

Marvelous Grace

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By far, most Christians think of the grace of God as that which, if accessed in accordance with the dictates of the church or the scriptures, provides escape from hell and entrance into heaven. Coming generally from a Reformed tradition, with certain differences, grace is linked to faith and is granted to one on the basis of one's acceptance of Christ as Savior.

Some make that a-once-and-for-all-time decision guaranteeing eternal salvation, while others require acceptance of Christ and faithful obedience to Him with the provision that, if at any time you fail, forgiveness is available upon repentance and confession putting you back on the road toward eternal bliss. Admittedly, there are many variations of these two primary Protestant schools of thought.

If one is of the Roman Catholic tradition, then grace becomes the favor of God appropriated through the means of grace i.e. the sacraments of the church, the most important of all, in practical terms, as it relates to eternal destiny, being the sacrament of confession, so that you do not depart this vale of tears with any unconfessed mortal sins staining your soul.

Venial sins will land you in an in-between state with hope of making it all the way. With all the above, both Protestant and Catholic adherents would claim that their theology of grace does not violate the truth of salvation as a gift from God.

I write primarily for a readership that would smile knowingly and agreeably, for the most part, as to my assessment of prevailing notions about grace. Compared with the average believer, I would consider my readership to be well advanced in understanding the meaning of divine favor; but, by that standard, one could look pretty good while being woefully lacking in appreciation of the true nature, extent and purpose of grace.

Now before proceeding further, I should offer some kind of definition of grace, that if accepted, will allow me to toe hold into your spiritual considerations. For the most part, those reading this, if asked for a definition of grace would respond, without much thinking, that grace is the unmerited favor of God.

At an elementary level, that definition did help point us at least generally in the right direction of understanding God's grace. But please consider defining grace more accurately as: the divine influence on the soul, initiated by God, without any qualification on our part; an influence which is intensified as needed in its particular applications, so as to, on its own, overcome all resistance to its benevolent intrusion into the heart, leading to and consummating in the fulfillment of God's purposes in our lives and beyond that, His purpose for all of His creation. Yes, dear one, grace is nothing less than that, and all of that, though most often it is accorded a place in our estimation far inferior to its true nature,

extent and purpose

My approach shall be to deal with what I believe to be the last refuge of a substandard theology of grace, a refuge where, even after seriously reflecting upon the primacy of grace---primacy, in the way conventional Christianity affirms the same, while actually denying it---and even experiencing it in some depth, one would be prone to refuse to extol it as it truly deserves, because the cost is too high--- the cost of accepting that we can bring nothing to the table for, bring nothing to bear upon unto, contribute nothing toward the granting of grace and/or the successful outcome of its working.

This is a refuge where, though there may be considerable understanding of the breadth of grace, there is still a timidity in looking into its depths for fear of falling, for fear that, after all, grace finally depends upon something from us to facilitate its operation, so we take refuge in, we seek to pacify conscience by attempting to do our part, lest we be found before God to have abandoned OUR responsibility.

There is abroad the notion, entertained even by men of some spiritual stature, that the grace of God only affords us family relationship with God, that is, it facilitates making us children of God, but it can never make us kingdom-effective sons. That, supposedly is another matter. The discipline required to bring us to the place of acting with authority and power in our Father's affairs, it would seem, in the perception of many, to be a discipline other than the discipline of grace.

In reality, it is grace, and grace alone, that delivers us from destitute bondage and places on us the robe of royalty with the accompanying family signet ring by which we authorize the orders that govern the kingdom and the scepter with which we extend the righteous edicts of our King, Jesus.

Indeed, of a certainty, those who rule and reign with Christ must be a disciplined people but they are disciplined by grace. "*The grace of God has appeared to all men teaching (disciplining) us...*" (**Titus 2:11**). In the kingdom of God, to be entrusted with the authority of the kingdom, one must be brought to the place where he or she has abandoned all hope of succeeding in disciplining themselves and trust only in the already disciplined life of Christ in them that is their life.

Grace is not merely that which cleans our slate, it is that which is unfailing when we fail. In it is found the cross and the crown. It is the very trying to qualify that is disqualified. Did you get that? God disqualifies your trying. He'll have nothing of it. It is judged to be a strange and foreign thing that seeks recognition in the kingdom of God.

We are encouraged by the apostle Paul to "*grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ*" (**II Pet. 3:18**). Grace is the source not only of freedom from guilt, it is also the supply for growth as we grow together unto the full stature of Christ. Is this grace which is so freely given to us, is this grace something that refuses to allow hardship, trials and tribulation to touch us? Most certainly not. It IS that which keeps us going through it all so that having come through we have nothing to boast of except the grace of God and our own weakness.

It was said of the magnificent church, following the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, that "great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33). What was their secret? Grace, all the way. It was said of the Lord Jesus in His youth, "*And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him*" (Lk. 2:40). "*And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*" (Lk. 2:52). [Note that the Greek word translated favor in Verse 52 is the same word translated grace in Verse 40.](#)

The Lord Jesus regularly testified of that grace when he affirmed that what He did was really His Father doing the works in Him. That's grace; God in you, without your help AND without needing your permission, doing HIS thing.

If we trace the teaching of grace in the **Book of Romans** as Paul begins quite specifically dealing with grace in **chapter five**, we find that its thread appears immediately again in **chapter six**, assuring us that our old man was crucified with Christ. Know for sure that you had nothing to do with your old man being crucified. And if it was done to you, for you, without your help, that is grace.

The theme continues in **chapter seven** revealing that we were not only made to be dead to sin, but also dead to the law. In **chapter eight**, it is by grace that we are communicants in the newness of life afforded by Christ's resurrection and are encouraged in the hope of the glory which shall be revealed to us. In **chapters nine through eleven**, we see the sovereignty of that grace which will not change its mind about the gifts and calling of God, but will see to it that none fail of those gifts and calling.

In **chapter twelve**, we are exhorted to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto God which is our intelligent service. Why is it a reasonable, rational, intelligent, service? Because we should know by this time as we go through **Romans** that grace has qualified us to prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (**Rom. 12:2**). (The Amplified version speaks of our reasonable, rational, intelligent service in translating Vs. 1).

By the time we get to the end of the book, we find that the free gift which has abounded toward us unto a reigning life with Christ shows up in chapter sixteen, **Vs. 20**, in Paul's declaration, "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

I, myself, know nothing about reigning with Christ based on some courageous decision my part by which I reached down within my own will to find some autonomous willingness to suffer with Christ that I might reign with Him. The will of the Father, which was the will operating in the Son, is the source of any submission to God's will that has been operative of my life. That willingness, that endurance, that submission to the Father's plan, to whatever degree it has manifested in this disciples life has been simply a fruit of the free grace gift of Christ to me as my life.

There is such a deep streak of credit-seeking propensity in our flesh, that one can read this article, give mental assent to its proposition, and then, still, set out to TRY to depend only on God's grace. Subtle, huh? Yep; the subtlety of the serpent. Even our complete dependency upon God's grace is not in our hands, it is in God's hands. "Be still and know that (He) is God." Ed Browne says that "[Be completely motionless,,,](#)" conveys more

accurately the force of the prophets word.

Stay tuned for future serious, seminal samplings.

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