

Gospel and Grace of God

Outline

1. The Grace of God is Fundamental to Christianity
2. The Grace of God that brings salvation to all men has appeared & will appear
3. The Grace of God can be refused if we want to live independently of God

1. The Grace of God is Fundamental to Christianity

“The principle of grace is as fundamental to Christianity as that of justice is to Law, or love is to marriage. Christianity cannot be understood apart from an adequate grasp of grace. The doctrine of grace distinguishes the Christian faith from every other religion in the world and the cults. Rightly understood and applied, the doctrine of grace can revolutionise one’s Christian life”. (Bob Deffinbaugh)

“If your religion isn’t a religion of grace, it may be something, but it’s not Christianity. Unless you’ve understood the grace of God in all its truth, you can’t call your religion Christianity”. (Tim Keller)

John 6: 36-37, 40, 44-45 But as I told you, you have seen me, and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away... .. ⁴⁰ For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.” ⁴⁴ “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from him comes to me.

In the passage from John 6 above, Jesus tells the Jewish leaders that He is not surprised if people don’t want to believe in Him because no one can become a believer and a follower of Christ unless the Father in heaven draws them within their hearts to be a believer in Jesus (Matt 16:17). In other words, people can be Christian only by the grace of God.

Grace is the undeserved favour of God. We need grace because all humanity has a fundamental problem. By **natural inclination**, we are born sinners and want to live independently of God — by our effort, merit, and standards. And when we live independently, by our understanding, we form religion. So, if you want to be a Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or faithful follower of any religion, you can become one. But you can’t make yourself a Christian. Because by God’s grace alone, only by revelation, can you become a Christian (Matt 16:17).

On the other hand, you cannot take any credit if you are a Christian because you became one only because of grace. By His grace, God put His call in your heart, and you answered His call by faith and became a follower of Christ. Therefore, you cannot be proud or feel superior if you are a Christian. There is no such thing as a Dalit Christian or a Brahmin Christian. [In the Hindu Caste system, Dalits are outcastes, whereas Brahmins are the highest caste].

Grace is fundamental to Christianity because it is God’s character. God is gracious when dealing with others, whether good or bad people. Grace is never something that man deserves; God gives us grace because He is gracious.

Because God is gracious in character, He gives grace to the good and the wicked people on earth (Matt

5:45). This is known as **common grace**. The talents of teachers, musicians, scientists, mathematicians, economists, entertainers, and leaders all come from God's common grace. These are the grace gifts of the Father who works all types of workings in all men (1 Cor 12:6). Every single person has been given some grace gift from Father God. Common grace should lead us to appreciate who God is and give Him thanks. This will open us to receiving God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, His Son.

God is gracious; He gives us salvation by His grace, but we must have faith in His grace to be saved. Grace is a gift of God, and so is faith because every good gift comes from God. But faith is the gift that opens the door for the gift of grace to work in our lives. Without faith, it is impossible to please God and receive anything from Him. We can block faith when we want to live independently of God without understanding His character. We must believe that God is good, that He loves us, and that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us.

Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works so that no one can boast.

Col 1:6 The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

Grace as Power for living

The Bible uses the word grace 131 times, of which 123 are in the New Testament. And in the NT, Paul uses grace 84 times. So, 64% of all the uses of grace in the Bible are by Paul. No wonder people call him "the apostle of grace."

Paul teaches us that grace is not only the undeserved favour of God for salvation but also an influence or power of God that works in us to change our capacities for **work**, suffering, and **obedience**. God is so gracious that He treats us better than we deserve and is also generous enough to offer us practical help so that we can please Him in our daily life.

2 Cor 9:8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Cor 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Grace is given to the humble:

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble".

Humility is to know we are utterly **unattractive** to God because we are sinful and, therefore, **helpless** to save ourselves. Therefore, it should make us utterly **dependent** on God's grace for our salvation because we utterly **trust** (have faith) in God's goodness and faithfulness — on His terms, which is the gospel.

