

Grace

*If none of God's saints were poor and
tried, we should not know half so well
the consolations of divine grace.*

—Charles H. Spurgeon

As my life's renewal has continued, I am amazed at God's ways and work. I am sometimes confused and even baffled by His interactions with me. But I am convinced and reminded that all of what we experience is due to God's wisdom, grace and mercy toward us, and God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8).

All Christians receive grace and mercy from the Lord, so before I go any further, I want to use an illustration to explain the difference between the two:

“As Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court.

The judge asked, ‘Guilty, or not guilty?’ When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, ‘That’ll be ten dollars – a dollar for every mile you went over the limit.’

Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. ‘You have violated the law,’ he said. ‘The fine must be paid — but I am going to pay it for

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you.’ He took a ten-dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner!”¹⁵

Mercy is represented by the ten dollars the judge paid for Billy Graham’s fine. It was due for the crime. The steak dinner Billy Graham received afterwards was grace. Billy Graham was given benefits he didn’t deserve from the judge: mercy and grace. We enjoy both grace and mercy from the Lord. Jesus’ death on the cross paid our fine. We were guilty; we received mercy. Jesus gives us grace also. He gave us an inheritance, He gives us positions of authority and complete restoration in His kingdom.

Praise the Lord that:

- We are justified (saved from the penalty of sin).
- We are being sanctified (saved from the power of sin).
- We will be glorified (saved from the presence of sin).

Put another way: By grace, God saved, is saving, and will save His people.

Receiving Grace

I love the refrain from the song “Grace Greater than Our Sin,”¹⁶ written by Julia H. Johnston.

*Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God’s grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!*

¹⁵ Village Church of Wheaton, “Grace and More,” accessed Oct. 9, 2019, <https://www.villagechurchofwheaton.org/docs/sermon2009-07-12.pdf>.

¹⁶ “Grace Greater than Our Sin,” Timeless Truths, accessed Oct. 9, 2019, https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Grace_Greater_than_Our_Sin/.

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The song reminds me that grace has pardoned me in God's court by reigning over our sin. And ultimately, grace will forever separate me from my sin when I stand before God. Completely will grace triumph.

The benefit of God's grace has always kept up with humankind's capacity for sin. Jesus' death and resurrection caused a "superabounding"¹⁷ state of grace to flow to sinners in God's creation! (Romans 5:20). In the Garden—grace triumphed. When the Mosaic Law was given and sin increased in the world—grace trumped. When Jesus explained that sin is committed in our minds, sin increased—grace trumped (cf., Matthew 5:28). Jesus is infinitely "full of grace" (John 1:14).

I took the time to remind myself of a few of my grace benefits here. They apply to you as well if you know Jesus as Savior.

- I have everlasting salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- I am a friend of Jesus (John 15:15).
- I am forever in the family of God (Matthew 12:48-50).
- I receive constant assurance from The Spirit that I am a child of God (Romans 8:16).
- I am at perfect peace with God (Romans 5:1).
- My shame is removed (Romans 10:11).
- I have great potential for great rewards (Matthew 20).
- I am part of God's demonstration of love (Romans 5:8).
- I am equipped to love as God loved me (1 John 4:19).

Resting in Grace

Even with the accumulated benefits of grace, there are times when I struggle to be at rest in it, to embrace it as I should. I disbelieve because I get frustrated with my old sin nature hanging around. It seems like grace should stop my sin, but I remain frustrated in my inaccuracies of application. I sometimes, sinfully

¹⁷ *Aramaic Bible in Plain English*, Bible Hub, accessed Oct. 9, 2019, <https://biblehub.com/aramaic-plain-english/romans/5.htm>.

and erroneously, question God's grace because of my sinfulness. My sinful heart testifies against me. But then I am reminded by John that, "whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything" (1 John 3:20b, ESV). Even when I struggle to rest in grace, there is yet a grace for that! Hallelujah! I choose to remember that I should never attempt to "set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21b). I remember, too, that we are not able to be perfected here on earth. "For God has consigned all people to disobedience so that he may show mercy to them all" (Romans 11:32). There will be no prideful person entering Heaven that became perfect on earth. No, we will all stand before God because of His all powerful will, as objects of His grace.

Giving Grace to Others

As I reminded myself of the love I have for God's grace and remember that I also need to rest in it, I remember here that, I am not very good at giving grace to others. I doubt that I am alone in this struggle. An author poetically described this reality in his life this way: "I have barely tasted of grace myself, have rendered less than I have received." By "barely tasted," Yancey wrote that he had rarely experienced grace either at the churches he attended or at his Bible college where he graduated. He instead said he experienced "ungrace."¹⁸ Later he would go back and explain to his old professors what he experienced only to be rebuffed. I doubt his Bible college was unique. Churches, ironically, are not great places to experience the expressions of grace. We often speak of and desire grace, but it seems that we don't understand the application of the term. We love for grace to come our way, but we are often not much of a vessel of grace toward others.

I need grace. You need grace. The church needs grace and the lost need grace. Let's show grace.

¹⁸ Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997), 14-16.

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Not Abusing Grace

Especially as time has gone on, I tend to get comfortable with my “small” sins (there is no such thing as an acceptable or small sin). When I do this I take advantage of grace. I abuse grace. Let me explain: instead of confession and repentance when I am impatient, I choose to say, “Ah, grace.” When I am cynical, “Grace.” When I gossip, “Grace, grace.” I need grace daily, but I confess that I should take my sinning more seriously. Grace was not given to me for misuse. Peter admonished his readers against this improper use of freedom. He wrote, “Live as free people, not using your freedom as a pretext for evil, but as God’s slaves” (1 Peter 2:16). We are not to hide behind grace to commit evil.

We see this was a problem in the Roman church also. Paul reprimanded the church when he wrote, “What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2). We easily realize how their view gained footing: put up with sinful views and tendencies and we’ll make more room for more of them.

Instead of excusing sin, grace is intended to break the chains of sinfulness. “For sin will have no mastery over you, because you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Due to grace, we are now free to choose the holy, the most excellent ways of love (1 Corinthians 12:31, 13:13).

Scripture Passage

Ephesians 1:3-14

Questions

- 1) How did you become complacent with those sins in your life?
- 2) What steps will you take to facilitate holy change in your life as you continue

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to grow closer to the Lord?

3) Think of the last time someone hurt or offended you. Write about it here.

4) Did you show grace to that person? If so, how did you show grace to them?
If not, why were you unable to show them grace?

5) In your own words, define grace and mercy and explain the difference.

6) Why is grace not a “license to sin”?

7) What is the purpose of Grace?

8) How do we balance our need for daily grace without using it as a cover for sinful behavior?

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Aim Point

- 1) Take the time to thank God for His grace.

- 2) Think of the most difficult person in your life right now. Ask God to fortify your mind and heart to be an agent of grace toward that person in the days ahead.

- 3) Pray, “ God please humble me; help me. Challenge me to give grace to those around me, yes, even to those that don’t deserve grace. Remind me in these moments that I don’t deserve grace; therefore, I can freely give grace to others.”

- 4) I recommend Philip Yancey’s book, *What’s So Amazing About Grace* (ISBN 0-310-21327-4) for further reading on grace and how to live it out.