

“Christianity Explained: How Do You Become A Christian? (Part 5)

[By God’s Mercy and Grace]”

We want to better understand how a person becomes a Christian so we can share this Good News with others. Here’s today’s emphasis: ***a person becomes a Christian by God’s shown mercy and abundantly outpoured grace.*** Hallelujah for God’s mercy and grace! None of the other ways a person becomes a Christian (i.e. repentance, confession, faith/belief, receiving Jesus, calling upon the name of the Lord) would be possible without God’s mercy and grace. While we want to do justice to these two huge theological truths, we also want to keep things simple. Let’s start with some definitions. **Grace** is defined as: God’s unmerited favor; undeserved favor that is freely given; bestowed benefits; Divine enablement (the power and ability to do God’s will); an unearned gift which is given; something that is unearned by humans which is freely and generously given by God; it’s God stooping to help the undeserving and helpless. If I had to choose one word to best define “grace,” it would be “gift.” **Mercy** is defined as: showing compassion or kindness toward an offender or enemy; feeling pity for someone in need; an outward manifestation of pity; responding (when able) to help another in need; being moved to help; a compassionate response and expression which meets human need/ills; to feel sympathy for the misery of another; sympathy manifested in act; condescending love reaching out to meet a need without considering the merit of the person who receives the aid. Grace and mercy are often contrasted and compares as follows: grace is when I’m given something I don’t deserve (like a super-nice gift); mercy is when I’m not given something I do deserve (like punishment for my sins).

Of course, the Scriptures have much to say about mercy and grace, but let’s consider these two marvelous passages of Scripture. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:1-10: “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* The Apostle Paul also wrote in 1 Timothy 1:12-17: “*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, ¹³although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴And the grace of our Lord was*

exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Let's try to capture the wonder of God's mercy and grace by making three statements, from a negative angle. **First**, *no one could become a Christian if God didn't love us*. The reason God feels pity toward us when He sees our desperate condition (mercy) and supplies what we need to be delivered (grace) is because He loves us. There's no other way to explain why God has done everything He has done for us, other than His love. God is love, and He's crazy about you! Because God loves us, He has provided the way of salvation! **Second**, *no one could become a Christian if God didn't help us when we were helpless*. We need help, because we all find ourselves trapped and ensnared by sin and its consequences. Satan could care less, but God weeps for us and refuses to pass us by. God is moved to help terrible rascals who are living horrible lives as enemies of God because of His mercy. Because God shows us mercy, the helpless ones will receive the best aid possible from the great Helper Himself! **Third**, *no one could become a Christian if God didn't do for us what we cannot do for ourselves*. God gives us what we need to be rescued from the inescapable pit we are in. No person can get themselves out of the pit of sin. It's too deep, and we're too imperfect, and perfection is required. Also, no person can earn God's help and intervention. The only thing we earn, the only wage we're entitled to is death, because the wages of sin is death. But God helps us out of our helpless dilemma (mercy) by giving us the perfect Gift of salvation (grace). Grace is the gift God gives to us. It's undeserved, and a favorable blessing beyond description, and free to us—but supplied at a very high cost. Jesus is the personification of grace. He did for us what we could never have done for ourselves by taking our place on the old rugged cross. Oh, what a gift!

Discussion Guide/Action Steps

1. Praise God for mercy and grace!
2. God loves you! Receive His love. Let God love you.
3. God is a merciful God—He is full of mercy! Receive His mercy. Let God help you.
4. God abundantly pours His grace out upon us! Access His gifts of grace through believing faith.