The Grace of God

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ABSTRACT

The excellent gift of God to humanity is His abundant "grace" freely bestowed upon us through His crucified son Jesus Christ. Grace reconciles man to God after the avoidable fall in the Garden of Eden. It is a clear agendum of God to restore man to his dignified and honored state before the fall, which was only possible by the shedding of blood as the sacrifice needed for the atonement and remission of sins via the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. This Christ did of His own volition, the product of which is the "grace" that reconciles man to God. This "grace" is the central theme or focus of the Bible, as it swallows the law and paves the way for humanity to please God - human weakness is made strong through grace. Man can receive this free gift of grace by implicit faith in God, which is also free gift through the hearing of the word of God - one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This paper looks into this gift of grace to humanity and the urgent need for us to key into it for our own good here on earth and hereafter.

KEYWORDS: Grace, faith, holy spirit, God's love, Jesus Christ, salvation, mercy of God, forgiveness

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INTRODUCTION

What is grace? With reference to Apostle Paul's statement in Ephesians 2: 8-9, which says: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast" [1]. Furthermore, the central message of the gospel is the good news of God's grace to man, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Grace is a concept that is nebulous in nature, a phenomenon that cannot be stereotyped. Grace cannot be pinned down to a specific perspective. Grace is erroneously perceived by many to be limited to entering heaven or a catalyst that makes us worthy in God's presence, or something that takes us to salvation. Grace is for all humans. Grace is an essential part of God's character. Grace is closely related to God's benevolence, love and mercy regardless of who you are and your state/status, as Christ died for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5: 8).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GRACE

In the Old Testament, God's grace is evident in stories of Noah, Abraham, and David, showcasing His love, mercy, and forgiveness. For example, Noah found favor with God, indicating that divine grace played a significant role in His dealings with humanity (Genesis 6: 8).

The sacrificial system and covenant with Israel also highlight the need for divine grace, underscoring human inability to achieve righteousness independently [2].

- Pelagianism vs. Augustine: In the 5th century, Pelagius and Augustine of Hippo engaged in a pivotal debate about the nature of grace and human free will. Pelagius emphasized human effort in achieving salvation, while Augustine asserted the primacy of God's grace. The Councils of Carthage and Ephesus later condemned Pelagianism.
- ➤ The Protestant Reformation: Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized justification by faith alone, teaching that salvation is a gift of God's grace. Luther's stance was that "the law says, 'do this,' and it is never done. Grace says, 'believe in this,' and everything is already done."
- ➤ Council of Trent: The Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformation, the Council of

Trent (1547), established Catholic teaching on grace and justification, distinguishing it from Protestantism [3, 4].

Grace is variously defined as follows [5]:

- > Unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification.
- ➤ A virtue coming from God.
- > A state of sanctification enjoyed through divine assistance.
- ➤ A special favor or privilege.

In the Bible, grace is defined as [6]:

- ➤ Grace is applied as favor of God for example, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord -Genesis 6: 8.
- ➤ Grace is a gift for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God – Ephesians 2: 8.
- The five (5) ascension gifts are pure products of grace. And He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ – Ephesians 4: 11-
- > "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...." Those who are in Christ are distinguished from unbelievers in that they have arch a bear fruit. These are strictly products of grace.

Every good thing we have is from God. There is nothing good in us that did not come from God. What did you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why did you boast as if you did not receive it? – 1 Corinthians 4: 7.

