

# Introduction

I needed  
grace  
today

## 1. What is grace?

(1) What we don't deserve

(webster,  
graceful)

(2) Unmerited Favor

■ Romans 3:24: "[We] are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Grace is what inclines God to give gifts that are free and undeserved by sinners.

■ Romans 5:15: "If many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." So, grace is that quality in God that produces free gifts for guilty sinners in salvation.

■ Romans 11:5-6: "At the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace." So, you can't work to earn grace. It is free and undeserved. It's unmerited

## (3) Grace as power for life

- 2 Corinthians 9:8: "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." Now, that seems to picture grace as a power or an influence for obedience.
- 2 Corinthians 12:9: Jesus says to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
- 1 Corinthians 15:10: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder [that was the effect of grace] than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."

In all three of those texts — and they're not the only ones — grace is not only a disposition or a quality or an inclination in the nature of God, but is an influence or a force or a power or an acting of God that works in us to change our capacities for work and suffering and obedience.

## 2. Aspects of Grace

So, what I do when I see things like this in the Bible is to adjust my categories in my head. I won't say, "Oh, well that can't be, because I've got this category in my head." No, no, no. You fix the categories in your head.

If once I thought of grace only as a character trait or a disposition or an inclination in the nature of God, which moved him to treat sinners better than they deserve — if that was my only conception; once upon a time — now, having seen all the texts, I broaden my understanding of grace as the Bible uses the term. Now I say, "Well, it appears that the word grace in Paul's use not only refers to God's character trait or disposition or inclination to treat people better than we deserve, but the word grace also refers to the action or the power or the influence or the force of this disposition, which produces real, practical outcomes in people's lives, like being sufficient for good deeds or enduring the thorn in the flesh or working harder than everybody else, which Paul says about his own apostolic work."

Now, that does not mean you have to give up that simple definition of undeserved favor. That's true. That's a good definition. It just means that the word also embraces the encouraging truth — at least I love the truth; that's why these verses are so precious to me — that this favor overflows in powerful, practical helpfulness from God in your daily life where you most need it. That help is also called grace because it's free and it's undeserved.

(1) When is grace not grace?

1. When is it just nice or helpful or generosity?  
Or just a cultural understanding of grace? (Approval; Favor)

(2) Is there a place in Scripture we can see grace & all of its aspects on display?

1. Eight aspects at least.

# I. Grace is unexpected (✓7)

## 1. Grace ceases to be grace if you have to initiate

I do not at all understand the mystery of grace - only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us. -Anne Lamott

## 2. Grace is everywhere

(1) Stanford : 73% of emerging scientists support intelligent design

(2) Genesis 1:1 - 4a Prepares grace

Genesis 1:26 Initiates grace

Genesis 1:29-30 (give, you, give)  
Gives grace

## 3. We are conditioned to our environments

### (1) An environment of grace

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| 1. Light     | 3. Dogs   |
| 2. Breathing | 4. Gender |

We image this aspect initiate:  
① Forgiveness  
② Welcoming

(3) It interrupts our normal experience of the world  
1. Can't give yourself grace  
2. It initiates

## II Grace is unrestricted (v9)

1. Grace ceases to be grace if you can't access it

(1) Common / Saving grace

(2) Not privileged

2. Grace ignores self-interest

(1) A Jew - a position of privilege

(2) A Samaritan - classless citizen

3. Grace ignores boundaries

(1) No dealings - conditioned norm

(2) Grace creates equity

1. Graceless preserves oppression

"Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars...You only need a heart full of grace."

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

(3) We image this aspect when we offer grace to those we love & those who are hard to love



## III. Grace is unconditional (✓!)

1. Grace cannot be grace if you earned it

(1) Grace is a gift, just ask

1. Can't be purchased, earned or taken ... only received

Romans 11:5-6 - So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. [6] But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

(2) Grace in other religions:

*Justified by Grace*

1. In Judaism, you are justified by an elaborate religious system of works & sacrifices

2. In Hinduism, you are justified (moksha) through climbing through a caste system ... repeat until you get it right

3. In Buddhism, you are justified (enlightenment/nirvana) by dharma/karma ethics, morals, obligation & extinguishing all personal desire

7. Gifts don't expect repayment

(1) God's expressions of grace were innumerable. His requirements were minimal (Gen. 2)

(2) We impute this aspect when we don't hold grace over others or a "catch"

Always looking for "tell me what I have to do/give" Johnny Cash "all paths"

## IV. Grace is unselfish (✓ 17, ✓ 29)

1. Grace ceases to be grace if you don't share it

(1) Grace is not kept to ourselves

1 Peter 4:10 - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

(2) Grace compels grace, not out of obligation, but as grateful stewards

2. It's contagious

(1) When we see grace it startles us because it's countercultural

(2) It becomes contagious, not like a virus, but a remedy to a virus

(3) We imitate this aspect when we are shown grace, we do so to others.

