

A PRAYER-BLESSING FOR GRACE

—THE NECESSARY AND PROMINENT ROLE OF GRACE IN THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILDS—



GRACE UPON GRACE ...

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW ...

The thorough and blessed preparation in the hearts of the Thessalonians as the Lord was building his church.

1. They were prayed for and their faith and love affirmed.
 - (1 Thessalonians 1:2–3)
2. Paul affirmed that the gospel was effective in their lives.
 - (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5)
3. They were exhorted to walk worthy.
 - (1 Thessalonians 2:12)
4. They received the word of God as the word of God.
 - (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
5. They were prepared to face afflictions as their destiny.
 - (1 Thessalonians 3:3)
6. Paul asked God to make their love for one another abound so that he would establish their hearts in holiness.
 - (1 Thessalonians 3:12–13)
7. They were instructed on the discipline of controlling their bodies.
 - (1 Thessalonians 4:2–5 ESV)
8. They were commended for their love for each other and urged to do this more and more.
 - (1 Thessalonians 4:9–10)
9. They were cautioned to live quietly and mind their own business.
 - (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12)
10. Paul gave them important information regarding the rapture of the saints.
 - (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17)
11. Paul gave them important information regarding the Day of the Lord.
 - (1 Thessalonians 5:1–3)

12. Paul asks them to respect their leaders.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13)

13. Paul exhorts them regarding their general behavior in view of the will of God—not paying back evil, doing good, rejoicing, praying, giving thanks, not quenching the Spirit, honoring prophecy, testing, holding fast to what is good and abstaining from evil in every form.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:15–22)

14. Paul blesses them for the complete work of the holiness of God in their lives.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24)

All of which is meaningless apart from the grace of God active in their lives ... so Paul prays for grace and peace.

1. Grace to you ... Paul's prayer-blessing for grace and peace underscores our absolute dependence on the grace of God from the very beginning.

- (1 Thessalonians 1:1 ESV) Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: **Grace to you and peace.**

TWO QUESTIONS ... **WHAT IS GRACE? AND WHY IS IT CRUCIAL TO OUR LIVES IN EVERYTHING WE DO?**

WHAT IS GRACE?

A. Grace is more than an attitude.

B. Grace is the work of God by which he extends his good will to favor the humble and not the proud.

Grace is the inexhaustible, immeasurable, continuous supply of God's unmerited favor which he exercises toward his elect in the outworking of his saving and sanctifying activity in our lives.

God's grace is the superabounding, eternal stream of his mercy and love from which and based on his character, his power, his authority, and the riches of his glory he works his good into our lives for his glory.

- (Ephesians 2:4 ESV) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us.

Grace is the opposite of human works.

- (Romans 11:6 ESV) But **if it is by grace, it is**

no longer on the basis of works; **otherwise grace would no longer be grace.**

WHY IS GRACE CRUCIAL TO OUR LIVES?

C. Grace is our abounding victor in our battle with sin.

- (Romans 5:20 ESV) Now the law came in to increase the trespass, **but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.**

Grace does not sidestep or ignore sin but confronts and defeats sin. If we do not understand the abounding, victorious nature of grace, then we do not know grace.

D. By grace we can now have true hope.

- (Romans 5:2 ESV) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, **and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

E. By grace we have a restoration path to glory.

- (Romans 3:23–24 ESV) **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift,** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

A correct, biblical understanding of grace reveals our desperate need for something beyond ourselves; something that we cannot supply; something without which our lives and all our endeavors are hopeless. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The grace of God changes that.

F. Knowing grace is knowing Jesus—knowing Jesus is knowing grace.

- (John 1:14 ESV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and **we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**
- (John 1:16 ESV) **For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.**

"Grace upon grace" provides insight into our tremendous need for the continuous supply of grace.

2. Prayer: Pray for those leading the work of building the Lord's church.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:25 ESV) **Brothers, pray for us.**

WHY DO WE PRAY?

A. We pray because God tells us to pray.

B. Praying reveals our need for God's involvement—his

grace—in our lives.

C. Praying brings us in humility before God and heightens our awareness of the importance of God's help and intervention in our lives.

D. Our need to pray is without ceasing.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 ESV) Rejoice always, 17 **pray without ceasing,** 18 give thanks in all circumstances; **for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

3. Affection: We need to express sincere affection toward our brothers and sisters in Christ.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:26 ESV) Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

4. Accountability: We must be diligent to make sure that everyone hears the things in this letter.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:27 ESV) I put you under oath before the Lord **to have this letter read to all the brothers.**

CONCLUSION ... Examining our lives for the presence and activity of grace ...

AM I STANDING IN GRACE? AM I A GRACE PERSON?

5. Grace: Paul's prayer-blessing for grace underscores our absolute dependence on the grace of God to continue.

- (1 Thessalonians 5:28 ESV) **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

A. Believing is God's work of grace.

- (Acts 18:27 ESV) And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped **those who through grace had believed.**

B. By grace we have been saved.

- (Ephesians 2:5 ESV) Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved.**

C. We have been saved by grace so that God may show us the immeasurable riches of his grace.

- (Ephesians 2:7 ESV) **So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

D. Grace is sufficient for us to face every obstacle in life and those challenges we face provide the necessary conditions for Christ to display his power in our weaknesses.

- (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. 10 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.**

Maybe our lesson here is that when we finally and genuinely come to acknowledge how weak we are in comparison to the powerful working of God's grace—which is based on his character, power, authority and riches—then we are ready to rely on his grace and truly understand how to be strong.

E. We have the amazing opportunity to bring the grace of God into the lives of others by our words.

- (Ephesians 4:29–32 ESV) **Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.** 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 **Let all** bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander **be put away from you, along with all malice.** 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, **as God in Christ** forgave you.

As God in Christ portrays grace active and alive in us ... demonstrating the authentic and genuine nature of our faith in Christ.

So we should ask ourselves? Do we pass the word test and the forgiveness test? Is grace active in our lives in our words and in our forgiveness? Or do we live "the human way" and grieve the Spirit?

We grieve the Holy Spirit of God when we do not give grace with our words but sin in our mere human behavioral patterns that are conducive to bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and bad feelings.

F. God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud.

- (James 4:6 ESV) But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**”

G. Paul in his prayer for the Thessalonians makes a correlation between the Lord Jesus being glorified and the activity of the grace of God in our lives.

- (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 ESV) **To this end we always pray for you,** that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, 12 **so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you,** and you in him, **according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

H. We each have been gifted a stewardship of God's grace to use to serve one another.

- (1 Peter 4:10 ESV) As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

I. Another correlation: Clothing ourselves with humility and God give us grace.

- (1 Peter 5:5 ESV) Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

J. Growing in grace is a practiced discipline that is opposite of the undisciplined error of lawless people.

- (2 Peter 3:17–18 ESV) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** 18 **But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.