

Doctrine of God Part 19 - The Grace of God

Psalm 145:8...Heb channun

⁸The Lord is gracious and merciful;
Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.

⁹The Lord is good to all,
And His mercies are over all His works.

1 Peter 5:10...Gk charis

⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. ¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you. ¹¹To Him *be* dominion forever and ever. Amen.

D H Kuiper on The God of All Grace

"But the God of all grace, Who hath called you unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." I Peter 5:10-11

The God of our salvation is the God of all grace! This amazing attribute of God is rather well known to the believer, for he understands himself to be saved for one reason and that is the grace of God. (See Ephesians 2:8) ...

When the apostle Peter wrote his first general Epistle, he certainly had in mind the encouragement and comfort of those called to be saints. He wrote the letter to stir up the church unto a contemplation of "the God of all grace"!

The Biblical terms for grace are important for us to understand. Basically the terms mean that which is pleasant, attractive, or beautiful; not a superficial beauty of course, but a beauty that is rooted in ethical goodness and purity.

The terms also refer to a pleasant attitude or disposition that one may have toward another. We read, for example, that Noah and the virgin Mary found grace in the eyes of God.

Thirdly, and in close connection with the above, grace has the meaning in Scripture of undeserved favor or unmerited goodness that someone shows to another. When Paul writes in Eph. 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved ..." he means to say, "you are saved without any merit whatever, you do not deserve to be saved at all, but you are!"

With this understanding of the word grace, we can see that the grace of God is a sovereign or freely determined grace. Consider, first, that those upon whom God confers His grace are in themselves unlovely, unpleasant, and ethically ugly and impure. We are sinful, we have forfeited every right to the favor and blessing of God, we deserve only to be separated from God forever. But God, in His grace, decides to bestow upon such undeserving sinners life, spiritual benefits, and everlasting glory! **God decides to give the undeserving the very opposite of what they deserve! Thus, grace stands in Scripture opposed to works, wages, or merit.** And grace is synonymous with reward, free gift, inheritance. **Beware that you do not attempt to change grace into works;** beware that as you confess salvation by grace, you are not really meaning salvation by works. Today, as always, people like to play around with words and their meanings, but with the apostle Paul we must call for an end to this: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Romans 11:6)

That God's grace is a sovereign, freely determined grace, is shown, secondly, by the fact that grace is not for every one, but is God's amazing gift only for His people, the elect. In Exodus 33 God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." **God gives His precious grace, not to those who will to receive it, not to those who make themselves worthy of it, but to those whomsoever He pleases. It is a matter of the good pleasure of His will!**

Next let's look into the matter of God being the God of all grace. This implies, first, that God is gracious, beautiful, desirable, and pleasant in Himself. He is ethically pure and lovely! (See Psalm 27:4 and Psalm 16:11)

Secondly, the God of all grace is the source and author of all grace. Wherever you find true beauty, real attractiveness, spiritual loveliness and charm, you may be sure that it is because God is there and God has worked! And if God is not present then there is no beauty, truth, or purity!

With the words "God of all grace", Peter has in mind especially the idea that there are different aspects to, different stages of, various manifestations of, the grace of God. Grace is very rich! Grace is always sufficient for the believer and for the Church as a whole. When the truth of the gospel is under attack, then we need the grace of courage and the grace of spiritual understanding and knowledge. When the evil one tempts us in our daily life, trying to conform us and our children to this world then we need the grace of wisdom and holiness. When we are under heavy loads of sickness and pain, adversity and want, disappointment and loneliness, we stand in need of grace to be patient, content, and humble.

Of all these spiritual graces, God is the author, the giver, and the worker by His Spirit. In that way His grace becomes sufficient unto each day.

