

# THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD

## FAILURE TO FULLY APPRECIATE

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- For true believers, the thought of the mercy and grace of God is overwhelming, something in fact that they can never get over
- They realize that everything they have received from the Lord is all of grace, apart from any merit of their own
- They humbly understand that grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense and that all they are is because of the grace of the Lord

**1 Corinthians 15:10** ~ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

- But many today do not view the mercy and grace of God with such awe
- “But many church people are not like this. They may pay lip service to the idea of grace, but there they stop. Their conception of grace is not so much debased as nonexistent. The thought means nothing to them; it does not touch their experience at all. Talk to them about the church’s heating, or last year’s accounts, and they are with you at once; but speak to them about the realities to which the word *grace* points, and their attitude is one of deferential blankness. They do not accuse you of talking nonsense; they do not doubt that your words have meaning; but they feel that, whatever it is that you are talking about, it is beyond them, and the longer they have lived without it the surer they are that at their stage of life they do not really need it.”<sup>1</sup>
- “What is it that hinders so many who profess to believe in grace from really doing so? Why does the theme mean so little even to some who talk about it a great deal? The root of the trouble seems to be misbelief about the basic relationship between a person and God – misbelief rooted not just in the mind but in the heart, at the deeper level of things that we never question because we always take them for granted. There are four crucial truths in this realm which the doctrine of grace presupposes, and if they are not acknowledged and felt in one’s heart, clear faith in God’s grace becomes impossible.”<sup>2</sup>
  1. The moral ill-desert of man – but most people believe they are good at the core
  2. The retributive justice of God – but most people reject the notion that God will judge sin
  3. The spiritual impotence of man – but most people think they can repair their relationship with God
  4. The sovereign freedom of God – but most people think God’s grace is earned or deserved
- Failure to comprehend these four realities keeps us from truly grasping the biblical view of grace
- It is only when we understand what the NT teaches about the gospel of grace that we are swept off our feet with wonder and joy...because only then do we understand that our Judge has become our Savior by unmerited mercy and grace

## DEFINITIONS AND RELATIONSHIP

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### Definitions

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- Mercy (Gk. *eleos*) is God’s goodness manifested towards those who are in misery or distress...it is seen in his withholding of deserved judgment and is manifested in his patience and longsuffering
- It involves God not giving mankind the punishment they deserve

<sup>1</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

- “Mercy is an attribute of God...which disposes God to be actively compassionate...mercy is the goodness of God confronting human suffering and guilt...It is human misery and sin that call forth the divine mercy.”<sup>3</sup>
- It is God’s undeserved goodness in relation to human suffering
- It is God’s kindness exercised toward those who are miserable
- It is God’s willingness to relieve sinners in their distress
- It is when God rewards us with more than we deserve and punishes us with less
- “God’s mercy is His compassion toward all those who are made miserable by the pain and suffering brought on by their own sin or as a consequence of living in a fallen world. It is extended, then, to those who are undeserving and have no claim on it.”<sup>4</sup>
- “God’s mercy describes him as perfectly having deep compassion for creatures (people), such that he demonstrates benevolent goodness to those in a pitiable or miserable condition, even though they do not deserve it.”<sup>5</sup>
- Grace (Gk. *charis*) is God’s undeserved favor shown to man...it allows him to show unmerited favor towards his people
- It is his willingness to lavish his people with his blessing and gifts and it is completely undeserved
- It has been referred to as God’s love toward the unworthy...his benevolence apart from any merit...undeserved benevolence...his goodness to those who have forfeited it
- “Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving. It is a self-existence principle inherent in the divine nature and appears to us as a self-caused propensity to pity the wretched, spare the guilty, welcome the outcast, and bring into favor those who were before under just disapprobation. Its use to us sinful men is to save us and make us sit together in heavenly places to demonstrate to the ages the exceeding riches of God’s kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”<sup>6</sup>

## Relationship

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- God’s mercy and grace are very closely related and are often referred to in the same context
 

**Exodus 34:6** ~ Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

**Nehemiah 9:31** ~ Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them, For You are a gracious and compassionate God.

**Psalms 103:8** ~ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

**Psalms 145:8** ~ The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.

**1 Timothy 1:2** ~ To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

**2 John 3** ~ Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father
- Clearly, there is much overlap in the meanings of these two words in that both indicate the saving favor of God toward those who are undeserving
- But they are not identical...mercy is not getting what we deserve...grace is getting what we don’t deserve

<sup>3</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, 90-91.

<sup>4</sup> Terry Johnson, *The Excellencies of God*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 182.

<sup>6</sup> Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 93.

