

GRACE

Grace, the most powerful, yet most neglected resource available to the New Testament believer. When we speak of grace, we speak of a very broad subject, one that touches and effects every aspect of the believer's life. Unfortunately, grace has traditionally been taught and perceived as effecting our salvation alone. However, the Scriptures are clear about the impact of God's grace in our lives. It not only has an impact on the believer's salvation but on his/her growth, stability, service and afflictions as well.

In the Old Testament grace normally implied favor, either divine or human. We see this time and again in the lives of men such as Noah, Lot, Joseph, Moses, etc. (**Gen 6:8; 19:19; 39:4; Exo 33:12-17**). This favor, of course, was unmerited and displayed God's willingness to work on the behalf of His people. However it's impact does not reach its full realization until the New Testament.

In the New Testament grace not only implies divine favor, but divine influence as well. As believers, we experience its full realization through the new birth by receiving His fullness. (**John 1:14-17**) The Bible says that Jesus is "full of grace and truth". When we received Him, we also received His grace for grace. For the New Testament believer there is greater access to this grace through faith. (**Rom 5:1-2; Heb 4:16**) However, with this access comes a greater accountability. (**Luke 12:48; 1 Pet 4:10**) Since we are to be good stewards of God's grace, it is only wise that we understand exactly for what we are accountable. The importance of this doctrine can not be overstated; it effects every aspect of a believer's life.

I. WHAT IS GRACE?

- ❑ **2 Cor 8:9** (Memory Verse) – This is God's definition of grace.

NOTE: His unmerited favor and influence on our behalf.

DEFN: (Webster's) Grace: (1) Appropriately, the free unmerited love and favor of God, the spring and source of all the benefits men receive from Him. (2) favorable influence of God; divine influence or the influence of the Spirit, in renewing the heart and restraining from sin.

DEFN: (Gothard's) Grace: The desire and power God gives to do His will. (**Phi 2:13; 1 Cor 15:10**)

II. THE ROLE OF GRACE IN SALVATION

- ❑ **Tit 2:11** (Memory Verse) - Every person has the opportunity of enjoying God's divine favor and influence. His will is to see every person receive salvation. (**2 Pet 3:9**)
- ❑ **Acts 15:11** (Memory Verse) - The early Church understood that salvation is a work of God engaged on our behalf by His grace. (**Eph 2:5**)

NOTE: God's grace is His ability and His power to perform the operation of salvation. This ability and power is His gift which can only be activated through the act of faith. (**Eph 2:8-9; Rom 5:1-2**)

1. Grace is God's ability to **forgive**, regardless of how great the sin. (**Rom 5: 20; Eph 1:7; 2:1-7**)
2. Grace is God's ability to **justify**, to wipe away all offenses as though there were none. (**Rom 3:24; Tit 3:5-7**)
3. Grace is God's ability to **establish**, to securely place us in Himself. (**1 Pet 5:10-12; Rom 5:1-7**)

NOTE: Remember God's ability to forgive, justify and establish, stand dormant over a person's sin until faith activates them.

- ❑ **Rom 5:17-21** – Grace reigns through righteousness, which the believer receives as a free gift, unto eternal life. By receiving the abundance of grace the believer is empowered to reign in this life.
- ❑ **Eph 3:2-8** - This salvation by grace marks a new dispensation in which we would become fellow heirs of the promise. A promise that the Old Testament saints received in truth, but could not obtain without grace. (**John 1:17; 1 Pet 3:7**)

III. THE ROLE OF GRACE IN GROWTH

- ❑ **Luke 2:40** - Christ as a child grew in grace.
- ❑ **2 Pet 3:18** (Memory Verse) - We are commanded to grow in the grace of God.

NOTE: We are exhorted to have grace added unto us in 18 of the 27 books in the New Testament. It is quite evident that God wants His children to grow and function in grace.

- ❑ **Eph 4:7-16; Rom 12:3-8** - He gives His grace to equip others, who in turn use their gifts and talents to assist in your growth:
 1. By equipping individuals in specific offices. (**1 Cor 3:10; Eph 4:11-12**)
 2. By collectively blessing the local Church. (**Acts 4:33; 11:22-23; 13:43**)

NOTE: God, through the Spirit of grace, orchestrates every gift and talent, helping every believer utilize his or her full potential in grace. (**1 Cor 1:3-7; 1 Cor 12:7-11**)

- ❑ **Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5** (Memory Verses) - As we grow in His grace, this growth is manifested both inwardly and outwardly: Inwardly through humility, having a submissive and quiet spirit.
- ❑ **Heb 13:9; Col 3:16; Eph 5:19** - Inwardly through the heart, having the heart established in thought and music.
- ❑ **Eph 4:29; Col 4:6** - Outwardly through our speech, using the tongue as a source of truth for service.

