

# A Cup Overflowing – A study of the Christian life

---

Lesson 6:

A Christian Life is...

*A Grace-filled Life*

# The word "grace"

- ☒ The only Greek word translated "grace" in the NT is χάρις (charis).
  - ☑ *favor* (6) – Luke 1:30
  - ☑ *thanks* (5) – 2 Corinthians 9:15
  - ☑ *credit* (3) – Luke 6:32
  - ☑ *commendable* (2) – 1 Peter 2:20
  - ☑ *gift* (2) – Romans 4:4
  - ☑ translated into 14 other words once (each), including *benefit*, *blessing*, and *gracious gift*.

# The word “grace”

- ☒ The only Greek word translated “grace” in the NT is χάρις (charis).
- ☒ It’s helpful to notice how the word is translated in addition to “grace”, because it helps us understand the word.

# Definition

- ☒ How would you define “grace”?
  - ☑ Undeserved acceptance and love received from another, especially the characteristic attitude of God in providing salvation for sinners. For Christians, the word “grace” is virtually synonymous with the gospel of God’s gift of unmerited salvation in Jesus Christ.

*Holman Bible Dictionary*

- ☑ A couple of key points in this definition...

# Definition

❑ How would you define “grace”?

- ❑ Undeserved acceptance and love received from another, especially the characteristic attitude of God in providing salvation for sinners. For Christians, the word “grace” is virtually synonymous with the gospel of God’s gift of unmerited salvation in Jesus Christ.

*Holman Bible Dictionary*

If it were deserved, it wouldn't be a gift, it would be payment of a debt.

# Definition

- ❑ How would you define “grace”?
  - ❑ Undeserved acceptance and love received from another, especially the characteristic attitude of God in providing salvation for sinners. For Christians, the word “grace” is virtually synonymous with the gospel of God’s gift of unmerited salvation in Jesus Christ.

*Holman Bible Dictionary*

It is God’s nature that he *wants* to save us – 1 Peter 3:9.

# Definition

- ❑ How would you define “grace”?
  - ☑ Undeserved acceptance and love...God’s gift of unmerited salvation in Jesus Christ.
  - ☑ Divine grace is simply *God giving us what we don’t deserve* – and taking great joy in doing so.
  - ☑ Related – but different – concepts:  
justice, mercy, propitiation, atonement, sanctification, justification

# Making sense of it all

- ☒ In order to understand passages like Eph 2:4-10...

# Ephesians 2:4-10

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

# Making sense of it all

- ☒ In order to understand passages like Eph 2:4-10, we first need to discuss God's mercy and justice.
  - ☑ Recall the suggestion that *grace is God giving us what we don't deserve.*
  - ☑ By contrast, *mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve.*
  - ☑ God's justice demands the just penalty be paid for our sin – Romans 6:23.
  - ☑ Yet God's nature demands that he not extend grace without satisfying his justice!

# Making sense of it all

- ☒ In order to understand passages like Eph 2:4-10, we first need to discuss God's mercy and justice.
- ☒ Why not take the concept one step farther – why can't God just offer amnesty?
  - ☒ If God offers us amnesty instead of justice, it would undermine the entire social and moral order.
  - ☒ How much restraint can we expect people to observe is they are exempt from satisfying God's requirements in any way?
  - ☒ Just as God has bound himself to consistency in the laws of nature, he must also be consistent with the application of moral law.

# Making sense of it all

- ☒ In order to understand passages like Eph 2:4-10, we first need to discuss God's mercy and justice.
- ☒ Why not take the concept one step farther – why can't God just offer amnesty?
- ☒ So... God extends both grace and mercy in ways that are consistent with his justice – Romans 3:19-31.

# Our need for justification

- ☒ What is justification, and why should we be interested in it?
- ☒ In order for us to be justified, what do we need? Mercy? Is that enough?
- ☒ Paul wrote that we have been “justified freely by his grace...” Let’s look further into Romans 3:24.

“...justified freely...”

☒ The thought begins in v. 22:

“There is no difference, <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

☒ So that’s the full thought, but let’s center in on v. 24...

“...justified freely...”

“...and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

- ☒ Neatly sandwiched in between “justified” and “by his grace” is the adverb “freely”.
- ☒ Such a simple word, yet a powerful modifier in this case.
  - ☑ The word literally means “gratuitously”, or “without a cause”.

# Back to Eph 2

- ☒ Now that we have a better handle on mercy & justice, let's get back to Ephesians 2:4-10 – especially v.8-9:
  - ☑ “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.”
  - ☑ Back to the word “grace” (charis) – it means “gift”. So where do works come into the picture?

# The religion of “optional obedience”

- ☒ Ever hear the term “cheap grace”?  
What does it mean?
- ☒ Quite the opposite of the idea of “cheap grace”, God's *true* grace is anything *but* cheap, and it teaches us to be obedient!

# Blessed Assurance

- ☒ How many times have you sung that without really feeling it?
- ☒ The Word doesn't require us to *feel* saved in order to *be* saved, but
  - ☑ we *can know* we're saved (1 Jn 5:13)
  - ☑ and we can be confident in our salvation, even when we don't *feel* saved. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

# Grace – a summary

- ☒ It's God giving us something we don't deserve – eternal life.
- ☒ Mercy is God *not* giving us what we *do* deserve – eternal damnation.
- ☒ God's justice demands the penalty be paid for our sin.
- ☒ We are obedient because of our love for God.
- ☒ We can feel confident of our salvation because it's based on Christ's goodness, and not our own.

# Next week:

☒ A Christian Life Is *A Light-filled Life*

## Notes for *A Christian Life is Grace-filled Life*

Slide 1: <none>

Slide 2:

**Note:** It's not necessary, of course, to do Greek word studies in order to understand scripture. It does deepen our study, however, and allows us to see the finer points of God's word by doing simple studies like this.

