt she could never repay no matter what she did. In our relationship to God, we have sinned so greatly that nothing we do could ever make up for it. But there is a way out: God is willing to forgive us.

CONCLUSION

1. God has ordained...
 - a. ...that through **faith** and **repentance**
 - b. ...culminating with **baptism** into Christ
 - c. ...we might receive the wonderful **grace** of God!
2. Why don't more people respond to God's saving grace?
 - a. **It may be some do not understand the NEED for grace**
 - 1) They consider themselves good, moral people
 - 2) Yet, in nearly every example of salvation in the book of Acts, those being saved were deeply religious and very moral already!
 - 3) And as Isaiah said, "***all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags***"!
 - b. **It may be some are not aware of the PROVISION of grace**
 - 1) They may think that they are too sinful to receive God's grace
 - 2) Yet God desires all to be saved, and has provided Jesus "***a ransom for all***" - cf. **1 Timothy 2: 3-6**
 - c. **It may be that some have not been taught the proper RECEPTION of grace**
 - 1) Many are told to "Say the sinner's prayer", but are not told what Jesus and His apostles commanded people to do to receive God's saving grace
 - 2) People need to listen to Christ and His apostles, not modern preachers! - cf. **Mark 16: 15-16; Acts 2:36-38; 22:16**
3. We saw at the beginning of our study that Paul's ministry was... "***to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.***" (**Acts 20:24**)
4. So we have sought to do in this study; and in closing, we add the words of Peter... "***testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand.***" (**1 Peter 5:12**)

Dear friends, what is your relationship to the grace of God? Have you received the gospel of the grace of God? Are you standing in the true grace of God?