

Givers of Grace

[Ephesians 4:29](#)



I want to talk to you this morning about the grace of God and our responsibility to be givers of grace. Let's start by making sure that we have a biblical view of grace, for grace is at the very heart of the gospel. To not understand grace, is to not understand the gospel. Hopefully, you understand that we are saved by grace, and grace alone. This is what the Bible teaches:

being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (Romans 3:24 NASB)

The word “**justified**” means: “to declare righteous.” It a legal act on the part of God. We see here that we are justified “as a gift by His grace.” The word “gift” is the Greek word *dorean*. It means: “for nothing, gratuitously, gift-wise or with out a cause.” The cause of our justification is in God and not in us. The word “**grace**” means: “free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment.”

“As a gift by His grace” is redoubled to show that the act of justification is all of God. Nothing in this act of justification belongs to, or proceeds from man. Paul teaches this in his epistle to the Ephesians:

even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), (Ephesians 2:5 NASB)

Verse 5 says that grace is the cause of our salvation, whereas, verse 8 says that grace and nothing else is the cause:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB)

The only way anyone ever gets to heaven is by the grace of God. Yet the majority of people today who think they are going to heaven think they are going there because of something they do, or don't do. Men think that they can earn their way into heaven. But the Bible teaches that our salvation is all of grace and only of grace.

Grace stands in direct opposition to any supposed worthiness on our part. Please understand that grace and works are mutually exclusive:

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (Romans 11:6 NASB)

Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. (Romans 4:4 NASB)

Grace is God's free and unmerited favor. If you have to work for something, it is not free and it is not unmerited, it is earned. Our relationship with God is not based on merit; it is based only and completely

upon grace.

I think that most Christians understand that salvation is all of grace. We deplore and anathematize those who add works to grace. All Christians know that we are saved by grace alone but many think that once you are saved, you have to work to stay in God's favor. They tend to base their personal relationship with God, on their performance, instead of on His grace. This is wrong! All of the Christian life is by grace. My daily relationship with God, as well as my salvation is based on the infinite merit of Christ alone. John Newton, the writer of the hymn "Amazing Grace" put it this way, "*Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*" Grace saves, grace sustains.

The Bible teaches us that all of **our debts were paid in full by Jesus Christ**. And not only has the Christian's debt been paid in full, **there is no possibility of going into debt again**. Jesus paid the debt of all our sins: past, present, and future. This is GRACE!

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, (Colossians 2:13 NASB)

We are forgiven! This is true not only of our justification, but for our Christian lives as well. God is not keeping score, granting or withholding blessings on the basis of our performance. Our sin debts, all of them, have been paid by Jesus Christ.

All of the Christian life is a matter of grace. We are brought into God's eternal kingdom by grace; we are positionally and practically sanctified by grace; we are motivated to obedience by grace; we receive strength to live the Christian's life by grace; and we receive both temporal and spiritual blessings by grace. **The entire Christian life is lived by grace.**

I think that most Christians tend to base their personal relationship with God on their performance, instead of on His grace. Most Christians are legalistic in their walk with God. Living by grace means that you are free from the performance treadmill. It means that you do not have to try to earn God's approval.

Nothing you ever do will cause God to love you any more or any less. You are loved and accepted through the merit of Jesus Christ. Such a strong and unqualified statement about the love of God sounds dangerous, and could bring against me the charge of saying, in effect, that God doesn't care whether you sin or not.

But think about the alternative: God loves you if you are obedient and doesn't love you if you are disobedient. This is what many Christians believe. But if God's love is conditioned on our obedience, we are all in trouble. Remember what James said?

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10 NASB)

In order to be obedient, we would have to keep all the law, all the time. Who does this? We are never completely obedient. So, if God's love was contingent upon our obedience, God would never love us, for we are never completely obedient. We are accepted and loved by God, either on the merit of Jesus Christ or on the basis of our own performance. Which do you prefer? Thank God that our acceptance and love is based upon the merit of Jesus Christ alone.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19 NASB)

Jesus Christ rendered perfect obedience to God and you have received His righteousness by grace through faith. By His death Jesus completely satisfied the justice of God for all who trust Him, which required eternal death as the penalty for sin. The pictures that the Bible gives us of God's grace are that of complete and total forgiveness:

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB)

Do you see yourself as righteous as Jesus Christ? If you don't, you are not living by grace. If you are not as righteous as Christ, you are under the condemnation of God and headed for the Lake of Fire. But if you have trusted Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, you are no longer under the condemnation of God:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1 NASB)

We are not under the condemnation of God any longer, nor will we ever be because we are in CHRIST. Now if you have the KJV or NKJV you will notice that there is a qualifying phrase:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1 NKJV)

Many have interpreted this verse to mean that we are not condemned as long as we live right. Is that what it is saying? Is our condemnation or lack of it based on how we live? Is our not being condemned a result of our daily walk? All of a sudden this is not such a comforting verse. Which of these translations is right? Should we just pick the one we like best? The one that fits our theology best?