God's grace also refers to the unconditional love, favor, and mercy that God shows to humanity, despite our flaws, sins, and shortcomings. It is a gift from God that is not earned or deserved, but rather freely given, as shown in Figure 3. It is therefore, an unmerited favor, forgiveness, mercy and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

WORKS OF GRACE IN BELIEVERS OF **CHRIST**

The work of grace refers to the transformative and redemptive actions of God's grace in a person's life. Some of these key aspects are [6]:

- 1. Salvation: God's grace brings salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, forgiving sins and reconciling people to God – Ephesians 2: 8-9; Romans 5: 8, as shown in Figure 4.
- 2. Sanctification: God's grace enables believers to grow in holiness and Christ-likeness through the

- work of the Holy Spirit 2 Thessalonians 2: 13, 1 Peter 3: 18.
- 3. Transformation: The grace of God transforms the believers' lives, changing their hearts, minds, and actions to align with God's will – 2 Corinthians 5: 17. Romans 12: 2.
- 4. Empowerment: The grace of God empowers believers to live out their faith, overcome challenges, and serve others – Philippians 4: 13, 2 Corinthians 9: 8.
- 5. Comfort and guidance: God's grace provides comfort in times of sorrow, guidance in times of uncertainty, encourages us, and strengthens in times of weakness – 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4, Psalm 23: 4, Timothy 2: 1, Thessalonians 2: 16-17.
- 6. Justification: God's grace justifies us before holy God – Romans 3: 24, Titus 3: 7.
- 7. Communication and fellowship: The grace of God provides us access to God to communicate and fellowship with Him – Ephesians 1: 6, Hebrews
- 8. Intimacy: God's grace wins for us a new relationship of intimacy with God – Exodus 33:
- 9. Discipline and training: The grace of God disciplines and trains us to live in a way that been gifted with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to lopme honors God - Titus 2:n11-14, 2 Corinthians 8: 7.
 - 10. Spiritual riches: God's grace grants us immeasurable spiritual riches – Proverbs 10: 22, Ephesians 2: 7.
 - 11. Help in time of need: God's grace helps us in our every need – Hebrews 4: 16.

TYPES OF GRACE

In theology, there are several types of grace which are as discussed below:

- 1. Saving/amazing grace: This is the type of grace that brings salvation and forgiveness of sins and its consequences through faith in Jesus Christ -Ephesians 2: 8-9, Romans 5: 8, Romans 10: 9-10, John 3: 16, Acts 16: 30-31, Titus 2: 11, 2 Timothy 1:9.
- 2. Sanctifying grace: The grace that helps believers live a holy and virtuous life, conforming to God's will - 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 7: 1, 1 Peter 1: 15-16, 2 Peter 3: 18, Romans 6: 22, Hebrews 10: 14.
- 3. Common grace: This is grace that God extends to all people, regardless of their faith, providing blessings, and opportunities for life - a demonstration of God's love and benevolence to

humanity – Matthew 5: 45, Acts 14: 16-17, Psalm 145: 9, Genesis 9: 13-16, Romans 2: 4.

- 4. Prevenient grace: This is the grace that precedes and prepares the human heart to respond to the gospel. This is God's initiative to draw individuals to Himself, enabling man to make a free choice to accept or reject salvation Romans 2: 4, John 6: 44, John 12: 32, Acts 17: 27-28, 2 Peter 3: 9, Titus 2: 11.
- 5. Actual grace: The specific, temporary graces that assist individuals in particular situations or challenges in life Philippians 4: 13, 1 Timothy 1: 12.
- 6. Habitual grace: The ongoing, habitual presence of God's grace in a believers' life, transforming them into the likeness of Christ 2 Peter 1: 3-4.
- 7. Sufficient grace: This describes God's abundant and fully satisfying grace, that is more than enough for every need and challenge, providing strength and comfort 2 Corinthians 2: 7-10, Philippians 4: 13, Hebrews 4: 16, Psalm 138: 3, Romans 8: 37.
- 8. Revealing grace: This is associated with the revelation of wisdom, insight, and mysteries that were previously hidden, helping believers to understand God's will and purpose Ephesians 2: 7-8; 3: 2-5, 2 Timothy 1: 9, Titus 2: 11-12, Romans 1: 16, James 1: 5, Colossians 1: 26.
- 9. Irresistible/efficacious grace: This is the idea that when God calls someone to salvation, he cannot resist or reject John 6: 37, John 6: 44, John 10: 27, Ephesians 2: 8-9, Acts 16: 14, Romans 8: 30.
- 10. Healing grace: This is God's compassionate nature and His ability to give both physical and spiritual healing to those in need Luke 17: 11-19, Mark 2: 1-12; 5: 21-24, 35-43, John 9: 1-7, 2 Kings 5: 1-19.
- 11. Renewing grace: Renewing grace leads to the renewal of the mind, spirit, and inner self, transforming believers into a new creation in Christ Romans 12: 2, 2 Corinthians 4: 16, Ephesians 4: 23, Colossians 3: 10, Titus 3: 5.
- 12. Unfading grace: God's grace can never fade, it remains constant despite the challenges and changes of life 1 Peter 1: 3-4, 2 Corinthians 4: 16, Psalm 23: 6, James 1: 17, Hebrews 13: 8.
- 13. Sustaining grace: This refers to God's ongoing support, strength, and provision for believers to endure trials, challenges, and difficulties in life. It empowers believers to persevere in their faith 2

