

The Exceeding Grace and Mercy of God

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There are two words in the Bible that are used with accuracy and distinction that we are going to look at today. These are the words “grace,” and the word “mercy.” The justice of God demands judgement and thus mercy is God’s withholding of merited (or earned) judgement.

Grace is God’s unmerited divine favor. Everyone understands what it means when someone does you a favor, or if someone goes out of their way to bless your life, we call that a “favor.” Many times, people do favors for others, but there are usually strings attached. “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” You did something nice for me, so I’ll do something nice for you! That’s not how God’s divine favor works. God’s does His favors without any payback in mind. It’s freely given, it’s freely received. Grace is God’s unmerited divine favor, which only He, God can give.

Ephesians 1:2 Grace [unmerited divine favor] be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Wow! This epistle starts off with a bang! The very first word in verse 2 is “GRACE.” God’s unmerited divine favor starts it, then continues with “peace.” God has done and has given us unmerited divine favor without anyone asking Him for it. It is freely given by God, right out of the starting gate! Grace defines God’s heart of love here. It is from His heart of love that His divine favor is poured out to us. Everything that follows in what He has done for us is under the banner of “GRACE,” in the book of Ephesians. HOW was His grace poured out to us? As verse 3 states: **“He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavies in Christ.”** In other words, now with the accomplished work of Christ, we now have divine favor from God. By nothing that we did, God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *realm*. EVERY spiritual blessing has been emptied out to us. This is quite the description of what God’s grace means here in this verse.

As we really begin to get a glimpse of what God’s grace is all about, it becomes a brighter day in our understanding of God. Perhaps we have heard this “grace” word used in the Bible many times before. We may have heard that it is God’s unmerited divine favor. However, do we really grasp its significance? There’s always an opportunity for improvement. In fact, each and every time that we see this word in the Bible, we should just be tickled pink! Why would God give us this grace? Why us? Why now? Let’s continue reading...

Verse 4 According as [the standard being that] he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption [sonship] of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

The word **foundation**: Greek: *katabolē* = a casting down, founding, establishing. In **Hebrews 6:1**, meaning “to cast down a foundation,” that is, “to lay a foundation.” Here it is used with the Greek word *kosmos* (the physically ordered world). The casting down or laid foundation of the physically ordered world does not necessarily refer to the beginning creation in **Genesis 1:1**.

There was a foundation of the physically ordered world laid again in **Genesis 1:3 - 2:3** after the earth had become without form and void. Another foundation of the physically ordered world was laid in **Genesis 3:22-24** after the fall of man. Understanding that there would not have been a need for people to be chosen in Christ before the fall of man suggests that “before the foundation of the world” would refer to the promise made in Genesis just before this establishing of a different physically ordered world in

Genesis 3:22-24, which had an order different from the previous world. The promise regarding the Christ to come was first stated in Genesis 3:15. Christ was the “seed of the woman.” At that point, God determined at the time of Adam’s fall what He was going to do for mankind by the seed of the woman, then God reordered the physical world. Those who would believe in the Christ, (the seed of the woman), were to be justified from Adam’s sin and condemnation, as described in **Romans 3:20-5:21**.

How could He choose us before the overthrow of the world? Because God has foreknowledge. It is because God knew ahead of time that you and I would believe His Word. Therefore, He could predestinate. Make sense? In other words, God didn’t pick us out of the crowd and “make” us do what He wants, but rather He knew if you heard the Word one day, you would believe. Therefore – predestinate. It is all by His Grace, and by NOTHING that we did ahead of time. We just believed His Word.

People can do a lot of things for us. They can give us the gift that we really wanted for our birthday. They can paint our house. They can give us a ride to someplace. They can help us move from one place to another. However, nothing can equal the divine favor that God Almighty, our Heavenly Father has done for us! That is truly grace upon grace.

Ephesians 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ...7 That in the ages to come he might shew [display, exhibit] the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast.

These verses in Ephesians are just the beginning of describing God’s divine favor, but it is a great place to start our quest of learning what grace is all about.

Now, let’s talk about God’s mercy. God’s “mercy is merited judgement withheld.” And in this case, it would be judgement that is fully justified. It is retribution and / or punishment for harm done. If a person is commits a crime, there is a subsequent punishment associated with that crime. In man’s world, the more severe the crime, the more severe the punishment. In the case of God and human beings, we were all dead in trespasses and sin because of Adam’s transgression. Sin is sin. There are no degrees of sin in God’s eyes. Sin is separation from God. Adam committed a crime and treason against God, thereby made all of the human race subject to the punishment of separation from God by sin. But because of what Jesus Christ accomplished by his death, God accepted his (Jesus Christ’s) payment as punishment owed for Adam’s sin.