The modern translations are based on additions of the Greek text that go back to the theories of [Westcott and Hort](#), which wound up producing a text that is more like the manuscript we've recovered from ancient Egypt than it is like the majority of the surviving manuscripts, many of which are much later. And discussions, even in Hort's day and since then, have been over whether the Egyptian manuscripts represent a closer approximation to the original text or whether the majority of manuscripts do that. The Majority text has the phrase, "***who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.***" A very large majority of the manuscripts contain these words.

Textual criticism says that since condemnation refers to justification, then obviously the last phrase was an interpolation because justification is unconditional. But, the majority of texts have the phrase "***who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit***" in them. I believe that the Scriptures teach that our justification is unconditional, so how do we deal with this seemingly qualifying phrase?

I'm sure you would all admit that if not being condemned is based upon our daily walk, we are all in trouble. Yet, the better manuscripts say that, so now what?

The problem lies in our understanding of the phrase, “*who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*” Most Christians would define “**walking after the flesh**” as doing sinful things. But that is not how Paul uses them. For Paul “walking according to the flesh” is living under the Old Covenant and “walking according to the spirit” is living under the New Covenant. So, to be in Christ is to be walking according to the spirit. So this is not a qualifying phrase but a descriptive phrase.

To be in Christ is to walk according to the New Covenant. Everything He is and has, we are and have. Paul said in Colossians that we are free from accusation:

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- (Colossians 1:21-22 NASB

I like the way the NIV translates verse 22:

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation. (Colossians 1:22 NIV)

Does “beyond reproach” and “free from accusation” describe the way you think about yourself? If you don’t see yourself this way, you are not living by grace. May God help us all to understand that we are saved totally and completely by His amazing Grace.

We have seen thus far in our study that grace is; “Free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment.” Now, I want us to look at another aspect of grace; grace is also used in the Bible to mean: “**God’s power that enables us to deal with life’s circumstances.**”

This should be of interest to all of us. I don’t think that I need to tell any of you that life can be very difficult at times. As Christians we are not immune from the difficult circumstances of life. We struggle with sick and dying loved ones, unemployment, problems in the home, and financial struggles. We know how difficult life can be. Well, I want you to understand that In the midst of our adversity, we have a promise from God that will give us great comfort if we will believe it. God said,

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB)

John Calvin, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 12:9, said, “***Here the word grace does not mean as elsewhere God’s favor but is used by metonymy for the help of the Holy Spirit which comes to us from God’s undeserved favor.***”

Paul uses grace in the sense of “God’s power that enables us to deal with life’s circumstances” in:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10 NASB)

We use the word grace in this sense in modern speech. Have you ever heard anyone say, “By God’s grace I was able to remain calm”? When we use the word grace this way, we are referring to “God’s power that

enables us to deal with life's circumstances." In other words, apart from the enabling power of God, I would never have been able to do this or that. We see this same idea in:

I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:12-13 NASB)

What Paul is saying here is that whatever circumstance he finds himself in, he can handle it through God's enabling power. The words "by His grace" could be substituted for "through Him who strengthens me." The idea is the same. Verse 13 could be read, "**I can do all things by His grace.**" "By His grace" and "through Him who strengthens me" express an identical thought.

So, the word grace as used in the New Testament, expresses two related meanings. First, it is "Free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment." Second, it is "God's power that enables us to deal with life's circumstances." The second meaning is encompassed in the first because God's enabling power is part of His unmerited favor. So, part of God's unmerited favor is the enabling power He gives us. There is a distinction, but they are related.

Does the power of God that enables you to deal with life's circumstances interest you? Do you want the grace of God to enable you to deal with life? I'm sure that every Christian does. So how do we get it? The Bible teaches that we must appropriate God's grace:

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:1 NASB)

The verb "be strong" is in the imperative mood; that is, it expresses a command. Paul wanted Timothy to do something; he wanted Timothy to appropriate God's grace and be strong in it. We need grace, enabling power to live our lives. By "appropriating God's grace," I mean to take possession of the divine strength He has made available to us in Christ. We do this by applying the "**means** of grace". Now, the million dollar question is: What are these means that bring us God's grace? What is it that we can do to bring God's grace into our lives?