- Corinthians 12: 7-10, Psalm 23, Isaiah 40: 28-31, Lamentations 3: 22-23.
- 14. Restorative grace: This refers to God's ability to bring healing and reconciliation to individuals and communities, assisting believers to mend broken relationships Luke 15: 11-32, Mark 3: 1-6, John 8: 1-11, Ezekiel 37: 1-14.
- 15. Adoption grace: This is the grace God employs to graciously welcome believers into His family, making them His children and heirs, showing the loving relationship between God and His followers Galatians 4: 4-7, Romans 8: 15-17, Ephesians 1: 5-6, John 1: 12-13, 1 John 3: 1-2.
- 16. Abounding grace: Abounding grace signifies the generous and boundless grace manifested through blessings Romans 5: 20, 2 Corinthians 4: 15, 2 Corinthians 9: 8, Romans 5: 2.
- 17. Instructive grace: This is grace that provides guidance, instruction, and wisdom, helping believers to live in accordance with God's truth Titus 2: 11-12, 2 Timothy 3: 16-17, Psalm 25: 4-5, Psalm 32: 8, Proverbs 2: 6; 3: 5-6, James 1: 5.

The above types of grace have its own purpose and significance. The grace of God is not only a means of salvation but also as a means to discover His character, purpose, and will for humanity. God's grace empowers us for service. This ability to serve God and carry out His will does not come from our own capabilities but from His grace. As the book of 1 Peter 4: 10 states, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." This underlines how grace not only benefits us personally but also equips us to bless others, showing that grace is multifaceted – Romans 12: 6, Ephesians 3: 2, 7; 4: 7.

From the biblical context, grace is seen as the:

1. Unmerited favor from God: The word "grace" is used over 170 times in the New Testament alone. Grace cannot be bought; it is the free gift of Almighty God to needy mankind. God's grace (unmerited favor) as in Ephesians 1: 6 says: "... wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." In the original Greek text, the word "accepted" is the word charitoo, which means "highly favored." Humanity is deeply loved by God, as expressed in the book of John 3: 16 which says that. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...." God demonstrated that He "so loved us" when He sent Jesus to die on the cross for us, as shown in Figure 5. According to Ephesians 2: 8-9: "For by grace (unmerited favor) are ye saved through

