
Made in His Image: Grace

“The LORD waits to be gracious to you”

Key Text:

Ex. 34: ⁶“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Eph. 2:¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^u and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Titus. 2:¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- 1) What makes it difficult for us today to accurately define the *grace of God*?

- 2) Grace describes God's disposition to show favor towards humans, and God's continuing loyalty towards those accepted into divine favor. The Hebrew term *khen* is used to describe acts of God's generous favor or grace shown towards his people. “Finding favor in the eyes of the Lord” is a common expression in the Old Testament to describe *khen*.
 - a. Who was the first person to whom God shows *khen* (cf. Gen. 6:5-8)?
 - b. The best example of God showing *khanun* (which is the adjective form of *khen*), is in the golden calf debacle at the foot of Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex. 33:15-16, 17, 34:6).
 - c. Particularly in the Psalms, there are frequent requests for *khanun* in times of great difficulty or in need of deliverance (cf. Ps. 4:1, 6:2-3, 25:16-20).
 - d. When God's people rebel, in many instances they are asking for God's favor despite the fact that they really don't deserve it (cf. Ps. 103:8-11, 130:1-8).
 - e. Prophets like Isaiah declared that one day God will show *khen* to his people by delivering his people ultimately through the Messiah-King Jesus Christ (Isa. 30:18-26).

- 3) The word used to describe grace in the New Testament is the Greek word *charis*, which simply means “gift”. *Charis* is not an inherently Biblical term. Preston M. Sprinkle writes:

Rich people in the ancient world often gave *charises*, or gifts, to other people. They would donate *charises* to their hometown; a fountain in the city square, a statue of Zeus next to the courthouse. They would give a *charis* to someone in need of food or shelter. The wealthy were eager to give gifts to people. Why? Because the ability to give a *charis* showed (or showed off) that they had the means to give. So Christians weren't the first people to talk about grace. But Christians revolutionized what *charis* meant, and here's why.

When rich people gave a *charis* to this person and a *charis* to that person, they didn't give it indiscriminately. The ancients gave *charises* only to those who were worthy to receive it. *Charis* was given to people who were worthy of *charis*: those who had a high status or who were morally upright, intellectually astute, or physically impressive. After all, we wouldn't want to squander our *charis* on some bum in the gutter who's unworthy of our gift. A rich person wouldn't waste *charises* on outcasts, the unappreciative, or thugs who had nothing to offer in return. But Jesus did. Jesus and his followers gutted the word *charis* and infused it with fresh meaning, with life giving power. Jesus did more than give *charis* to the unworthy dregs of society. He made it his mission to seek them out (*Scandalous Grace*).

- a. How does John describe Jesus as God's *charis* (cf. Jn. 1:14-17)?
- b. How does Paul describe grace (cf. Eph. 2:1-10)?
- c. How does Paul describe his worth and the gift of God's grace (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13-14, 1 Cor. 15:9-10)?
- d. Who does God extend grace to (cf. James 4:6)?
- e. How much did grace cost to God (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9)? To us? What should this motivate us to do?

- 4) Dietrich Bonhoeffer warns us of the tendency to “cheapen grace”:

Grace is represented as the Church's inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; Grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; And, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing...In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. “All for sin could not atone.” Well, then let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin (*The Cost of Discipleship*).

How should the knowledge that God is gracious and how he has shown us grace change the way we live (cf. Titus 2:11-14, 2 Pt. 3:17-18, Rom. 6:1-4)?