

## Foundational Doctrines: Grace

(Ephesians 2:8-9)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to talk about a foundational doctrine—the most important doctrine ever revealed. That doctrine is God’s grace that brings salvation.
  - A. It is the theme of the Bible and the base upon which God’s work among humans is built.
  - B. It explains why it can be said of God, the holy and righteous lawgiver and judge of the world, that He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).
  - C. It sums up God’s saving plan (Eph. 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”).
2. In order to examine, and hopefully marvel at, God’s grace, I want to talk about...
  - A. Grace defined
  - B. The human condition—or why grace is needed.
  - C. Salvation by grace.

### BODY:

#### **I. Grace defined:**

- A. Grace (*χάρις*, *charis*) is used in the Scripture in at least two different ways.
- B. First, it is used of how we approach and are to affect others.
  1. Defined:
    - a. **Thayer** – That which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness
    - b. **BDAG** – Graciousness, attractiveness
  2. This use of *charis/grace* is found in connection with how we control our speech and actions.
    - a. Eph. 4:29 – “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, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”
    - b. Col. 4:6 – “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”
  3. Of course, God’s approach toward us is full of grace, being lovely and kind, while also resulting in joy, delight, pleasure, etc.
- C. Second, it is used of showing favor toward another, especially when it is not deserved.
  1. **Thayer** – Goodwill, loving kindness, favor of God, even on the undeserving.
  2. **BDAG** – Favor, gracious care or help, goodwill...that which one grants to another, the action of one who volunteers to do...what he is not bound
  3. In most N.T. cases *charis/grace* addresses *God’s* favor towards us, and goes so much further than being sweet, or charming, or delightful. God’s grace involves:
    - a. **Forgiveness** of our sins/trespasses (Eph. 1:7 – “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace”).
      - i. I want to talk about forgiveness in the near future, seeing it is so incredible.
      - ii. But grace means the reality of forgiveness!
    - b. **Salvation:**
      - i. Eph. 2:8 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”
      - ii. Titus 2:11 – “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men”
      - iii. God does not forgive and leave us to die. His grace means he forgives and saves!
  4. Yet, to understand this grace in the fullest sense, we need to have a practical understanding of its importance in our lives. To do that we need to understand the human condition.

#### **II. The human condition—why grace is needed**

- A. We are sinners:
  1. Every accountable human finds him/herself guilty of sin (Rom. 3:9, 23 – “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin...<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”).

- a. This is true no matter who you are, no matter if your life might seem to be, or even be, better than others (2 Cor. 10:12 – “For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those **who commend themselves**; but when they **measure themselves by themselves** and compare themselves with themselves, they **are without understanding**.”).
  - b. The standard is God’s holiness (1 Pet. 1:14-16 – “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,<sup>15</sup> but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;<sup>16</sup> because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”).
    - i. This is the standard to which God has called everyone to live.
    - ii. So, whether I live a “better” live than the person down the road is not going to change the fact that I have not lived up to the standard of the Holy God.
2. And, because all have fallen short of that standard, we are worthy of God’s wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3 – “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,<sup>2</sup> in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.<sup>3</sup> Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath, even as the rest**.”).
- B. So, we are in a serious predicament!
1. Our ***sin condemns us***, though that is not what we want, and we cannot fix it on our own.
  2. For, to seek to be justified by works, by how well we have done what God commands, is to put ourselves under a **curse** (Gal. 3:10-11 – “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who **does not abide by all things** written in the book of the law, **to perform them**.”<sup>11</sup> Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “The righteous man shall **live by faith**.”).
    - a. In order to justify oneself, or *make oneself* righteous before God, one would have to perfectly obey God’s will from beginning to end. You could never sin!
    - b. That is why Paul says anyone trying to get to heaven by the good one does is cursed, seeing no one is perfect. No one beside Jesus has lived their life perfectly.
  3. Our sin negates the possibility of us saving ourselves, of us justifying ourselves.
    - a. For, acts of obedience to God cannot take away sin (Rom. 3:20 – “because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”).
    - b. Although this references specially the O.T. law, it is true of any law, including the law of Christ.
      - i. God’s law, since it is law, shares a characteristic true of all law, which is that once you violate it, you are condemned by it as a “law-breaker.”
      - ii. No amount of law-keeping from that point forward can change this!
      - iii. Ex: A person who murders is condemned by the law as a murderer.
        - 1) A though that person may keep all the laws, including not to murder, from that point forward, the law still says they are a murderer!
        - 2) So, when we violate God’s law, which is to sin, we cannot erase that by keeping the rest of God’s law from that point forward, even if we did so perfectly!
        - 3) Once violated, God’s law still says a sinner is a sinner!
- C. So, what is to be done about our sin?
1. We are rightfully deserving of condemnation by our sin and have no resources or remedy of our own to address our condition.
  2. So what we need is some special **favor** from God that **we do not deserve**. What we need is **grace**.
  3. Without His grace we are children of wrath, having nothing to hope for but God’s wrath!