faith; and not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

- 2. Divine riches imputed onto man: There are spiritual riches pertaining to who we are (our identity), and as well as our spiritual riches pertaining to how we live, things which God gives us to obey Him in this life. There are spiritual riches or blessings concerning who we are (Ephesians 1: 3-13), and there are spiritual riches or blessings concerning how we live (2 Peter 1: 3). Spiritual riches play a great deal in our divine riches. They are good things which God has given to us through Christ which either affect who we are or how we live.
- 3. Divine strength and special ability given to man to function: God wants us to grow more and depend on Him for supernatural strength that only comes from Him. Psalm 46: 1-3 says: "God is our refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,..." Our strength is not in the physical because we are not fighting against "flesh and blood," hence, we need to put on the whole armour of God Ephesians 6: 11-12.
- 4. Divine authority granted man for exploits: Divine authority has been granted onto us to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy, nothing will harm us (Luke 10: 19). Authority and power is also granted onto us to do exploit for the Kingdom of God. It will help us to "resist the devil...." In James 4: 7; Matthew 28: 18 – "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." We are to build our assurance on this. No kind of substitute power is fit to be used in working for God. All other powers will fail but the divine power will sustain us. Let's call to mind, the book of Luke 9: 1, which says, "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." A servant of God indeed cannot be short of this power – Philippians 2: 9-11.
- 5. Divine wisdom bequeathed to man to approach life issues: Divine wisdom is the understanding and knowledge that comes from a deep connection to one's inner self and the Divine. It is the ability to see beyond the natural world and to understand the interconnectedness of all things. Divine wisdom is the Spirit of God that grants divine capacity to understand and reason beyond the realm of men. The wisdom of God stabilizes destinies. Wisdom here connotes knowing the right way to go, the right steps to take and the right things to do. Divine wisdom invokes the

grace of God, and it is unending. It also takes wisdom to drive or navigate through life. Divine wisdom is the wisdom from above, the wisdom from God and by God – James 3: 17.

RECIPIENTS OR BENEFICIARIES OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Both the Old and the New Testaments of the Holy Bible is full of those who received the grace of God. This showed the desire of God to extend His forgiveness, redemption, and blessings to His people, which transcends mere kindness or pardon, but showcases God's boundless love and mercy extended to His creation, even when underserved.

- 1. In the Old Testament: God's grace was revealed in the Old Testament to His people, the Jews, as backed up with over 300 prophecies of the coming of the Saviour. Some of those who received this grace of God include:
- Abraham: Grace in the call and covenant Genesis 12: 1-3; 15:5, Romans 4: 16.
- Noah: He found grace in the midst of judgment Genesis 6: 11; 8.
- ➤ Joseph: Grace in forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Moses: Grace in leadership and law Exodus 3: 10-12.
- The Israelites: Grace in forgiveness and restoration.

The Jews have twice been "cast out" and then "returned to the land" by God's grace:

- The first: The Babylonian captivity and release (Jeremiah 25: 1-14). This was from 606/586 BC to 536-516 BC (captives/temple).
- The second: The destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) and the return (late 1890s until now) and the reestablishment of the State of Israel (May 14, 1948).
- ➤ Jesus prophesied the destruction and restoration of Jerusalem, relating them to the season He would return Luke 21: 1-35 (v. 24).
- a. Rahab A trophy of grace Hebrews 11: 31, Joshua 2: 11b.
- b. Ruth The redemption of Ruth Ruth 2: 10-13.
- c. David Grace in kingship and forgiveness 1 Samuel 16: 12-13, 2 Samuel 11: 7-16, Psalm 51.
- d. Abigail Amazing example of grace 1 Samuel 25: 3 and vs. 32-33.
- e. Hannah Grace that breaks the yoke 1 Samuel 2: 1-2.
- f. Esther The kaleidoscope of grace.
- 2. In the New Testament:

In the New Testament, God showed His prevalent, revealing, unchanging character, and willingness to

extend His grace in both the ordinary and extraordinary moments of life. Some of those who received this grace of God are as follows:

- a. Mary, the mother of Jesus Grace in favor and calling Luke 1: 28, 38.
- b. The thief on the cross a testament to grace, faith, and God's sovereignty in salvation Luke 23: 39-43. The thief acknowledged his guilt, saying: "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes, but this man has done nothing wrong." The thief also recognized Jesus Kingship and sinlessness, saying: "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." Due to the thief's expression of faith, Jesus assured him of his kingdom, saying: "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." Hence, our salvation is not dependent on external works, rituals, or circumstances but in our genuine faith in Christ Jesus.