Let me answer that question in one word and then expound upon that word— **humility!** We appropriate the grace of God by humility. What we must understand is that **pride stands in direct opposition to grace:**

You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. (1 Peter 5:5 NASB)

Please notice that this verse is both a warning to the proud and a promise to the humble. Pride is an attitude of self-sufficiency toward God. Humility is an acknowledgment that we are weak, unworthy, and inadequate. To the humble, God promises grace.

This principle runs throughout Scripture— God brings the proud low, but he exalts the humble. **Biblically, humility is dependence upon God and submission to His will.** A humble person realizes that he is dependant upon God for all he is, has, and does.

How do we humble ourselves before God? We need to know this. If the humble receive grace, we must know how to be humble. We need grace, enabling power to live our lives. We must learn how to appropriate the grace of God. By “appropriating God’s grace,” I mean to take possession of the divine strength He has made available to us in Christ. God uses **means** to bring us His grace. We appropriate grace through humility and we do this through applying the means God has given us. We see in the Word that there are three things that are a means of grace: 1. Word of God; 2. Prayer; 3. Ministry of others.

1. WORD OF GOD:

Why is it important for us as Christians to read and study the Bible? It is important because the Bible is a means of appropriating God’s grace— His enabling power.

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32 NASB)

The reference here is to the ongoing use of Scripture in our daily lives to build us up in the Christian faith. Paul calls it, “The word of His grace,” the word through which we come to understand and appropriate God’s grace in our daily lives.

The Bible is the only source of truth we have about God.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; (2 Timothy 3:16 NASB)

Paul is saying to Timothy that the Bible comes from God. He is its ultimate author. The Bible provides information that is not available anywhere else. The Bible is divine self-disclosure. In it the mind of God is revealed on many matters. With knowledge of Scripture, we do not have to rely on secondhand information or bare speculation to learn who God is and what he values. In the Bible, God reveals Himself.

If we are to appropriate the grace of God, then, we must spend time in our Bibles. We must seek to know and understand the great truths of Scripture.

God uses Scripture to mediate His grace to us. R.C.H. Lenski said, ***“God and the Word of his grace always go together; God lets his grace flow out through that Word.”***

If we are to appropriate the grace of God, then, we must regularly expose ourselves directly to the word of God. We don’t earn God’s blessing by reading His word. But a regular intake of God’s word is necessary to sustain a healthy spiritual life and to appropriate His grace.

2. PRAYER:

Prayer is another means of grace. Please look at:

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16 NASB)

This is a call to prayer. We obtain grace to help in time of need—this is God’s enabling power through prayer. We are to ask for grace—this is the power to deal with life’s circumstances. The disciples went to God’s throne of grace in prayer when they had been commanded by the Jewish rulers not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus:

"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, (Acts 4:29 NASB)

The NIV puts it this way:

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. (Acts 4:29 NIV)

They went to God in prayer for the enabling power, grace, to be able to speak boldly for Christ in the midst of great opposition. Remember, we said that grace was: **“God’s power that enables us to deal with life’s circumstances.”** Their circumstances were more than they could handle, so, they went to God in prayer for grace. They appropriated God’s grace through prayer.

Most of you are probably familiar with the idea that we appropriate God’s grace through Bible study and prayer, but I don’t think too many people understand the third one;

3. THE MINISTRY OF OTHERS:

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29 NASB)

What is the means of grace here? The ministry of other believers. God uses us as givers of grace. Are you aware that you can be a means of grace in another believer’s life? That is a very sobering thought. I can impart grace to a fellow believer! Peter put it this way:

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10 NASB)

The Greek word for “gift” here is *charisma*, it has the idea of: “grace.” We have received grace, and we are to minister grace to each other. Think about this for a minute. How important is God’s grace to you? We can’t make it through one day apart from the grace of God. We need God’s enabling power to live our lives, and this power, this grace can come to us through the ministry of others.

Now you might be thinking, “How is this possible?” Have you ever been in the pit of despair, being overcome by your circumstances? I have. And in those times, God uses His word to strengthen me, and He uses prayer. But He also uses “fellow believers.” When I think of times of trial, I remember the comfort that I received from my friends. Friends who gave me encouraging words, words of support, words of comfort. My friends reminded me of what I knew the scripture said, and reminded me of God’s faithfulness. My friends ministered grace to me. They were used of God as a means of grace. Ministering to one another in time of need is an important means by which the Lord mediates His grace to us.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. 10 For if either of

them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NASB)

When you live independent of the corporate community, when you don't spend time with other believers, you cut off a means of the grace of God. How sad it is for the person who has no one to minister grace to them in their time of need.