God reveals His manifold grace by "calling us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus". God's eternal glory is the radiation of His matchless virtues in the new creation, when His church will not only observe that divine glory, but shall actually participate in having it revealed in and through her. (See Romans 8:18) **All the grace, the beauty, the attractiveness, the truth, that belongs to God is in the man Christ Jesus. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. And because Christ dwells in us and we in Him, as believers, the glory of God in Christ is ours; it is in us! We have and shall never lose the glory of God, now in principle, and one day in final perfection.**

We have such glory because God has called us, and God has called us with a gracious calling. It is here that it makes all the difference in the world whether we view the grace of God as resistible or irresistible. If the calling that comes through Christ and His Gospel is be resistible grace, then it is weak and uncertain, and may be compared to an invitation, an offer, or some kind of pleading. **But if the calling comes to us from Christ and His preached Gospel is by irresistible grace, then it is powerful and sure, and can only be compared to a summons, a command, and a divine imperative!** The difference between the Arminian and the Calvinist on this point, as on all others, is great. **The Arminian has a weak grace, he has a grace that tries to accomplish great things, but man is able to resist and frustrate that grace. But the Calvinistic or Reformed, truth of Scripture teaches an irresistible grace and an irresistible calling! Whom God calls by His Word and Spirit, without exception, comes to God! Whom God calls, without exception, are translated out of this world into the kingdom of His dear Son.** Many are called (that is, hear the message of the Gospel with their ears), but few are chosen (that is, have that message of the Gospel applied to their hearts by the Spirit so that they repent, believe, and live forever).

Have you been called by God savingly out of darkness into marvelous light? If so, that calling results in suffering for you. The calling is into fellowship with Christ and His suffering. Those sufferings are on the foreground in I Peter 5; verse nine speaks of "the same afflictions (which) are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." And verse 10 teaches that we shall be perfected "after that we have suffered a while." **Concerning this suffering we ought to note several points. First, we do not suffer alone but we may be assured that all the brethren undergo this suffering for Christ's sake. Further, it is for a little while, or as Paul writes elsewhere "Our light afflictions, which is but for a moment." (I Cor. 4:17-18) Finally, our present sufferings are necessary for us to endure. They work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Suffering works glory, and it is impossible to receive the glory God has prepared for us except through a certain measure of tribulation.**

An important question for us is, Do we suffer, do we have affliction in this world as the brethren do? We do not have in mind physical infirmities and pains; we do not have in mind suffering that we bring upon ourselves, perhaps because of a wagging tongue. But **we mean suffering that comes to us because the God of all grace has separated us from the world, has given us a place in the Church of Christ, and has made us children of light in a world of darkness. Is that true of us, or are we strangers to that? It seems that many in the church don't experience what the Word of God insists is the only way of life for the pilgrim Christian. Why is that? The answer is compromise. We are confronted by some issue, by the necessity of making a certain decision; we know that if we take the way of faithfulness we will involve ourselves in all kinds of difficulties and troubles. And so we take the easy way out by making some kind of a compromise.** We'll avoid the unpleasantness. We won't testify against sin, we won't avoid the company of evil men, we won't pray in public places. We won't take a stand on important issues of life **in short, we refuse to live antithetically in this present evil world. And that's no good!** For one thing that puts us out of touch with the brethren, with our fellow saints, who need us in the time of trial. for another thing, by adopting compromising positions in various ways, we fail to testify to the glory of God's grace, that it is sufficient at all times.

The God of all grace promises us, as we face many temptations and afflictions in life, that after He has caused us to suffer a little while, He will make us perfect or finish us. And all these hardships which we are called upon to endure are the tools which God uses to accomplish that perfecting of us. Thus, even hardships must be seen as manifestations of the grace of God to His children. God promises to perfect each saint by establishing, strengthening, settling him in the faith no matter what the hardship or opposition.

Let us lay hold of that promise, doubting nothing. And let us join the apostle in this doxology: To that God of all grace, beautiful, pleasant, the longing of my heart and soul, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

John 1:14, 16-17...the greatest manifestation of grace

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John *testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" ¹⁶ For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ 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, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

2 Timothy 1:9

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, ¹⁰ but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel

cf Deut 7:7-8

⁷ “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Ephesians 1:6

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Spurgeon on our response to Gods grace...