Some of the lessons we can learn from the thief on the cross include:

- 1. Faith that saves, not works.
- 2. That God's grace is available and accessible to all, as said by Jesus that: "The one who comes to Me, I certainly will not cast out" John 6: 37.
- 3. Humility and repentance are key: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, God, you will not despise" Psalm 51: 17.
- 4. We are not qualified to judge salvation: God is the ultimate judge, since what we may perceive as an incomplete or flawed faith, may be recognized by God as genuine.
- a. Apostle Peter His restoration after betrayal –
 Luke 15: 11-12.
- b. Cornelius A portrait of God's saving grace.
- c. Elizabeth A wonderful story of grace of God's timing Luke 1: 39-45.
- d. Mary Magdalene A reflection of brokenness through grace Luke 8: 2, John 19: 25; 20: 10-18.
- e. Apostle Paul Grace in transformation and mission 1 Corinthians 15: 9-10,1Timothy 1: 15-17.

BELIEVERS ARE SAVED BY GRACE

The believers or Christians are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ is based on the basic tenet of Christianity. Grace alone means that God loves, forgives, and saves us not because of who we are or what we do, but because of the work of Christ – Ephesians 2: 8-9.

1. Jesus Christ is the author of salvation: Jesus Christ is considered as the author of salvation. In Christianity, salvation means to be saved or

- rescued from the penalty of separation from God. To be saved, a Christian must:
- Acknowledge that he or she is a sinner.
- Ask for forgiveness of their sins.
- > Be willing to turn away or repent from their sins.
- ➤ Believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins, and
- Decide never to emulate the ways of life of the ungodly.
- 2. Faith as the means to receive salvation: Salvation is received by faith, which is a gift from God. God gives us faith as a means to receive His grace and be saved from the power of sin. This faith in salvation is centered on Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, and His resurrection. Salvation cannot be earned by our own efforts or works, but through faith in Christ. Our faith in Jesus Christ is essential for salvation and justification Ephesians 2: 8, Hebrews 11: 6. Salvation is God's righteousness at work in us when we say yes to His plan, in demonstration of our faith.

CONCLUSION

We have people in the Scripture that received God's grace both in the Old and New Testaments. The grace of God demonstrates the fundamental aspect of God's nature, offering unmerited favor, forgiveness, and transformation. It also informs us that grace is never earned but is freely given, and by which we are invited into a relationship with God. Being recipients of this divine grace of God, we are called to extend it to others, to reflect the boundless love and mercy of our creator. Christians generally therefore, must not joke with the grace of God given and extended to us through His only begotten Son – we must cherish it.

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Figure 1. Grace in Christianity

Source:https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=ac 60e713747e51d1&sxsrf=AE3TifNfj28VGS0WBUa w66evmIkDeeEdoA:1750710467311&udm=2&fbs =AIIjpHxU7SXXniUZfeShr2fp4giZ1Y6MJ25_tm WITc7uy4KIeoJTKjrFjVxydQWqI2NcOha3O1Yq G67F0QIhAOFN_ob1aWGQOelbxvw0PKo40Qtw vZMGAT8mh52EQduMaEwrkL_OWJKMRsfwjGj YSpRBIZ1JDaBjTRFJHK6nc3h7Df_ewEX8Xvmv bWbC3KO9R3Wzz8jDjRXDvvSfLP0DDBhoo8LS WAeOg&q=images+on+God%27s+grace+by+wiki pedia&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwih0YjcsIiOAxVfTW wGHai4CeYQtKgLegQIEBAB&biw=1036&bih=5 39#vhid=moAPeFD2zpMKnM&vssid=mosaic

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Figure 2. God's graceSource:https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=ac
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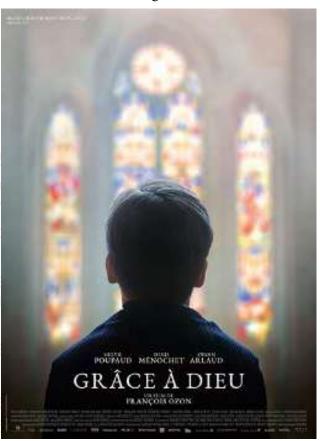


Figure 3. By the grace of God

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Figure 4. Salvation in Christianity

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