- ❑ **1 Pet 4:8-10; 2 Cor 8:1-9** - Outwardly through our giving, using hospitality and our finances to minister to the needs of others; most importantly, the giving of ourselves. (**2 Cor 8:5**)

NOTE: We are to abound in the grace of giving (**2 Cor 8:7**) and by doing so, God is able to make all grace abound toward us. (**2 Cor 9:8** - Memory Verse)

IV. THE ROLE OF GRACE IN SERVICE

- ❑ **2 Tim 1:9** (Memory Verse) - God calls us into His purpose by His grace. This call gives us direction, assurance and vision as to His will for our lives. (**Rom 15:15-16; Gal 1:15-16; 1 Cor 3:10**)
- ❑ **Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:7-12** - Through grace we are equipped for His calling. The Spirit gives to each person, severally as He wills, the gift, which will best benefit the body of Christ. (**1 Cor 12:4-11** - Intentionally repeated)

NOTE: Remember, grace is God's ability and influence on your behalf. If we will allow His ability and influence to operate in our gifts, they can be used to their full potential. On the other hand, when we allow the flesh to operate our gifts, it will only produce pride, carnality and selfishness. This was the problem of the Corinthian Church, who came behind in no gift, but they abused their gifts by operating them in the flesh.

- ❑ **1 Cor 15:10** (Memory Verse) - Through grace we are fashioned for His purpose and made able to function and labor in that purpose. Notice, Paul said, "...yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." If we could learn to get ourselves out of the way, God could work His purpose in us. (**Phi 2:13** - Memory Verse)
- ❑ **2 Tim 2:1-2** - We are exhorted to be strong in God's grace before endeavoring to labor. This leaves the responsibility to us, to ensure our dependence on Him and not ourselves.

V. THE ROLE OF GRACE IN AFFLICTIONS

- ❑ **2 Cor 12:9** (Memory Verse) - Regardless of the affliction, persecution, illness or temptation God's grace is always sufficient.

NOTE: There are times when God will allow such conditions in our lives, that He may bring us to a point of weakness. In **2 Cor 12:6-9** God used the following in Paul's life:

1. Infirmities - but grace strengthens
2. Reproaches - but grace clears the conscience
3. Necessities - but grace brings contentment
4. Persecutions - but grace brings separation and virtue
5. Distress - but grace brings peace

The purpose was twofold, to produce humility and to perfect God's strength in Paul's weaknesses.

- ❑ **Jam 4:6** (Intentionally repeated) - Remember humility brings more grace.
- ❑ **Heb 4:14-16** - In weakness and humility we can approach the throne of grace to find mercy for forgiveness of sins and grace to help in time of need. There is no excuse for a believer to fall short in his/her affliction, when we have such great access to the grace of God.

NOTE: Notice Paul's approach, answer, and attitude in going to the throne of grace in **2 Cor 12:6-9**.

- ❑ **2 Cor 6:1-10** – We are not to receive God's grace in vain (emptiness or aimlessness) but are to approve ourselves as the ministers of God. Every believer is a minister or an ambassador for God, according to verse one (see also **2 Cor 5:18-21**). We are workers together with Him. How we utilize or fail to utilize our resource of grace plays an important role in how the world approves or blames the ministry.

NOTE: It is like a football team, which makes it to the championship, off the arm of its quarterback and the power of its running back. But on the day of the championship the coach decides to replace them and thus loses a game he could have won. God gives us the greatest resource in the world, let us not replace it with inferior works of the flesh!

VI. ABUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD

- ❑ **Gal 2:21** (Memory Verse) – Frustrating the grace of God occurs when we try to accomplish through the law what God has done by grace. For Christ to justify you by grace through faith and then require that you be justified by the law, would make His death a vain effort and Paul a transgressor. (**Gal 2:16-18**)
- ❑ **Gal 5:3-4** – Here, falling from grace applies to a believer who has fallen from the doctrine of grace and reverted back to trying to please God in the flesh by focusing on keeping the law. Notice Paul says that Christ is become of “none effect”. The believer will have no power with God to change his life. The result of trusting in doing the law of Moses in the flesh to accomplish perfection in one's life, means that you are not allowing the Spirit to change you through faith that worketh by love. All motivation for perfection or service should stem from a heart of love.
- ❑ **Heb 12:15** (Memory Verse) – One fails of the grace of God when he fails to utilize what grace is given and available. There is a loss of opportunity, not of salvation. When Esau sold his birthright he did not loose his relationship, he lost his opportunity. The opportunity to father the godly seed line and be a blessing. Thus, his loss brought bitterness, which defiled many in his family lineage, even to this day. Our failure to utilize God's grace can also bring bitterness in our lives.

- ❑ **Jude 4** – False prophets turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, which is loose living that's shocking to public decency.

DEFN: "Lasciviousness" – (1) Looseness; irregular indulgence of animal desires; wantonness; lustfulness. (2) Tendency to excite lusts, and promotes irregular indulgences.

- ❑ **Rom 6:1-2** – The abuse of the grace of God is not just limited to unbelieving false prophets who teach a loose life style of lasciviousness, but to believers who use the forgiving power of God's grace to justify continuing in sin.
- ❑ **Heb 10:29** – When we sin willfully we hold the Spirit of grace in spite which will result in God's chastening hand coming upon us.

CONCLUSION:

As a believer, learn to access and rely on the grace of God to give you power to live your Christian life. Then the Lord can use you and get the glory for it. The Apostle Paul relied on God's grace and acknowledged it in **1 Cor 15:10**, "But for the grace of God I am what I am...." What a wonderful saint of God Paul was!