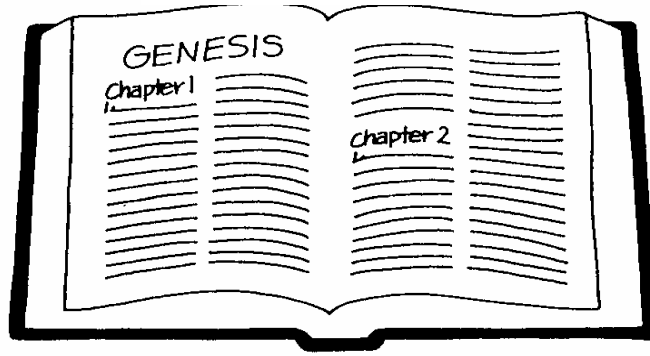


# The Grace of God

## Correspondence Course #4



### Introduction:

The three past lessons have examined the authenticity, interpretation and divisions of the Bible. This lesson shall look to the contents of the book itself. The Bible is a story of God creating man, man disappointing God, and God saving man by grace from eternal punishment. The following lesson will focus on defining the grace of God.

### What is Grace?

The apostle Paul wrote, *"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this **grace** wherein we stand;"* (Romans 5:1-2). To have access is to be introduced to. The Christian is one who has been introduced to the grace of God. Due to God's mercy and love for his creation, He has introduced his grace for our salvation.

The word grace is defined as, "kindness or favor which bestows upon one what he has not deserved" (Thayer 666). The favor of this grace from God has as its product salvation. *"God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved)..."* (Ephesians 2:4-5).

## Why Do We Need Grace?

Law has always been in existence (Romans 5:13). God gave man law in the Garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 2:16). Man violated that law causing sin and death to enter into the world (Romans 5:12). The consequences of that sin were both physical and spiritual death (Romans 6:23). Mankind, therefore, desperately needed a remedy to the situation of God's judicial punishment upon the disobedient. Grace is the answer!

If God had made man sinful, God would owe salvation to man. Again, if man were able to keep law perfectly, God would owe salvation to man. However, human experience alone indicates that we all sin. The apostle Paul said, "*for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;*" (Romans 3:23). Again, Paul said, "*for as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. Now that no man is justified by the law before God is evident: for, the righteous shall live by faith: and the law is not of faith, but, he that doeth them shall live in them*" (Galatians 3:10-12). Since man cannot possibly keep law perfectly, he is in a dilemma.

God does not make man sin; he sins of his own will (James 1:13-15). Man cannot keep law to receive salvation because of his sin; if he did, God would owe man salvation (Romans 4:4). This brings us back to the beginning of our discussion, as we quoted from Romans 5:1-2. The answer to our receiving justification, though we do not deserve it, is God's grace! However, before we can be introduced to this grace, we must acknowledge our need for it. The burden of the first three chapters of Romans is to prove that man is in sin and in desperate need of God's grace. The Gentile was guilty of sin by violating his respective law, and the Jew was guilty of violating God's revealed law. Herein we find the very purpose of law. Law helps man to identify sin. The law shows the heinousness of sin and its ability to separate man from God (Romans 3:20; 7:7; Galatians 3:19, 24; Isaiah 59:1-2). Once man recognizes his undone condition without God, he is ready to be introduced to that grace which saves.

## Is God's Grace Conditional or Unconditional?

God has given man the choice of whether or not to sin (James 1:13-14). Consider a man who chooses to sin. Will God save that individual? Paul answers our question in Romans 6:1: "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?*" God has always had a part for man to play in order to receive the blessings of His favor or grace. Consider the following examples of individuals who had access to God's grace by their faithful obedient acts:

- A. Noah:** (Genesis 6:8) "*but Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.*" Noah, by Godly fear, obeyed the commands of God (Hebrews 11:17).

God gave him instructions and he followed them (Genesis 6:13ff). *"Thus did Noah: according to all that God commanded him, so did he"* (Genesis 6:22). Noah received God's grace, salvation from the flood, through faithfully following his instructions.