**Matthew 18:23-33** - "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. [24] When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. [25] And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. [26] So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' [27] And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. [28] But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' [29] So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' [30] He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. [31] When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. [32] Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. [33] And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'"

## II. Grace is unFailing (vs-6, 11-14)

### 1. Grace ceases to be grace if it isn't enough

**Genesis 33:18-20** - And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. [19] And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. [20] There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

**Genesis 48:21-22** - Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers. [22] Moreover, I have given to you rather than to your brothers one mountain slope that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow."

(1) This well has been supplying water to God's people for thousands of years

1. Jacob → Israel 1900 BC
2. Gen. 48 → Exp years later
3. Jesus → 2000 years after

(2) "The well is deep" & so is grace

### 2. Not just enough, but More than enough

(1) We image this aspect:

1. Mexican meals
2. Give more than they need

**2 Corinthians 12:9a** - But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

**1 Timothy 1:14a** - and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me...  
3. Never runs out (I've needed so much)

## IV. Grace is undoing (v15-18)

### 1. Grace ceases to be grace if it doesn't change you

If You find it in Your heart, can I be forgiven?

Guess I owe You some kind of apology.

I've escaped death so many times, I know I'm only living

By the saving grace that's over me. -Bob Dylan

#### (1) The world hates the word sin

In American culture, we've substituted the term mistake for the terms **wrong** and **sin**. We aren't sinners; **we are really just mistakers**. How many times have we heard prominent leaders describe their extramarital affairs as mistakes? A mistake is an accident. Unless both parties were blindfolded and gagged, I don't think it's possible to have an accidental affair.

#### (2) If you don't see yourself as "falling short" then grace is what you expect & are entitled to

**Titus 2:11-12** - For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **training us to renounce** ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...

### 2. Our self-perception is undone:

(1) I'm pretty good - grace exposes our deficiency & sin

(2) I'm pretty bad - grace exposes our value & virtue

(3) Only through grace can we see ourselves rightly

(4) Image this aspect when we allow grace to undo our tightly held self-perceptions & admit they might be wrong

## VII. Grace is unburdening (v28)

1. Grace ceases to be grace  
if it isn't intended for flourishing

(1) Why is she out there in  
the middle of the heat of  
day? (v6) (noon)

1. She is burdened by her  
past

2. v28 - she lays down that  
burden

**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17** - Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, [17] comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

2. Grace can be hard

(1) Sometimes discipline, pain  
& boundaries are grace

**Hebrews 12:5-11** - do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

It is for discipline that you have to endure. **God is treating you as sons.** For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but **he disciplines us for our good**, that we may share his holiness.

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

**Tattoo** (2) We image this aspect when we offer what is for flourishing, not happiness. Happiness can add burdens

# VIII. Grace is unnatural (v29b, 19-26)

1. Grace ceases to be grace if it depends on us.

**Hebrews 4:16** - "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace."

That's a throne with the quality and the character and the inclination to treat people better than they deserve. That's the kind of throne we're coming to. But then it says,

"that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

- (1) Incredibly encouraging that God's grace is both:

1. The inclination of God's heart to treat us better than we deserve
  2. The extension of that inclination in practical, real, frequent help.
- By unnatural, I mean it cannot be sustained by natural/human*
2. The Deeper Well

- (1) We can only image aspects

**John 1:16** - For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

**1 Peter 5:10** - And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

**2 Corinthians 9:8** - And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

- (2) Grace is person

**VIDEO:** Ghosts For the Gospel

## Conclusion

Some of you could really use grace today. Either:

- (1) Knowing that God is inclined for your good, even if you don't deserve it
- (2) Receiving the extension of the knowledge of that help in real power, energy, & help.

Both are available today. Because Jesus is not only the better Jacob but He is the better well, where Grace Runs Deep.

He's the better Grace. His grace is unexpected, unrestricted, unconditional, unselfish, unfailing, undoing, unburdening ... because it's supernatural.

Grace runs astore in us.

But it runs deep in Jesus.

Not just enough, always more than enough.