Christ will be master of the heart, and sin must be mortified. If your life is unholy, then your heart is unchanged, and you are an unsaved person. The Savior will sanctify His people, renew them, give them a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness. The grace that does not make a man better than others is a worthless counterfeit. Christ saves His people, not IN their sins, but FROM their sins. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

cf Titus 2:11-13

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Hebrews 4:16

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ 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 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Acts 20:24

²⁴ But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

Octavius Winslow on The God of All Grace

"The God of all grace." 1 Peter 5:10

There is not, perhaps, in the Bible a word more expressive, or, to the believing ear, one more sweet, than the word GRACE. It at once discloses the secret of salvation, defines the underlying principle of redeeming mercy, and indicates the golden thread which runs throughout and knits together all the great doctrines of the gospel, emphatically designated the "gospel of the grace of God." **The definition of the word is simple as it is precious. It means, God's good-will and free favor to man, in and through Christ Jesus.** Thus is it employed, "By grace you are saved;" "The grace of God that brings salvation;" "It is of faith, that it might be by grace;" "By the grace of God I am what I am;" "We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

This principle of God's favor, or free grace, as we have just remarked, underlies and binds together all the great truths indicated by the previous titles of God. The whole plan of salvation is based upon free grace, or, in other words, God's good-will and unpurchased favor to sinners. This idea, of course, repudiates and ignores all worth and worthiness whatever on the part of the creature, constituting man God's debtor, instead of- as the scheme of salvation by human merit does- God being a debtor to man. Let this not be lost sight of, that salvation by works lays God under obligation to the creature, whereas salvation by grace lays the creature under eternal obligation to God.

Human merit, therefore, is entirely excluded as an element entering into our salvation; the whole scheme, from first to last, being by grace. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace."

As "the God of all grace," the grace He has so graciously revealed to sinners, is in Him AN ESSENTIAL PROPERTY. It is not grace inspired by our sinfulness, or moved to its display by anything on our part. No condition of ours, however abject and miserable, originated or elicits it. It dwells in Him as essentially as His own essence. He would not be God, if He were not the God of all grace. He must cease to be God were He to cease to be gracious.

Listen to His own words thus portraying Himself: "The Lord God merciful and gracious." Not so independently, and spontaneously, and freely do light and heat flow from the sun, as does saving grace from the nature of God to poor sinners. God cannot act but His grace displays itself in some one of its endless forms.

What is forgiveness, but God's grace remitting our sins? What is justification, but God's grace accepting our persons? What is sanctification, but God's grace purifying our hearts? What is adoption, but God's grace making us sons? What is our final salvation, but God's grace keeping us from falling, and preserving us into His eternal kingdom? Thus, each round of the ladder that lifts us from the mouth of hell to the gate of heaven, is an unfolding of the boundless grace of God to lost sinners, vile, graceless, and hell-deserving.

Do you think, then, that coming to God by Jesus Christ, and casting yourself upon His grace as a poor, lost, worthless sinner, He will cast you off? Never! God may cast down a poor soul— and this He often does in love, to lay it low, even to the dust, that he may learn that salvation, from first to last, is of His free grace— but He will never cast off a poor soul that has fled to the asylum of His mercy, that has cast himself upon His boundless grace to sinners. He is too gracious, too divinely, essentially gracious for this. **He must cease to be God if He cease to be gracious, and He must cease to be gracious if He refuse to receive and save a poor, broken-hearted sinner who casts himself on that grace.**

Yes, afflicted and sorrowing one, the God of all grace is the God of all comfort, and has deposited in Christ all comfort for you. He knows the nature of your sorrow— for He sent it. He marks the pressure of your cross— for He imposed it. He is acquainted with the bitterness of your cup— for He mixed it. All His promises of succour and support are Yes, and Amen in Christ Jesus. All the tenderness, the compassion, the sympathy, the grace that it pleased the Father should dwell in Christ, is designed for your personal and present sorrow....Live, then, upon this God of all grace. Remember, there is no limit to its extent— it is "ALL grace." Take your heart to God through Christ, and He will fill it with every blessing you ask, with every grace you need. Your sins, your needs, your trials, your temptations, your sorrows, can never exceed the "ALL grace" that dwells in God, and which Jesus waits to communicate. Go with an empty hand— go with the exhausted vessel— go with the often-told tale of grief— go with the old, old story of

backsliding, and unworthiness, and need; only go to Jesus, and sink your vessel, be it large or small, in His fathomless ocean of grace, and you shall "find grace to help you in every time of need."