- B. Abraham:** (Hebrews 11:8) *"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."* Abraham received that which was promised to him by acting on faith. The favor was the inheritance; however, it was not received until he obeyed the voice of God.
- C. Joshua:** (Hebrews 11:30) *"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days."* In Joshua 6:1-5, God tells Joshua that **He has given** Jericho into his hand. God's favor or grace was the giving of Jericho. Notice that there was something on the part of Israel to do in order to receive God's favor. When Israel complied with God's instructions, the walls fell and they took the city by force. They received God's favor by obedient faith.
- D. Naaman:** (II Kings 5) God gave Naaman instructions through his prophet Elisha that would show Naaman God's favor. The grace of God would heal Naaman of his leprosy if he washed in the Jordan seven times. Naaman complied with faithful obedience, and he was healed receiving God's grace.
- E. The blind man:** (John 9:7) Jesus said, *"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, he went away and washed, and came seeing."* The blind man received the favor or grace of God, his sight, when he complied with the instructions of Jesus. He received grace through faith!
- F. Three thousand people in Jerusalem at Pentecost:** (Acts 2) On the day of Pentecost 3,000 people had access by faith into grace. They wanted forgiveness of sins. They received God's favor of forgiveness when they complied with His commands through the apostle Peter.

The lesson learned by these examples is that we do not earn nor deserve to receive God's favor. Man is justified (acquitted) of sins through an obedient faith (Rom. 5:1-4). By the grace of God our Lord provides salvation; man must do his part in receiving that gift! The book of Judges reveals a story about a man named Gideon who went to war with the Midianites whose number was as the sand of the sea (Judges 7). Gideon called for God's people to gather for war and 32,000 Israelites assembled for the cause. To teach Israel a valuable lesson of faith, God whittled down the army of 32,000 to only 300 men. These 300 men defeated the Midianites and learned that it was not by their own hand but by God's that the victory was achieved. Likewise, the human effort toward salvation is always clearly removed by God so all will know that salvation comes by favor. God's favor; however, does not eliminate a conditional response on the part of the one who has faith. Roy E. Cogdill once said, "Obedience nullifies neither grace nor faith, but unites them!" This was the point James made, *"even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself"* (James 2:17).

## Grace and Obedience

*"For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world;"* (Titus 2:11-12). God's unmerited favor has appeared that all may have salvation. Notice that God's grace does some **instructing** as well. To be a recipient of grace, we must deny ungodliness and worldly lust and live soberly, righteously and godly.

Paul told Timothy, *"but thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness...I charge thee in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:"* (1 Timothy 6:11-14). Again, notice that there is a manner of living God desires and that is **"righteousness."** The word righteousness is defined as "the condition acceptable to God; integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, and correctness in thinking, feeling and acting" (Thayer 149). When we comply with God's commands he graciously has promised that we shall have eternal life (Revelation 21:7). Our faith moves us to submissive obedience in confident hope of receiving our end reward, salvation. Only the fatalist would deny the connection of faith and grace with obedience (cf. Hebrews 3:18-19). The Greek lexicons even define faith as it is used in passages such as Romans 5:1-4 as, "used especially of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, i.e. a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah – the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ" (Thayer 511).

## Conclusion

God has given man the ability to resist evil (James 4:7-8). He has also given man the ability to choose between good and evil (James 1:13-14). However, all the good deeds one may do according to law will never save one (Galatians 3:10-12). All men sin at one point or another and ruin their perfection and are due God's wrath (Romans 6:23). Therefore, man is in desperate need of God's grace. God's grace is offered today to all those who will submit to His will. Those who exercise an obedient faith shall have their hope realized, not because they did the works, but because they recognized that obedience is a part of faith in God.

Noah was not saved by building the ark. Marching around the city of Jericho did not cause the walls to fall. Namaan's seven baths in the Jordan did not cleanse him. The pool of Siloam's waters did not give the blind man his sight. These all obtained God's favor, His grace, by complying with God's instructions. Therefore, man's work of faith does not cause grace; it is a condition for receiving God's grace! This is why Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that man is to obey His words (Cf. Matthew 7:21-27). The apostle John gives us a litmus test to determine whether or not you or I truly love God by saying,

*"Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I Jn. 5:2-3). One who truly loves God does His will. Again, John defines love saying, "this is love, that we should walk after His commandments" (II Jn. 6). Lastly, we must see that Jesus tells us that we can determine who the true honest people are by the way they live. The parable of the sower ends in Luke 8:15 by Jesus saying, "that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience." Grace and obedience are inseparably connected because grace instructs us to live godly!*

**Questions:**

- 1. Define the word “grace.”**
- 2. Do individuals have a part in receiving God’s grace?**

**Please explain your answer:**

- 3. Give at least 2 Biblical examples of people who obtained God’s favor by complying with his commands:**
- 4. What does grace “instruct” people to do? (Hint: Titus 2:11-12).**
- 5. Is there a manner of conduct the Christian should follow? (cf. I Timothy 6:11-14; Matthew 7:24-27)**

**If so, explain the conduct:**

- 6. Define the word righteousness.**
- 7. How are faith, grace, and obedience connected?**

# **Bibliography**

Thayer, J. H. "Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament" Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1996.