- The Greek word "charis" is the only word translated "grace" in the English New Testament (translated "grace" 119 times in the NIV, out of 155 times it's used). Although it's the only word translated "grace", "charis" is also translated into other words. In the NIV, these words are:
  - "favor" (6 times) – Luke 1:30, *But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God."*
  - "thanks" (5 times) – 2 Corinthians 9:15, *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!* (χαρις translated "thanks" is always in this context.)
  - "credit" (3 times) – Luke 6:32, *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?"*
  - "commendable" (twice) – 1 Peter 2:20, *...if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*
  - "gift" (twice) – Romans 4:4, *Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.*
  - and 14 other words once, including *benefit, blessing, and gracious gift.*

Slide 3-4: <none>

Slide 5:

- Hopefully we can agree that God doesn't "owe" us salvation. It is truly a gift, the fact that it requires a response on our part to accept the gift notwithstanding. Paul emphasizes the point in Romans 4:4-5.

Slide 6: <none>

Slide 7:

- - The Greek word *charis* had a long previous history in secular Greek literature. Related to the word for joy or pleasure, *charis* originally referred to something delightful or attractive in a person, something which brought pleasure to others.
  - All of these words are related to grace, and all should be included in an in-depth study of the subject. While we will not have time to fully discuss them all during this lesson, some of them cannot be eliminated from our discussion.

Slide 8: <none>

Slide 9:

- This is a complex passage, but Paul makes it clear that:
  - We are saved by grace. He doesn't whisper it under the table and just matter-of-factly say, "oh yeah, it's the grace." He goes out of his way to emphasize it, and states it twice, in order to drive the point home.
  - This grace of God whereby we are saved is related also to his mercy and our faith.
  - Because of God's love and through his mercy, we were "made alive with Christ," even when we "were dead in sin."
  - It is a gift from God – unmerited on our part.
  - With grace comes responsibility – the very reason we were created was to do good works!
  - God had a plan for us from the beginning.

Slide 10-12: <none>

Slide 13:

- Justification is "to render, show, or regard as just or innocent." In our case, when we are justified, God regards us as innocent. We may still have to face the physical consequences of our sin, but spiritually we are "exempt from further prosecution."

We should be interested in justification, because grace is impossible without it! God cannot coexist with sin, so in order for him to save us by his grace, he must first remove our sin (i.e., justify us).

- Mercy is not enough for us to be justified. In our legal system (which God is not subject to, of course, but follow the analogy), mercy normally results in a suspended sentence, delayed adjudication, court-mandated community service, paying a fine in lieu of going to prison, etc. Seldom, if ever, does it result in charges being dropped. If charges are dropped, it's due to another reason – such as lack of evidence, etc. – rather than the judge's mercy. What we need in order to be justified is *more* than mercy; we need a full pardon! (At least when you look at it in light of a human legal system.)

God's mercy is simpler than that though. Number 1, we're sinners (Rom 3:23). Number 2, we deserve eternal, spiritual death (Rom 6:23). There is no possibility of a reduced sentence, so... Number 3, by his grace, through our faith, God extends to us *his* mercy, which is always a full pardon – no reduced sentence!

- Next slide...

Slide 14: <none>

Slide 15:

- 
- 
- Recognizing that God literally justifies us as a gratuitous act is one of those “hermeneutical epiphanies”. It’s when you discover a fine tidbit of scripture by digging a little deeper than simply reading the English translation.

One must be careful though, to not “literally apply” the literal meaning of a Greek word without considering the context in which it is used. The Greek word δωρεάν (“dorean” – translated here as “freely”) *does* have as one of its meanings “without a cause”. That meaning does not apply in this case, however, since if we were all “justified without a cause”, *every person* would be justified, regardless of his faith, regardless of his lifestyle, etc. That’s not what this verse says. It says God’s grace is delivered “through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Elsewhere, we learn that we are saved by *grace through faith*.

The point here is that God *does* justify us gratuitously in the sense that we cannot *earn* salvation through meritorious or righteous works. He does *not* justify us gratuitously in the sense that he just gives it to everyone without regard for a person’s repentance and trust in Jesus.

Slide 16:

- 
- 
- Paul specifically says we’re not saved by works, yet James spends an entire chapter dealing with the issue (James 2). The answer to the question “where do works come into the picture” is that with regard to salvation, they don’t enter the picture at all. As James makes clear though, our works are the *evidence* of our faith. To say you have faith is one thing, but *saving* faith is *obedient* faith. Indeed, we show our love for Christ by our obedience to him (John 14:15).

Slide 17:

- Many people equate the idea of being “saved by grace” with the idea that people will somehow not care any more whether they’re obedient or not. They somehow get the notion that these “saved by grace people” have the idea that “since I’m already saved, and it’s a gift from God, whether I sin or not won’t really matter – I’m already forgiven anyway!” Frankly, I know plenty of people who subscribe to the idea of being saved by grace, but I don’t know a single person who believes that he can just sin as much as he wants since he’s already saved anyway.

“Cheap” grace? Hardly! Jesus paid for God’s grace with his life, and when you accept God’s gift of grace, you agree to pay for it with *your* life too – a life in service to him.

- Titus 2:11-12 – “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup>It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,....”

Slide 18:

- No show of hands, please.
- 1 John 3:19-20 – “This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence <sup>20</sup>whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”
  - “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:13 NIV
  - “...**since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,** <sup>20</sup>by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, <sup>21</sup>and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>**let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...**” Hebrews 10:19-22 NIV

Slide 19-20: <none>