Listen to His cheering words; "My grace is sufficient for you." You are, perhaps, anticipating with fear the hour of death. It is, indeed, a solemn thing, even for a Christian, to die. But do not forget that our God is the God of all dying, as of all living grace. And that, when the hour is come for your departure out of this world to go unto the Father, the grace that was all-sufficient for the trials, and sorrows, and sins of life, will be all-sufficient for the demands and solemnities of death.

Do not forget that Christ does not give us grace in hand for future difficulties, but reserves it for the time of its requirement, and that, when death comes to you, Jesus will come with it, and you shall not see death, but Jesus only. And then will be experienced the last and most solemn and precious fulfillment of His promise, "my grace is sufficient for you."

Octavius Winslow

The Grace of God by J. I. Packer

What is it that hinders so many who profess to believe in grace from really doing so? Why does the theme mean so little even to some who talk about it a great deal? The root of the trouble seems to be misbelief about the basic relationship between a person and God – misbelief rooted not just in the mind but in the heart, at the deeper level of things that we never question because we always take them for granted. **There are four crucial truths in this realm which the doctrine of grace presupposes, and if they are not acknowledged and felt in one's heart, clear faith in God's grace becomes impossible. Unhappily, the spirit of our age is as directly opposed to them as it well could be. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that faith in grace is a rarity today. The four truths are these:**

1. **The moral ill-desert of man.** Modern men and women, conscious of their tremendous scientific achievements in recent years, naturally incline to a high opinion of themselves. They view material wealth as in any case more important than moral character, and in the moral realm they are resolutely kind to themselves, treating small virtues as compensating for great vices and refusing to take seriously the idea that, morally speaking, there is anything much wrong with them.

...Then, as pagans do (and modern man's heart is pagan - make no mistake about that), they imagine God as a magnified image of themselves and assume that God shares his own complacency about himself. The thought of themselves as creatures fallen from God's image, rebels against God's rule, guilty and unclean in God's sight, fit only for God's condemnation, never enters their heads.

2. The retributive justice of God. The way of modern men and women is to turn a blind eye to all wrongdoing as long as they safely can. They tolerate it in others, feeling that there, but for the accident of circumstance, go they themselves...The accepted maxim seems to be that as long as evil can be ignored, it should be; one should punish only as a last resort, and then only so far as is necessary to prevent the evil from having too grievous social consequences. Willingness to tolerate and indulge evil up to the limit is seen as a virtue, while living by fixed principals of right and wrong is censured by some as doubtfully moral....Yet the Bible insists throughout that this world which God in his goodness has made is a moral world, one in which retribution is as basic a fact as breathing.

God is the Judge of all the earth, and he will do right, vindicating the innocent, if such their be, but punishing (in the Bible Phrase visiting their sins upon) lawbreakers (see Gen 18.25). God is not true to himself unless he punishes sin. And unless one knows and feels the truth of this fact, that wrongdoers have no natural hope of anything from God but retributive judgment, one can never share the Biblical faith in divine grace.

3. The spiritual impotence of man. A whole technique of business relations has been built up in recent years on the principal of putting the other person in a position where he cannot decently say no. This has confirmed modern men and women in the faith which has animated pagan religion ever since there was such a thing – namely, the belief that we can repair our own relationship with God by putting God in a position where he cannot say no anymore. Ancient pagans thought to do this by multiplying gifts and sacrifices; modern pagans seek to do it by churchmanship and morality. Conceding that they are not perfect, they still have no doubt that respectability henceforth will guarantee God’s acceptance of them in the end, whatever they may have done in the past. But the Bible position is as stated by Toplady:

Not the labours of my hand
Can fulfill thy law’s demand
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone

Leading to the admission of one’s own helplessness and to the conclusion:
Thou must save, and thou alone.

4. The sovereign freedom of God. Ancient paganism thought of each God as bound to his worshipers by bonds of self-interest, because he depended on their service and gifts for his welfare. Modern paganism has at the back of its mind a similar feeling that God is somehow obliged to love and help us, little though we deserve it. This was the feeling voiced by the French freethinker who died muttering “God will forgive – that’s his job.” But this feeling is not well founded. The God of the Bible does not depend on his human creatures for his well being (see Ps 50:8 – 13; Acts 17:25), nor, now that we have sinned, is he bound to show us favor.