When it comes to the gospel, generally:

- Women respond to it before men.
- People at the bottom of the social ladder respond to it before those at the top.
- Laypeople respond to it before the priests.

Why so? Because Jesus tries to tell us that success, high social status, power, or wealth will generally draw

our focus more towards the world than towards God. It will drive us toward what we can accomplish ourselves rather than our dependency on Him.

Jesus is **not** on the side of the women because they are women.

Jesus is **not** on the side of the poor because they are poor.

Jesus is **not** on the side of the outcast because they are outcasts.

But, the entrance to the kingdom of God and the way of salvation is such that women respond to it before men, people at the bottom of society tend to respond to it before those at the top. Jesus says, *“So the last will be first, and the first will be last (Matt 20:16, Mark 10:31, Luke 13:30)*. Jesus means that those first and highly esteemed by the world are blinded by it and find it hard to be spiritually aware of God’s kingdom. At the same time, those who are the least and last in the world are the first to become aware of God’s kingdom and salvation. **It will always happen that way everywhere in the world.** It is happening in India right now. The Dalit (outcaste) responds to the kingdom of God before the Brahmin (highest caste). And most high-caste Hindus think that Christianity is a “Dalit” religion. The way of salvation is such that the last (the Dalit) will be the first to see it, and the first (the Brahmin) will be the last to see it. But there are exceptions!

2. The Grace of God that brings salvation to all men has appeared and will appear

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.¹² It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

There is a past, present and future aspect to note in the above verses.

The past (2:11): The grace of God has appeared. The word *“appeared”* in Greek is *“epefanee”*, which means *“to shine forth as a bright light shines in the darkness”* or *“a striking appearance or manifestation”*. That bright light is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that was made public to humanity living in darkness. The Message Bible translates 2:11 as *“God’s readiness to give and forgive is now public. Salvation’s available for everyone!”* [The Message by Eugene Petersen].

The future (2:13): Once again, the word *“appearing”* (epefanee) is used to signify the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ at His glorious and sudden Second Coming.

The present (2:12 & 14): The grace of God *“teaches”* (Greek *“paideo”*), which means trains and disciplines us like the way a parent trains and disciplines a child. The purpose is to purify and present us as a holy people (bride) to Him (v14). Now, we look back at the past (v11) with gratitude and look to the future (v13) with the hope of our reward, and in this way, we motivate ourselves to cooperate with His grace to perfect in all holiness in the present. Therefore, Paul says, *“As God’s fellow workers, we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain”* (2 Cor 6:1).

3. The Grace of God can be refused if we want to live independently of God

Read John 18:1-14. A group of Roman soldiers, some officials from the High Priest and some Pharisees came to arrest Jesus. When Jesus asked them who they wanted, they replied Jesus of Nazareth. When Jesus answered, *“I am He”* (Greek—I AM he—God’s Name), battle-hardened Roman soldiers fell to the ground. It was Jesus’ final revelation of divinity when He effectively used the words, *“I AM he”*. Yet, they got up, bound Jesus in chains, and eventually led Him to be crucified (John 18-19).

Notice that the group that came to arrest Jesus comprised **Jews and Gentiles, high-caste and commoners** (Jewish officials, Pharisees and rough- tough soldiers). They all bound Jesus in chains. That group, in a way,

represents the whole of humanity. And all of them did not want God on His terms. They wanted a God whom they could bind in chains and follow on their terms. They refuse the grace of God's revelation (I AM he) and want to live independently of God.

My non-Christian friends often ask me why I say Jesus is the only way to God. I tell them that God impressed my heart to earnestly seek Him and follow Him **on His terms, with a pledge to follow Him sincerely**. And God revealed Jesus to me. Then, I asked my friends whether they would sincerely pray to God to reveal Himself with a pledge to follow Him **on His terms** when He did. Their answer was either silence or they would say No—the cost is too much.

John 7:17 Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Jer 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Read Mark 12:1-11 — the parable of the tenants. A fearsome end awaits those who refuse the grace of God.