### III. Salvation by grace!

- A. What an amazing thing it is that humans can speak of it.
- B. It means that:
1. God chose to show favor and help the helpless (Rom. 5:6-9 – “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. <sup>8</sup> But God **demonstrates His own love toward us**, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been **justified by His blood**, we shall be **saved from the wrath of God through Him.**”).
  2. God chose to show loving favor and justify unlovely sinners if they will trust in the work of another (Rom. 3:21-26 – “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> **even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> **being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus**”).
    - a. God has made it so tha salvation is not about me and my abilities.
    - b. I can actually be saved by trusting in the work of another—by trusting in the saving work of God done through Jesus the Christ!
    - c. I struggle, maybe as do most of us, to understand how amazing that is!
  3. God has chosen to take servants of sin and make them heirs of eternal life (Titus 3:3-7 – “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, <sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His **mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that **being justified by His grace** we would be **made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**”).
  4. God chose to offer the **free gift** of justification to life, a most precious and costly gift.
    - a. The gift (Rom. 6:22-23 – “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in **sanctification**, and the outcome, **eternal life.** <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”).
    - b. Not free to God (Heb. 2:9 – “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the **suffering of death** crowned with glory and honor, so that by the **grace of God He might taste death for everyone.**”).
  5. God chose to save us in grace.
    - a. That grace has made it possible for sinners like you and me to be justified without it being dependent on our ability to keep His law perfectly.
    - b. That grace means we can actually be justified, pronounced righteous, by trusting in the **work of someone else**—in the redemptive work of **Jesus**.
    - c. How do we even begin to comprehend what we owe God? I do not know!
- C. Salvation by grace must be **received**! God will not force His grace upon you!
1. By grace you can be a **child of God**, but you must receive it **by faith** (Jn. 1:12-13 – “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”).
    - a. It has nothing to do with who you are. For, we are all a sinners!
    - b. It has to do with God’s willingness to give grace to save you by faith in Jesus’ name.
  2. By grace you can be **saved**, but you must **choose** it (Acts 2:36-41 – “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> Peter said to them,

“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” <sup>40</sup> And with **many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them**, saying, **“Be saved from this perverse generation!”** <sup>41</sup> So then, those who **had received his word** were **baptized**; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”).

- a. Salvation by grace requires faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ—your Savior (2:36).
  - b. Salvation by grace that forgives sin requires obedience to the commands to repent and to be baptized (2:38).
  - c. Salvation by grace comes to those who choose to “be saved from this perverse generation” and are baptized, resulting in being added to Christ (2:41).
3. Choosing to receive grace means choosing to submit to God in baptism.
- a. Seen in Paul’s conversion (Acts 22:12-16 – “A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, <sup>13</sup> came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. <sup>14</sup> And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. <sup>15</sup> For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”).
  - i. Despite seeing the Lord on the road to Damascus
  - ii. Despite acknowledging Jesus was His Lord (9:6).
  - iii. Despite doing what the Lord said and going and waiting in Damascus (9:8).
  - iv. Despite fasting for three days in repentance (9:9)
  - v. Despite praying (Acts 9:11)
  - vi. Despite all of that, Saul still needed to be baptized to wash away His sins (9:18; 22:16).
  - b. Why, because baptism brings on into Christ and allows one to be buried with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4 – “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection”). Being in the likeness of his death happens only in baptism!
  - c. Why, because baptism shows faith in the working of God power to raise us from death in sin with Christ by forgiving us of our sins (Col. 2:11-13 – “and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; <sup>12</sup> having been **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you were also **raised up with Him through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> 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**”).
  - d. Until one is willing to submit in faith to baptism...
    - i. There is no entrance into Christ and his death where God’s grace is found.
    - ii. There is no burial and resurrection to life with Christ which God’s grace brings.
    - iii. There is no spiritual circumcision resulting purity through forgiveness of sins.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. God want you to know His grace and receive it today in faith in Christ and obedience to His will.
2. I urge you to receive God’s word of grace that is truly able to save sinners and give life (Acts 20:32).

3. If you are a faithful Christian, I leave you with Peter's words (1 Pet. 1:13 – “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”).
4. If you are a sinner, will you come to Jesus by B-R-C-B?