

## The Wonders of God's Grace

### I. Definition:

“Grace is what God may be free to do and indeed what He does, accordingly, for the lost, after Christ has died on behalf of them.”

**(L.S. Chafer)**

“Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the cross.” **(R. B. Thieme)**

“Grace is love demonstrated by giving; in the gospel, grace is unmerited divine favor, arising in the mind of God and bestowed on his people. It is often considered with regard to its beneficial effects.” **(Anchor Bible Dictionary)**

“In the NT, grace (Gr. *Charis*) refers to the unmerited and freely given redeeming action of God through Christ by which sin is forgiven and its power broken, and believers are upheld and strengthen in their Christian life.” **(The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible)**

“The grace of God is essentially the gift of righteousness (right standing before God) and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only are these *gifts* but they are also unmerited gifts.” “...Furthermore, *grace alone has the power to free you from sin: For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace (Rom 6:14).*” **(Jeff Harkin)**

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

Unger points out that God's grace is to be distinguished from His mercy and love, quoting

**Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,**

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

The point here is that God loved us and had mercy on all mankind even when we were dead in sins. But He could not save us out of His love or mercy. That would require the satisfaction of His perfect Righteousness.

1. God desired out of His mercy and love to save all mankind.
2. But He had to satisfy His perfect Righteousness and there was no way that man could become perfect righteousness out of anything that he could do to be righteous.
3. So, God out of His mercy and love and kindness sent His Son to the cross, taking away the judgment for sins by His Son on the cross.
4. Then He would impute to everyone, His own perfect Righteousness the moment anyone, everyone believed in His Son as Savior, by faith alone in Christ alone!

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

5. Now, by Grace everyone is saved by grace through faith in the one He sent.
6. Everyone who believes in His Son as Savior, is saved forever by grace and can never lose his or her eternal salvation.
7. And, “by grace” is the pattern for everything anyone will ever receive from God.

Any biblical definition of grace must include the concept that Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ on the cross, satisfying His perfect Righteousness. Take away the cross work of Christ and God can do nothing for mankind and keep His perfect Righteousness in perfection. Any biblical definition of grace must not violate His perfect Righteousness. It must fulfill:

**Job 8:3 Does God pervert Justice? or does the Almighty pervert what is Right?**

Please, never forget that as much as God loves the human race, He will not, He cannot pervert His own Righteousness to save man from the penalty of sin or to save or deliver the believer from the power of sin or to bless man. Because of the cross, God is free to express His love to mankind through grace without jeopardizing His perfect essence. You will often find the word ‘free’ or ‘freedom’ when talking about Grace. Why? Because no one can truly give apart from freedom. And God gives to mankind out of Total Freedom because of the cross. Now, very important, Grace is always both God’s plan and God’s policy for mankind. This means that after one is saved, grace does not change. God blesses mankind, God blesses the believer on the basis of grace. So, as

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

you are saved, you will be restored from sin: by grace through faith; and blessed in your Christian life.

Any biblical definition of Grace must also include the perfect Righteousness of God.

Jeff Harkin's definition of Grace includes the Righteousness of God. "The grace of God is essentially the gift of righteousness (right standing before God) and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only are these *gifts* but they are also unmerited gifts." Many people emphasize the grace of forgiveness of sins, which is very important. But remember, that forgiveness of sins does not save, we need the positive of the gospel—imputed with the perfect Righteousness of God. Here is where many religious people bring in works...you have to do something to be righteous before God. To their way of thinking it just makes sense that you have to be good, at least as much as possible.

Redemption must come by grace. Anything we receive from God must come by grace. We cannot earn nor deserve anything from God, save His wrath. I like the way the Bible defines grace in

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

Here is where some preachers and theologians play with words. They correctly contend that for eternal life salvation, no works can be involved. And here, they correctly include as works, salvation by repentance, by confession, by joining a certain church or denomination, or some ritual or making Him Lord, inviting Jesus into your heart etc.

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

But, once you are saved, now to come out from the power of sin and back into the power of the Holy Spirit, now you have to repent or confess or yield etc. and here is the tricky part. They contend that now these acts are not works. Yes, they were works if you used them to be eternally saved but now, they are no longer works if you have to do them to be filled with or by the Holy Spirit. And what is fun here is that it all depends on their list of what you have to do, as it not being works. In other words, if they teach, you have to 'repent' to be filled with the Holy Spirit, then 'repentance' is not works. But, if you teach you have to confess or yield etc then they are works.

If repentance is not works, then confession, or yield etc. is works.

If confession is not works then repentance or yield etc. is works.

If yield is not works then confession or repentance is works.

And none of these scholars give any Biblical justification for their definition on how these acts are no longer works.