During the time David was hiding from Saul, who was trying to kill him, he fled to the cave Adullam. While in that cave, he wrote Psalm 142, a cry of distress to God. Notice verse 4:

Look to the right and see; For there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for me; No one cares for my soul. (Psalms 142:4 NASB)

How sad to think that no one cares for your soul. How sad to have no one to minister God's grace to you.

Grace is available to meet our every need, to get us through every circumstance, to empower us for every task. **But we must appropriate it.** We must spend time in God's Word, and in prayer, and we must spend time with each other.

Let me give you some practical suggestions and some specific activities that will help us minister grace to one another.

1. Share biblical truth with one another.

Most of the time when we get together, we talk about everything except the Scriptures and our God. We talk about our jobs, favorite sports, hobbies, and the weather. We talk about everything except what God is teaching us from His Word and through His providential working in our lives. In my experience, I haven't found many believers who are willing to have true fellowship. But when I have found it, it has been refreshing and joyous.

Several years ago I was sitting at my kitchen table discussing the Bible with a lady who was visiting from out of town. She commented on how much she had enjoyed our time of fellowship. She attends a very large, very active church in her home town. I asked her how much time she spends with friends from her church talking about the Bible and what God is doing in their lives. She said, "None." So many people are involved in church but not in fellowship with their God or other believers.

We need to get into the Word of God and then share with others what God is teaching us. I really enjoy and look forward to our testimony times, because I love hearing you share what God is teaching you. We all face the same struggles, and as you share your victories, I am encouraged.

As we share biblical truth with each other, we minister grace to each other:

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:12-13 NASB)

Here we see that an important, no, a vital means of withstanding the enticement to apostasy is that of

mutual exhortation - "...encourage one another day after day...." The word "encourage" is *parakaleo*, [par-ak-al-eh'-o] which means: "**to encourage, comfort, beseech, to beg.**" It's the same word used for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is not a negative warning but a positive encouragement.

How often are we to exhort each other? "Day after day" exhortation is required because the fight of faith is "daily." Temptation is "daily." The influence the world has upon us is experienced "daily." Our need for spiritual sustenance is "daily." All of this assumes frequent contact with the people of God. Thus, the Holy Spirit reminds us to prod one another heavenward every day. Let our speech and our manners be such toward each other as to give grace.

What is the alternative to daily exhortation in the Lord? ***"lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."*** The person that chooses to avoid daily exhortation, allowing his mind to be unaffected by the truth of God, will soon be effected by sin.

Calvin said, *"As by nature we are prone to fall into evil, we have need of various helps to help us in the fear of God. Unless our faith is repeatedly encouraged, it lies dormant; unless it is warmed, it grows cold; unless it is aroused, it gets numb."*

The duty of exhorting one another is neglected by most of us. We're faithful to judge and criticize others, but we're not so faithful to encourage them. One of the best ways we can encourage one another is with the Scriptures. We are to share biblical truth with each other.

Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17 NASB)

As we share Scripture with each other, we are sharpened and encouraged. We need each other, we need encouragement as we face trials. An encouraging word can give us the strength we need to stand.

J.I. Packer said, *"We should not think of our fellowship with other Christians as a spiritual luxury, an optional addition to the exercises of private devotion. We should recognize rather that such fellowship is a spiritual necessity; for God has made us in such a way that our fellowship with himself is fed by our fellowship with fellow-Christians, and requires to be so fed constantly for its own deepening and enrichment."*

Another way in which we minister grace to one another is by:

2. **Sharing our sins, failures, and discouragements.**

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (James 5:16 NASB)

We hesitate to share our sins and our failures with each other, don't we? Why? I guess we want people to think well of us, and we don't want them to know that we fail. That is just our pride. We forget the truth of:

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13 NASB)

We are not going through any experience that is new or unique, we all face common trials, and we all fail. Sharing our failures can help others to see that they aren't alone in their failures.

Believers, I think we all understand how important God's grace is to our lives. What I want you to see today is that **YOU are to be a giver of that grace!** I want each of you to think of yourselves as "givers of grace". What an influence we could have if we all lived in light of the fact that we are to be giving grace to each other. And by grace I mean: **"God's power that enables us to deal with life's circumstances."**

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on August 26, 2007. Tape #379.



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