

# We need to see our world in high-definition!



## What Is Grace? Why Does It matter?

### WE NEED TO SEE THE GOSPEL IN HI-DEFINITION ...

It seems that every religious group under the sun lays claim to the gospel and grace. But Paul has taught us that there is only one gospel, so we cannot all be right.

### WE NEED TO SEE GRACE IN HI-DEFINITION ...

Grace is God's unmerited favor. Grace is God at work. God alone does the work of salvation. See Ephesians 2:8 below: "this is not your doing."

- (Ephesians 2:8-9) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

If you are saved, you are saved by grace. Grace saves. Grace doesn't just get the process started; grace doesn't just help us along and provide encouragement and support, a kindly smile along the way. Grace saves.

From beginning to end our salvation is a work of grace. God pours his favor and power on us throughout the entire process. We will one day be presented before God as holy and complete, the craftsmanship of God.

- (Ephesians 2:10 ESV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

### SOME "HI-DEF" DEFINITIONS ...

**John MacArthur ...** Grace is a terribly misunderstood word. Defining it succinctly is notoriously difficult. Some of the most detailed theology textbooks do not offer any concise definition of the term. Someone has proposed an acronym: GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. That's not a bad way to characterize grace, but it is not a sufficient theological definition. One of the best-known definitions of grace is only three words: God's unmerited

favor. A. W. Tozer expanded on that: "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving." Louis Berkhof is more to the point: grace is "the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit." [MacArthur, John F. *The Gospel According to the Apostles* (p. 40). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.]

**Burton Scott ...** A rigid definition is hardly possible, but still a single conception is actually present in almost every case where "grace" is found—the conception that all a Christian has or is, is centered exclusively in God and Christ, and depends utterly on God through Christ. [Burton Scott Easton (1877–1950) was an Episcopalian seminary professor and NT scholar.]

### WE NEED TO SEE OUR CALLING IN HI-DEFINITION ...

- (Galatians 1:6 NIV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

The word χάρις (charis, grace) appears only seven times in the letter (1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18) but nevertheless touches on a key issue in Paul's argument. God has decisively manifested himself in Christ, thus sidelining the law, and his saving work in Christ is completely a matter of grace, to which humans can only respond with faith, not works of any kind. [Moo, D. J. (2013). Galatians (p. 77). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.]

**Grace matters because grace is how we live.** Grace is our sufficient strength provided by God and completely undeserved. We are saved by grace—God's promise that he will finish the work in our lives that he has begun.

- (2 Corinthians 12:9–10 ESV) 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of

Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- (Philippians 1:6 ESV) And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

### **GRACE IS NOT JUST A GOOD IDEA ...**

We have to be on our guard against the supposition that grace is an abstract quality; it is an active personal principle ... In the great proportion of passages in which the word grace is found in the New Testament, it signifies the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. [Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1871), p. 179.]

In Paul ... [grace] is never merely an attitude or disposition of God (God's character as gracious); consistently it denotes something much more dynamic—the wholly generous act of God ... it denotes effective divine power in the experience of men." [James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), p. 17.]

- (2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV) 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 of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
- (Romans 1:16–17 ESV) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

### **WE NEED TO SEE OUR LIVES IN HI-DEFINITION ...**

**What might grace look like in our lives? How would we know?** How can we tell if we've got it right, if we've got grace right, the gospel right? Maybe this. Does my life look like a life that has the generous, over-the-top, unmerited, undeserved favor of the Lord God the Almighty poured into it to overflowing? Does my life look like it has been changed by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit of God?

#### **So you might see this ...**

- (Galatians 5:22–25 NLT) But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

#### **And not this ...**

- (Galatians 5:26) Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

### **A tree planted by streams of water ...**

- (Psalm 1:1–6 NIV) Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.
- (Jeremiah 17:7–8 NIV) But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

### **Peace like a river of peace and righteousness as the waves of the sea ...**

- (Isaiah 48:18 ESV) Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.
- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.

### **A life of love ...**

- (1 Corinthians 13:1–8 ESV) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

Don't fool yourself with religion or some creed or statement of faith. Don't let your deceived heart bamboozle you with some packaged, rehearsed testimony.

When you stand in front of the mirror of God's holy word, do you see Jesus Christ, the hope of glory? Are you tasting the goodness of God or the bitterness of sin and this world?