

The Grace of God

I. Introduction

Sometimes people do not understand what is meant by the “grace” of God. Strong’s concordance stated that grace (#2580) comes from a Hebrew word that means graciousness, kindness, or favor. It originated from another Hebrew word (#2603) meaning to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior. An example would be a mother that bends down to pick up a crying baby, or a person that helps a wounded animal, or Princess Diana who visited the sick and elderly.

In the New Testament, grace comes from the Greek word (Strong’s #5485), meaning graciousness of manner or act; especially *the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life*; benefit or favor.

This study will concentrate on examples of God’s grace on individuals in Bible, the grace bestowed on Jesus, and the grace lavished on believers because of Jesus. Dispensations, covenants, and warnings given to believers concerning God’s grace will be examined.

II. Grace in the Old Testament

A. Noah escaped the Flood

Gen 6:8-9, 22 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. 9...Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God....22Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Just-Strong’s 6662-lawful, right, righteous

Perfect-Strong’s 8549-upright, without spot or blemish, undefiled, blameless

Noah was lawful, blameless, and obedient; he found grace and escaped the flood.

B. Lot escaped the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Gen 19:19 Behold now, thy servant [Lot] hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

God sent angels to rescue Abraham’s nephew, Lot, from the judgment of Sodom.

C. Moses and the Lord talked face to face

Ex 33:17 And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

The Lord talked to Moses and knew him by name.

D. Gideon invited the Lord to stay

Jud 6:17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

The Lord waited while Gideon prepared an offering to Him, and then disappeared in smoke.

III. Grace on Jesus

A. As a Child

Lk 2:40 And the child [Jesus] grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

The grace of God the Father was on Jesus His Son from Jesus' childhood.

B. As an Adult

Jn 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The grace of God the Father was on Jesus the Son always.

IV. Grace on Believers

A. Through Jesus we have abundant grace:

Jn 1:16-17 16And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace [grace heaped on grace]. 17For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

B. Grace is a gift to all believers

Eph 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

John said the Lord heaped abundant grace on us through Jesus; Paul said grace is a gift.

V. Grace in the Lives of Early Believers

A. Grace was on them all

Acts 4:33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

There was grace on ALL of them, not just the Apostles.

B. They had Power and Boldness

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

They experienced power, filling of the Holy Ghost, and spoke the Word with boldness

C. They experienced Unity and Sharing

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common.

They were united in heart and soul, and shared everything.

D. They met Everyone's Needs

Acts 4:34-35 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

The believers had received grace or kindness from God, and gratitude was in their hearts. They, in turn, showed grace through their unity, submission to authority, and purposeful generosity to others. Notice that the Lord used the local assembly to accomplish His goals. We can do more together as a group, than separately.

VI. Grace is Sufficient

A. Paul found God's grace to be sufficient for his personal infirmity/circumstances

2 Cor 12:9 My grace is sufficient [enough] for thee; for my strength [power] is made perfect in weakness.

Paul was not delivered out of his circumstances, but strengthened in them.

B. Paul said that God's grace is sufficient in all things

2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work...

God gives grace in all things so that we may do every good work.

VII. Dispensations and Covenants

To understand God's plan and objective throughout the ages, one must recognize the relationship between a dispensation and a covenant. *A dispensation is an administration within a period of time based on a conditional test to determine if a person or people will be faithful to God and His Conditions. A covenant is an eternal agreement made by God with humanity, revealing what God will do for a person or a group of people.*

God made covenants with the human race throughout history which are related to one of seven dispensations. Each covenant reveals principles by which God will relate to mankind. Man can choose to reject the covenant or principles of God (and some do) in every dispensation. When a person violates the covenant, he suffers consequences in the form of a judgment, bringing the dispensation to an abrupt end. Most Christians recognize the two dispensations of law and grace, but there are seven major dispensations and covenants. They are listed below:

A. Edenic Covenant-Innocence

Gen 1:28 And god blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Under this covenant, Adam had six obligations. With Adam's failure, he was cast out of the garden and mankind went from a state of innocence to having a sinful nature.

B. Adamic Covenant-Conscience

Gen 3:14-19 And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art Cursed....15And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: *cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.*

This dispensation was based on Adam's limited experience with good and evil. Since he did not remember the positive results of obedience, he had to endure the disastrous consequences of disobedience. Under this covenant, man degenerated to the point where people did only evil continually.

C. Noahic Covenant-Human Government

Gen 9:11-13 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. 12And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

This covenant involved the dispensation of human government, with humanity governing itself and the world for God. The failure of man under this dispensation culminated in the erecting of the tower of Babel and resulted in the judgment of the confusion of languages.