- “...when nuanced, mercy is directed toward our misery, grace toward our guilt. Mercy has in view our suffering, grace our sin. Mercy focuses on the divine *disposition* of sympathy and compassion, grace the divine *deliverance* of God’s people from the cause of their suffering.”<sup>7</sup>

## THE MERCY OF GOD

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- God’s mercy is the focus when people are in misery or distress

### Characteristics of God’s Mercy

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#### *Expressed in Sympathy*

- We are weak and in great need of help...and God is sympathetic toward those in that situation
- God’s attitude toward those in misery is one of compassion, sympathy, and pity
- He is never indifferent to those who are suffering...never detached or unconcerned
- God doesn’t ignore the downcast...rather he comforts them since it is in his nature to do so
- He is the very source and fountain of all comfort since only he is able to provide the adequate comfort for every circumstance that may arise

**Psalm 103:13** ~ Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

**Lamentations 3:22-23** ~ The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

**Romans 15:5** ~ Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

**2 Corinthians 1:3** ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

- “When I am sick, what is God’s attitude? He has compassion for me. When I am brokenhearted, what is God’s attitude? He sympathizes with me. When I am discouraged, lonely, confused, and defeated? He pities me like a father his children. There is no pity, no compassion as great as that of a father for his children.”<sup>8</sup>

#### *Expressed Through Means*

- Typically, God comforts us through means
- He demonstrates mercy to us through other people

**2 Corinthians 7:6** ~ But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

**2 Samuel 12:24** ~ Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the LORD loved him

- He demonstrates mercy to us through physical means

**2 Samuel 24:14** ~ Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man.”

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<sup>7</sup> Johnson, *Excellencies of God*, 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

**Daniel 2:18** ~ so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

**Jonah 4:6** ~ So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.

**Philippians 2:27** ~ For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

- He demonstrates mercy to us through answered prayer

**Hebrews 4:15-16** ~ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

### *Expressed in Acts of Care*

- God takes action by extending and showing mercy to his people...he helps them when they are suffering

**Psalms 68:5** ~ A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

**Psalms 146:7** ~ Who executes justice for the oppressed; Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free.

**Hosea 14:3** ~ Assyria will not save us, We will not ride on horses; Nor will we say again, 'Our god,' To the work of our hands; For in You the orphan finds mercy."

- For this reason, people in the Bible frequently cried out to God for mercy, pleading with him to grant it

**Psalms 25:6** ~ Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses, For they have been from of old.

**Psalms 30:10** ~ Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me; O LORD, be my helper.

**Psalms 31:22** ~ As for me, I said in my alarm, "I am cut off from before Your eyes"; Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications When I cried to You.

**Psalms 57:1** ~ Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by.

**Matthew 9:27** ~ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

**Matthew 15:22** ~ And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."

- "Knowing that God is merciful and that He loves to show mercy emboldens us to plead for mercy whenever we are in distress. It gives us confidence that He will hear our plea with favor. How are we to respond to sickness, bodily injury, family tragedy, relational discord, financial strain, natural disasters, the attack of our enemies? We are to plead for mercy to a merciful God."<sup>9</sup>

### **The Ultimate Display of God's Mercy**

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- Nowhere is this more evident than in the fact that God treats sinners with abundant and undeserved mercy, which saves them and grants them an eternal inheritance

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

**Titus 3:5** ~ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy...

**1 Peter 1:3** ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

**1 Peter 2:10** ~ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

**Romans 11:32** ~ God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

**Romans 9:1-24** (esp. vv. 15-16, 18, 23)

- For this reason, we can cry out to God for mercy in salvation

**Luke 18:13** ~ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’

## THE GRACE OF GOD

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- Not only is God merciful in relation to human misery, he is also gracious in regard to human sin
- God’s grace is his free favor displayed to those who are guilty, unworthy, and ill-worthy
- Grace is the saving act of God in rescuing hell-deserving sinners
- “Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God exercised in the bestowment of blessings upon which those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded from them. Nay, more; it is the favor of God shown to those who not only have no positive deserts of their own, but who are thoroughly ill-deserving and hell-deserving. It is completely unmerited and unsought, and is altogether unattracted by anything in or from or by the objects upon which is it bestowed. Grace can neither be bought, earned, nor won by the creature. If it could be, it would cease to be grace. When a thing is said to be of “grace” we mean that the recipient has no claim upon it, that it was in nowise due him. It comes to him as pure charity, and, at first, unasked and undesired.”<sup>10</sup>
- “Rightly understood, this one word ‘grace’ contains within itself the whole of New Testament theology...[it is] the key that unlocks the New Testament.”<sup>11</sup>

### It is Entirely Apart from Works

- God’s grace is free in that grace and works cannot mix

**Romans 4:1-5** ~ What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

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

**Galatians 2:21** ~ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

**Titus 3:5** ~ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

- Prior to the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church emphasized grace, but not grace alone

<sup>10</sup> A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, 66.

<sup>11</sup> J.I. Packer, *God’s Words: Studies of Key Bible Themes*, 95.

