

# Grace

What is grace? What does it mean? Oxford Dictionary defines it this way: Grace is the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings.

Grace is God's unmerited love for us. When I think of the word "grace," I also think of the word "infinite." Grace is too big and vast to adequately put into words. Without God's grace, I am helpless: it is impossible for me to know the way to heaven. But by and through the grace of God, when I can believe my sins forgiven, my heart is able to see the final destination.

## **God's Grace Teaches through His Word**

Have you ever pondered the journey through the wilderness that the children of Israel were on, with the God-appointed help of Moses and Aaron?

When the children of Israel grew tired, they were encouraged. When they questioned and asked "Why?" they were reminded to trust in God's plan and in His good care. They depended on the daily-provided manna for sustenance. So it is for us today. We need the gospel daily in order to remain on the right pathway to heaven. God, through and by His grace, shows to us the direction our footsteps should take.

When we study the Bible, whether it be about Job or Jonah from the Old Testament, the book of Matthew or the letters from Paul to Timothy, we are reminded that the former believers, even way back to the very beginning of man's time on earth, have fought the same battles with the same three-fold enemy.

Grace, this same teacher that teaches me, also taught the believers of times past and yet teaches all who believe, no matter where they live on this earth. Such teachings are unified and unchanging. They are from the Holy Spirit, from God himself.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40:8).

## **God's Grace Pulls Close with Gentle Love**

I recall a time when I was feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. I had not yet found the strength nor the words to share my thoughts and experiences with anyone.

It was the weekend of our special spring services. With a very tired heart, I dragged myself to church. Actually, in hindsight, I believe it was God himself who coaxed and carried me there. God had an angel waiting to uplift me—a dear sister I had just met. She didn't know what was going on in my life, nor did she ask any details. She just offered a warm hug and a few simple words: "God bless you! God bless you and your family!"

This dear angel friend reached out to comfort me with unconditional love. It was as if God himself was reaching out to embrace me and encourage me: Keep on, keep on! You do not have to bear this on your own! You are not alone on this journey!

God works through His people. God's grace wants to pull us close and lift us up when we are weak and weary. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9).

### **Grace Teaches to Look Ahead**

There was a time, when in the midst of heavy trials and a turmoil of doubts, I started to look backward and go over past experiences with a fine-toothed comb. My past sins, mixed with endless faults and failings, came harshly to the surface to stare me in the face, to taunt me and tease me.

What a dangerous hole to fall into! If I look at myself (or at my neighbor) with such critical and unforgiving eyes and heart, is this not belittling the power of forgiveness, the grace of God? The enemy slyly sneaks in through the weak spots! In such a place, a bitter thought can quickly come, and then another. Contentment and trusting in God are quick to fade away.

How was I able to realize where I had fallen at that time? What pulled me up out of that hole? Through discussion with a dear believing friend, God helped me see. He lifted me from that place. Through the proclamation of the gospel, I could believe that my sins and doubts were washed away. Not just partially washed away, but fully and completely, drowned in God's bottomless sea of grace. Its waters are so deep that whatever goes into it can never be retrieved. Forgiveness is forever, even if our minds have trouble forgetting. Such is this great and immeasurable love of God.

If we spend our time focusing on what is behind us, we soon lose sight of where we are going. Can we see where we are stepping if we are looking backward? The same danger comes if we focus on someone else's journey. We soon forget to look after our own matters. The enemy of souls rejoices over this. God's grace teaches us to put sins and wrong watching and doubts away. In this way, God helps us to correct our vision, to refocus. He teaches us to look ahead, to keep our gaze turned upward, toward heaven.

We can pray to God for a forgiving heart—toward ourselves and everyone, and for a forgetting mind. He helps. He hears our prayers. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Ps. 103:11).

## **God's Grace Encourages**

From outside comes the rumbling sound of the school bus. Children hustle and bustle, finishing up cereal, digging in the front closet for matching pairs of shoes. One little boy drags his heels. I put his pack on his back and lift him up for a piggyback ride.

At the bottom of the driveway, he does not jump down and run for the bus. He stands beside me, head down, leaning into my leg. Sparks of impatience flare up within me. The driver looks at us, waiting. I look down at our son, who looks back up at me. I pull him close. The gospel message flows from mother's heart to child's, from child's heart to mother's.

"Remember that God is with you today," I find myself whispering to him.

He hugs me again and smiles broadly. "Will you wave at me when I'm sitting on the bus?" And off he goes, ready to face his day out in the big world.

It is much easier for me also to face my day, believing my sins forgiven. My heart can look forward, trusting that God will guide and look after me this day. God's grace is like a blanket that wraps around me as I travel. It is also like a gentle light. Through the forest and the fog, beyond known and unknown turns in the road ahead, God allows me to see the final destination. This is a miracle.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

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### **Discussion Points:**

1. When thinking about God's grace, what is the core message God wishes to extend to us, and to every person?
2. Share about a time in your life when you felt God's love closely and personally.
3. Which Bible story or verse pertaining to God's grace speaks strongly to you?
4. In what ways does the enemy try to belittle God's power and try to turn us away from God's grace?