D. Abrahamic Covenant-Promise

Gen 12:1-3 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: 2And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

It was a dramatic turning point in history when God established a covenant with Abraham. Abraham and his heirs received an unconditional promise in which God promised to make them a great nation, to bless the seed of Abraham, to give him the Promised Land, and to bless all the families of the earth with a Redeemer, etc. Israel's failure in this dispensation came when they left their land to settle in Egypt, and resulted in slavery there. Israel's final testing under this dispensation occurred when God sent them back to the land, but they refused at Kadesh-barnea. [Ex 19:5]

E. Mosaic Covenant-Law

Ex 19:5-6 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

This dispensation meant government by the Mosaic Law, which was designed to reveal sin and death. The Law reflected the holiness of a personal God, instructed the people in God's discipline, reminded them of God's salvation, and served to lead them to Christ. The Law contained the commandments, judgments, and ordinances directing the religious life of Israel. This dispensation ended when Christ died on the Cross for the sins of all men.

F. New Covenant-Grace

Jer 31:31-33 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of

Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord: 33But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

God will make a new covenant with mankind by extending His grace to the Gentiles. Under this new covenant, God will call out a people for Himself from all the nations of the earth to form the bride of Christ (Rev 21:1-9). This unconditional covenant is better than the old covenant because it is based on Christ's atonement for the sins of mankind.

Mk 14:24 *And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many.*

G. Davidic Covenant-Fullness of Times

Eph 1:10 That in the *dispensation of the fullness of times* he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

The “dispensation of the fullness of times” might refer to the future millennial kingdom when David’s son will rule. During that time:

- A. Christ will take control of the kingdom and put an end to lawlessness (Is. 11:3-4);
- B. Men will be rewarded and given rest (2 Thes 1:6-7, Is 11:10)
- C. The curse on the creation will be lifted (Rom 8:19-21, Is 11:6-9)
- D. All Israel shall be saved (Rom 11:25-28)
- E. Israel’s blindness will be cured (2 Cor 3:14-17)
- F. Israel will be restored to the land (Ez 39:25-29)
- G. The times of the Gentiles will cease (Lk 21:24)

This covenant is unique in that a considerable amount of time passes between its revelation and accomplishment. The Davidic Covenant contains the following four promises: the establishment of David's throne; guaranteed authority to rule over God's people; the establishment of His kingdom; and recognition of David's reign forever. In the final dispensation, humanity's failure is shown in a final revolt, where the rebels are judged in the lake of fire.

VIII. God's Plan and Purpose

Eph 1:10 That in the *dispensation of the fullness of times* he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11In whom also *we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him* who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12*That we should be to the praise of his glory*, who first trusted in Christ. 13In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also *after that ye believed, ye were sealed with*

that holy Spirit of promise, 14Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

When God extended His covenant of grace to the Gentiles (us), He promised to write His law in our hearts which would change our hearts, and also promised us an inheritance. He predestined us, knowing that we would accept Him, and that we would be to the praise of His glory. Believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a down payment of our inheritance until He comes for us.

IX. Dispensations involve Stewardship

A. Paul spoke of the dispensation of God given to him.

Eph 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery [hidden truth]...6That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: 7Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual [effective] working of his power.

Dispensation: Strong's 3622-administration (of a household or estate); spec. a religious economy, stewardship.

Paul was not just saved by God's grace so he would have eternal life [Jn 3:16]; He was saved because God planned for Paul to become a minister [an Apostle] to the Gentiles.

Remember: In the New Testament, grace comes from the Greek word meaning graciousness of manner or act; especially the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life.

B. Paul was a steward entrusted to preach the gospel

I Cor 9:16-17 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 17For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation [stewardship] of the gospel is committed [entrusted] unto me.

Paul willingly ministered the gospel to the Gentiles so that they would be saved also. He considered himself a steward [slave] entrusted to preach the gospel.

C. Paul was a steward entrusted to make disciples

Col 1:25-28 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; 26Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27To whom God

would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: 28Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man *perfect* in Christ Jesus

Perfect Strong's 5046-complete in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc; completeness-of full age

X. Conclusion

Throughout the generations of humanity, God poured out His grace upon mankind. In the various dispensations and covenants, mankind failed. There is a new covenant which is based on the atoning blood of Christ; it is a covenant of grace.

A. Peter spoke of the stewardship of grace

I Pet 4:1-2, 6-10 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God....6For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. 7But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. 8And above all things have fervent Charity [love] among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 9Use hospitality one to another without grudging. 10As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Peter told us to live the rest of our lives to the will of God in the spirit. He warned that the end of all things is at hand so we should be sober [Strong's 4993-of sound mind, sane, moderate]; pray; and most importantly, have love towards others. We are to be good stewards of the grace of God.

B. Paul said that he would not frustrate the grace of God

Gal 2:20-21 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21I do not frustrate [Strong's 114-a struggle, fight] the grace of God....

Grace-the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life!....