- Rome does not teach that one is saved by works apart from the grace of God...they teach that one is saved by the grace of God...but they teach that grace requires human cooperation and effort if anyone is to be saved
- Salvation results from human works infused with God's grace...a joint human-divine cooperation that leads to salvation (grace + works = salvation)
- This is what the Protestant Reformation objected to...the Reformers maintained that the sinner is saved by the grace of God alone, apart from human effort
- Nothing the sinner does commends him to the grace of God...the sinner does not cooperate with God in order to merit his salvation...it is entirely apart from works (grace = salvation + works)
- Even today, there is the idea that God brings man part way along the path of salvation but then leaves it up to him to save himself by "making a decision for Christ"
- Unwittingly, this results in a "cooperative effort" form of the Gospel where man is saved not by grace alone but by grace plus works
- Such a presentation is based on the flawed and unbiblical idea that can be summarized by the saying, "Satan votes against you, God votes for you, and it is up to you to cast the deciding vote."
- So much that passes for evangelism training today has more in common with something from a book on salesmanship than it does the Bible, often using manipulative techniques to get someone to "make a decision"
- They assume God did His part...and now He is just waiting for me to have faith...to do my part
- In this view, God supplies the grace and we supply the faith

## **It is Eternal**

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- Before time began, God determined to grant grace to his people, an act done entirely apart from man's works

**2 Timothy 1:9** ~ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

## **It is Sovereign**

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- God did not have to choose to be gracious to anyone because no one has a claim to the grace of God
- It is given to those who are undeserving...and he exercises grace toward and bestows it upon whom he wishes

**Exodus 33:19** ~ And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

- "Eternal life is a gift, therefore it can neither be earned by good works, nor claimed as a right. Seeing that salvation is a 'gift,' who has any right to tell God on whom He ought to bestow it? It is not that the Giver ever refuses this gift to any who seek it wholeheartedly, and according to the rules which He has prescribed. No! He refuses none who come to Him empty-handed and in the way of His appointing. But if out of a world of impenitent and unbelieving rebels, God is determined to exercise His sovereign right by choosing a limited number to be saved, who is wronged? Is God obliged to force His gift on those who value it not? Is God compelled to save those who are determined to go their own way?"<sup>12</sup>

## **It is Mediated Through Christ**

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- God's grace is most abundantly evident in the Person and work of Christ...there is no salvation outside of him
- To have Christ is to have everything; to not have Christ is to have nothing

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<sup>12</sup> Pink, *Attributes of God*, 67.

**John 1:14, 16** ~ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth...16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

**Romans 5:15** ~ But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

**1 Timothy 2:5** ~ For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

## It is Saving

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- God's grace saves believers from God Himself...apart from His grace, mankind can only expect His judgment
- God's saving grace is super-abounding in that there is no amount of sin that God's grace cannot overcome

**Romans 5:20** ~ The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more

- We contribute nothing to our salvation except the sin that makes it necessary...the totality of our salvation is a gift of grace from God
- God is exclusively the Savior of lost sinners in that is the grace of God alone that converts the sinner
- This is what is meant by the Protestant Reformation principle of *sola gratia* (grace alone)...salvation involves grace at the start...grace to the end...grace in the middle...grace without fail...grace without mixture...grace without addition...grace that allows no boasting...grace that precludes all glorying but in the Lord
- It is God who acts first...God who draws the wretched sinner to Himself...God who gives new life to a person
- "Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the grace of God. As soon may you expect the leopard to regret the blood with which its fangs are moistened—as soon might you expect the lion of the wood to abjure his cruel tyranny over the feeble beasts of the plain, as expect the sinner to make any confession, or offer any repentance that shall be accepted of God, unless grace shall first renew the heart."
- No one is saved other than by grace

**Titus 2:11** ~ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men

**Titus 3:3-7** ~ For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life

**Romans 3:9-28**

**Ephesians 1:4-8**

**Eph 2:1-10**

## It is Sanctifying

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- Grace not only enables the faith that justifies but also provides the power that sanctifies, a transforming grace
- Justification and sanctification are inseparable...this rules out any notion of antinomianism because the same grace that saves also sanctifies

**Romans 6:1** ~ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

**Titus 2:11-12** ~ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD

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### Gratitude to God

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- We should revel in the grace and mercy God has shown us...because the wonders of divine grace are the greatest wonders of all
- When we realize our salvation is all of grace, it humbles us and makes it realize where we would be were it not for God's grace...this should compel heart-felt worship and praise to God for his mercy and grace

**Romans 11:30-36** ~ For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, 31 so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. 32 For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

### Assurance of Faith

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- “We may pause here to consider the impact of the grace of salvation on our assurance...Satan will attempt to rob us of our confidence. He will point to our weak faith and our flawed works. He will accuse us of hypocrisy and self-deception...Flee to the strong tower of grace...Flee to the God whose essence is grace.”<sup>13</sup>

**Romans 8:29-30** ~ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

### Grace and Mercy Toward Others

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- We should never forget God's dealings with us as we deal with others; mercy received means mercy extended

**Matthew 5:7** ~ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

**Matthew 18:33** ~ Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?

**Luke 6:36** ~ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

**Luke 10:36-37** ~ “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?” 37 And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4** ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

**James 2:13** ~ For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

- “God does not respond to our weakness with contempt, disdain, or disgust...God looks on our weakness with sympathy, compassion, and mercy. So likewise must we look on the weak as enabled by a merciful God. Let us then show mercy to the poor, the sick, the weak, the young, the elderly, the oppressed, the ignorant, the foolish, and the disabled. Let us show mercy as we have received mercy.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Johnson, *Excellencies of God*, 31.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.