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All of the penalty for Adam’s crime was fulfilled by Christ. Praise God for that! It is by God’s mercy that we didn’t get what we deserved, and that was death. By God’s grace and by God’s mercy, we have eternal life. What a difference that makes in the life of any individual! To come to the realization of what that means takes learning and understanding that only God can give.

Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow [pursue] me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Of all of the things that we could possibly need in times of trouble, in times of our darkest hours, in times of overwhelming odds, in times of great self-condemnation... it is God’s goodness and mercy that is pursuing us, chasing us down, not to punish us for anything, but to bless our lives, all of our life long!

Psalm 25:10: All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth [truthfully merciful] unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies [the Word].

“Covenant” and “testimonies” are used here by a Fig. of Speech (*Hendiadys*) “Two words used for one thing meant.” It is emphasizing that all the paths of the Lord are truthfully merciful to such as keep His Word, who walk on His Word, who stand on His Word. To those, the paths of the Lord are mercy. Getting a good *dose* of understanding about mercy will just blow your mind! It will bless your socks off! It will give you joy unspeakable. Let’s look at I Peter 1 from the *Working Translation*.

I Peter 1:5: Through believing, you are protected by the power of God unto a salvation [deliverance] ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this, you are very glad, even though it may be necessary for a short time at present to be grieved by many kinds of temptations ⁷ so that the proof [genuineness] of your believing (which is of much more value than gold, which perishes and which is proved by fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him. Believing on him whom you do not currently see, you are very glad with inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ receiving in return the end [outcome] of your believing, that is, the salvation [deliverance] of your souls. (Used by the fig. of sp. “synecdoche” to refer to the whole person.)

The context of this word, “salvation” meaning deliverance, is referring to the return of Christ to gather us together. (see **Romans 5:9-10**; **I Thessalonians 5:8-9**.) What a joy that will be!

Time and time again, whenever you read about grace or mercy in God’s Word, they are spoken of in the same context. We could spend the entire weekend going through God’s Word and looking at His grace and His mercy. Remember again, grace is God’s unmerited (or, *unearned*) divine favor, and God’s mercy is merited (or, *earned*) judgment withheld. However, since we don’t have all weekend, we are looking at some “highpoints” of God’s grace and mercy.

Ephesians 2:4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for [because of] his great love wherewith he loved us,

God is RICH in mercy. God’s great love is the foundation for His rich mercy and grace by which He has given life to those who believe regarding his Son Jesus Christ. This foundational love is the basis for the love spoken of in other passages of Ephesians.

Verse 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Again, here in the context, mercy and grace of spoken of together. Even when we were dead He loved us, and because of His great mercy - which always has love, grace and peace connected with it, He loved us even when were dead, and He quickened us, He made us alive together with Christ!

Verse 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

He seated us in the Heavenly Realm! This statement is made five times in the book of Ephesians. (5 number for grace).

7 That in the ages to come he might shew [publicly display] the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

In the future ages to come, He is able to make a public exhibit of His **exceeding riches**, not only of His mercy, but of His grace. God made it possible for us to be raised from spiritual death when we were without God and without hope. Not only that, but He raised us up to the point of being seated in the heavenly realm. Because of God's grace and mercy, and His love we are now born from above of His incorruptible seed. He made it possible for us to have eternal life, and be filled with Christ in us, the hope of our future glory! And thus giving us a more than abundant life, and making us more than conquerors. Let's close in Philippians.

Philippians 4:19: But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

We read a minute ago that God is rich in grace. Rich in grace. One way that God's Word interprets itself where words are used before. In Ephesians it says that God is rich in mercy and rich in grace.

God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is *El-Shaddai*. He is God Almighty. He is my Almighty God... He is your Almighty God. He is individually personal, so He is personally your *El-Shaddai*; He is your Father and my Father; we are His son or His daughter. "My God shall supply all your need" because He is almighty in resources to defend, to support and to supply every need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

God has done and will do His part toward us. There is therefore now no condemnation. God saved us when we were dead in trespasses and sin. By His mercy and grace He has saved us AND seated us in the heavenly realm. He has given us sonship. He is now our personal God who continues to meet every single need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. So what's our part?

Verse 20: Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We give Him the glory! We give Him the honor, the respect and the love He deserves back. Our glory to come is assured through Christ within us. Now we give him glory forever and ever. Amen.