



God's Generosity: GRACE

Ephesians 2:8-10

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I. What is GRACE?

- a. GRACE is one of the distinctions of God.
 - i. "No other system of religious thought, past or present, contains an emphasis on divine grace comparable to that of the Bible."¹
 - ii. *Many theologians have cited that the very center and core of the whole Bible is the doctrine of the grace of God.*
- b. Grace is the opposite of karma:
 - i. Karma is all about getting what you deserve.
 - ii. Grace is God's unmerited favor: I don't deserve, and I didn't earn it.
 - iii. Paul wrote about it the most; he was aware of his need. 1 Corinthians 15:9-10.
- c. MYTH: Good Performance = Acceptance.
 - i. Surfacingly this may seem true, but it's not God's way (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - ii. Bob Goff says it this way, "...God makes confetti out of our big plans for self-improvement and uses it to celebrate his better plans for grace in our lives. It's a reminder that grace isn't just a means to an end; it's the end. It will be enormous grace, not our big plans, that will change the world."²

II. The PURPOSE of Grace

- a. Grace has an effect: "the supernatural assistance of God bestowed upon a rational being with a view to his sanctification."³
 - i. Grace is the gift that keeps on giving. It is given to transform us and to then flow through us. (Matthew 18)
 - ii. Imago Dei: Living a life on purpose requires that we return to our original design – in the image of God.
- b. God's grace grounds and empowers everything in a Christian's life. Grace is the doorway to TRANSFORMATION!
 - i. Grace shows us how to live the life that God created us for. Grace leads us and teaches us.

¹ Bilezikian, G. (1988). *Grace*. In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 898). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

² Lucado, Max. *Grace* (p. iv). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

³ Cross, F. L., & Livingstone, E. A. (Eds.). (2005). In *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church* (3rd ed. rev., p. 700). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

- ii. Some have abused and misused the doorway – seen purely as an escape hatch, justification for behavior.
 - 1. Grace does not empower narcissism. (Romans 6:1-2)
 - 2. Grace is freedom “from” bondage and the path into a new life with God. (Romans 6:14-16)
- iii. Freedom from sin is an evidence of God’s grace at work in our lives.
- c. We CANNOT live without GRACE! God’s grace is the basis for our identity (1 Corinthians 1:10), our standing before God (Romans 5:2), our behavior (2 Corinthians 2:12), our living (Romans 5:17), our holiness (2 Timothy 2:9), our strength (2 Timothy 2:1), our sufficiency (2 Corinthians 2:8-9), our response to difficulty and suffering (Hebrews 4:16), and our future (1 Peter 1:13).⁴

III. Grace empowers GENEROSITY

- a. When we understand the grace, goodness, and generosity of God, it makes us want to give.
 - i. We are active in serving: “serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.” (1 Peter 1:10).
 - ii. We are active in God’s mission (Acts 11:23). We testify to the grace of God (Acts 20:24).
 - iii. We are generous in offering grace in our speech and our tweets (Colossians 4:6).
- b. Receiving has the responsibility of giving (Luke 12:48).
- c. Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor. Matthew 18:21-35
 - i. Peter asks Jesus, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?”
 - ii. The Rabbis required 3 times. Peter is “generous” and offers 7 times.
 - iii. Jesus responds, “No...seventy times seven!” In other words, endless – don’t keep track of offenses.
 - iv. The parable reveals that we have been forgiven of so much more than we have been offended.
 - v. God requires that we walk in forgiveness – forgive as we have been forgiven.
- d. When GRACE is alive in our lives, we are eager and excited to share it with others.

Reflection Questions:

- Am I operating out of a worldview that embraces Grace or Karma – you get what you deserve? Is my approval of myself and others based on my performance requirements?
- Are the effects of grace evident in my life? Where do I struggle? Where do I need help?
- Am I generous in giving grace to others? Where is grace active in me? Where does grace need to come alive in my life, family, workplace, etc.?

⁴ Justin Holcomb, <https://www.christianity.com/theology/what-is-grace.html>