People, if it is not by faith alone in one whom God has sent, it is works.  
**Grace is no longer grace.**

One more issue is that God's grace is biblically distinguished from His *mercy and His Love*. note carefully

**Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy,  
because of His great love with which He loved  
us,**

The Wonders of God's Grace  
Ephesians 1:6

**Ephesians 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions,**

Do you see it? Even when we were unbelievers, dead in sin, God had mercy on us and loved us...but He could not save us but...

**made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),** Not saved by His mercy or by His love, but we are saved by His Grace. His mercy and His love motivated Him to provide a grace way whereby all mankind could be saved. Therefore a few verses down He states:

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

And to put the whole picture together we need a correct reading of

**John 3:16 For in this manner, loved, The God, the world, that The Son, the only begotten, He gave that (to die spiritually on the cross, bearing the judgment for the sins of the world) -in order that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life**

- II. Every human being should face the fact that he or she must be perfectly righteous to have an eternal relationship with God. And there is nothing he or she can do to make himself or herself righteous before God. Any addition of human merit or human works, any mixture of human merit violates grace, nullifies grace!

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

People, there are no works that we can do from our flesh nature to be righteous before God as unbelievers or even as believers.

**Isaiah 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, (by being descendants of Adam. From Adam we all receive an Inherited Sin Nature) And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; (Human good or good deeds that come from our flesh nature is filthy before the perfect Righteousness of God.) And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.**

Add to this

**Rom. 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**

This is a pitiful translation. The Greek word is *hustero*. It does not mean to fall short, it means to fail; to lack. Listen, in football to miss by one point is to fall short. Here this does not mean to fall short, it means that all have sinned and completely fail the glory of God. In Matthew 19, the rich young ruler bragged that he kept all the law. But there was one he did miss, and to miss one is to miss all the Law. So, our best is the worst before God. But do not give up in despair. God motivated by His love and orchestrated by His grace has provided a way where every member of the human race can be righteous before Him, a righteousness that

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

does not depend on man in any way. It is free, it is easy and it is by His grace. He sent His Son to the cross to bear the judgment of the sins of the world and He will impute His own perfect righteousness to everyone who believes in His Son for salvation. The moment one believes in His only begotten Son for salvation, God does 34 things that cannot, will not be taken away. He imputes His righteousness and His life to the person who believes.

III. Now comes the enemy of grace and that is *legalism*.

We are saved by grace through faith, but almost immediately or soon thereafter we cannot resist the enticement of legalism. The first book written by Paul was written to counter legalism, the letter of Galatians.

**Galatians 1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is *really* not another, only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.**

Legalism is man trying to offer God his own merit. Legalism is from our flesh nature. It is part of the world system. The world defines our worth by our production. We are part of this system of defining our worth from physical birth by our production. Rewards as infants growing up; grades in school; athletics, music etc. Now think about it: OK, I believed in Jesus as my savior.



**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

Now I have to be good, really good. Oh, I can't, so I am going to lose my salvation. To maintain my salvation, I have to feel really sorry for my sins, promise God I will get better. Doesn't that just make common sense that we have to be real good for God to maintain our salvation? Grace is just too diametrically opposed to the way the world has taught us. You just have to be good...Lordship salvation! That's it...I will make Him Lord in my life and then I can be sure I am saved. Oh, no, I still sin! I know I will go to some church and see what is on their list that I have to do or not do. Wait a minute, each denomination has a different list of all I have to do and oh yes, not do! Legalism is confusing and diametrically opposed to grace. Churches, movements always have some works, some talents, some abilities, some plan, some gimmick they want to introduce that man must do to be saved, or spiritual or blessed by God.

Just remember a little legalism will not hurt you, it will kill you!

1. Definition: Legalism is any merit system by works, performance by which man tries to gain the approbation of God, by something he does.
2. Man tries to perform, to gain salvation or Spirituality or blessings from God by his performance.
3. Legalism is the antithesis of grace.
4. Why is Legalism so bad? Legalism is trying to take the glory away from Christ. Trying to share in His Glory of Christ.

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

5. All Legalism is **Evil**. And when I say evil, I mean it in it's absolute sense: people treat each other in evil ways; it is evil what some do to animals etc. but the absolute evil is to try to take credit to yourselves what Christ has done! Like saving you.

**Galatians 2:11 But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I (Paul) opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.**

This is a powerful moment in Church-history: Here in Antioch, for one leader to oppose another so boldly. But the problem was the worst form of evil.

**Galatians 2:12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, (in Jerusalem...full of legalism as it related to the gospel and Filling of the Holy Spirit) he (Peter) used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they (the legalists) came, (from Jerusalem) he (Peter) *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.**

Here is what Legalism does—it tries to control others. There was nothing wrong with Peter fellowshiping with Gentiles. But to the Legalists of Jerusalem, this was forbidden. Why? They were not circumcised. Peter is a hypocrite...he tries to please everyone.

The Wonders of God's Grace  
Ephesians 1:6

**Galatians 2:13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.**

**the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy,** This means that the other Jews in Antioch also fellowshiped with Gentiles but when the Legalists came in they stopped fellowshiping with them.

**with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.** Here is a very important point about legalism: Legalism intimidates others, attempts to control others, and worst of all, it judges others. Any performance system leads to judging One Another. The New Commandment tells us to love One Another as Jesus loves. But legalism tells us to judge One Another. Here is wonderful Barnabas who knows better, backing off grace and going into legalism. Everyone can become legalistic before they even know it.

**Hypocrisy.** Here is the evil of legalism. You act, even claim you did something for your salvation or being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is a hypocrisy. You were saved by grace and you are spiritual by grace.

**Galatians 2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, (here is the Evil of legalism—it takes away from the Truth of the Gospel.)**

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

1. What is truth from the source of the gospel?
2. Truth from the Gospel is that God Does it All, and all we have to do is trust Him—trust the one He sent; John 6:29.
3. Truth from the Gospel guides us in all our relationships with God. To recover from sin, (Filling of the Holy Spirit) you do not need to add works, just go back to Gospel, to live by faith, with no works added, no repentance no confession, no yielding etc.
4. Legalism: When a believer walks according to law, works, do and do, to be spiritual or empowered by the Holy Spirit he deviates from the truth of Gospel.
5. Galatians 2:14 in NIV “**acting in line**” In line with what? In line with how you were saved. And how you were saved? **By Grace through Faith**; or as Colossians 2:6 *therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him*. We received Him by faith therefore we continue to walk in Him by faith.
6. Galatians 2:14 in NASV **they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel** from the Greek word ortho-podeo Orthodox; Orthopedic—foot-straightening; Now, if any of you broke your leg, you would be sure that the Orthopedic doctor knew what *straight* looked like. Yet, many will listen to someone present a gospel that is not *straight*! Not according to the Word of God.
7. So, here is the question: Is what you have to do to recover from sin, be Filled with the Holy Spirit; live a righteous life, have Spiritual Love etc., is it the way you claim to obtain these things...in keeping the way you were saved? The way you initially received the Holy

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

Spirit, imputed righteousness etc? Is it orthodox to your salvation?  
If it is not simply by faith then it is not orthodox to your salvation.

8. The principle again is to live how you were saved, by grace through faith. Recovery from sin, live the Spirit Filled Life, a righteous life, love as Jesus Christ loves. All are determined by how you were saved. You want to know how to walk as a saved Christian? Walk straightforward according to gospel.

**As you were Saved—so live**

Never move from the Truth of the Gospel; Everyone claims that their list is NOT works: But if it is NOT simple Faith—then it is not straightforward—according to truth of Gospel.

9. Failure to understand How one is saved according to the Word of God leads to Failure to understand *How to live a life that is pleasing to God.*
10. Legalism is man performing for God. And Paul ended any delusion of legalism by ending the works of circumcision.

**Galatians 5:6 for in Christ Jesus neither  
circumcision nor uncircumcision (any  
performance system) means anything, but faith  
working through love.**

11. In our study of Spiritual love where Spiritual love is not arrogant we studied that the great area of arrogance for the Christian is Spiritual Arrogance. This is where the believer lives under some system of performance and sure that God is pleased with his performance.

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

12. What does the Word of God say about Legalism?

**Colossians 2:20** If or since you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees as,

**Colossians 2:21** Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch! (which all *refer* to things destined to perish with use) in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men.

**Colossians 2:23** These are matters which have to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

**Romans 14:1** Now accept the one whose weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.

**Romans 14:2** One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to

**The Wonders of God's Grace**  
**Ephesians 1:6**

**judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.**

- IV. The greatest, most wonderful thing God can do for the believer is to make that believer just like His Son, Jesus Christ. We have studied just in Ephesians 1:1-6 all that God does to everyone who believes in Jesus. At the point of faith in Jesus Christ, God entered every believer into positional sanctification. That is, He positioned every believer into His Son. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, He was seated at the right hand of God the Father, positionally higher than angels. And since we are positionally in Christ we are positionally superior to angels.

But while here on earth, God wants us to be like Jesus in our lives here on earth. He has given to every believer the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit and a grace way for us to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, by grace through faith. How are we to live as Christians to be just like Jesus Christ? By grace through faith. By living by faith in the one He has sent, that is His Spirit. God sent His Son to save us and sent His Spirit to give us the power to live each day in the Spirit Filled life.

Then stage three or receiving the Resurrected Body exactly like the Resurrected Body of Jesus Christ minus the Inherited Sin Nature.

**Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;**

**The Wonders of God's Grace  
Ephesians 1:6**

**Philippians 3:21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.**