

# GRACE THROUGHOUT LIFE



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**To the praise of the glory of His grace,  
which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.  
Ephesians 1:6**

This book is edited from Bible classes taught by Gary D. Watson.

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Cover design by Melany Borsack.  
Cover photography: Robert/stock.adobe.com  
Proofreading of text by Camilla Hunt.  
Final book compilation by Cindy Rawlins.

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 979-8-218-32082-9

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## *Preface*

It is not possible for you to sit here, in the flesh, and comprehend the Word of God in the way that God intended for you to receive it. He planned for you to receive it through the ministry of His Holy Spirit, whose job is to help you metabolize this information and convert it into wisdom for your soul that you can use. This cannot happen if you are seated here, as a Christian, with *known* sins in your life. The Bible warns us: “do not quench the [Holy] Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19) and mandates us: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 4:30*a*). But that is what sin does. Therefore, you should always take a few moments of silent prayer before the study of the Word of God, to take the opportunity for self analysis to examine yourself and to see if there is any sin in your life. If there is, you need to make the application of Problem-Solving Device number one: **Rebound**.

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse [purify] us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

Let us take advantage of this grace asset that we have. Let us have a time of silent prayer. Let us prepare ourselves to study together. Let us ask God the Holy Spirit to enlighten us with what we examine in this book.

*We are indeed grateful, Father, for this grace opportunity to study Your Word. As we seek to learn your Word, may Your Holy Spirit have the freedom to challenge us, to enlighten us, to convict us, and to help us see that we really are in Christ, because it is in His name that we pray.*

*Amen.*

## *Grace Defined*

Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind, on the basis of the saving work of Christ on the cross; it is also the plan and policy of God for bestowing His unmerited love and favor on sinful humanity.<sup>1</sup>

“Unmerited” means there is nothing we can do, say, or be that would be deserving of God’s favor and love. There is no amount of money we can give to the church, no missionary activity, no personal sacrifice, no amount of abstinence from sin, and no number of good deeds that would be enough to earn God’s favor.

For each person, from birth to death, God’s grace provides the resources necessary to live. Those resources include the air we breathe, the food we eat, and all other essentials to sustain life. For the believer in Jesus Christ, God’s grace is not only provided during the believer’s life on earth, but it

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<sup>1</sup> Thieme’s Bible Doctrine Dictionary, R. B. Thieme, Jr., page 115

extends into eternity in heaven.

Understanding and applying grace is fundamental to our spiritual growth and happiness. Just as Jesus Christ graciously provided salvation to a fallen world through the cross, we, too, are expected to be gracious to others. Without grace orientation,<sup>2</sup> arrogance permeates the life, eventually leading to degeneracy, reversionism,<sup>3</sup> and unhappiness.

To better understand grace, we will examine it from three standpoints:

1. Grace related to God
2. Grace related to self
3. Grace related to others

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<sup>2</sup> Grace orientation is the mental attitude of the believer who recognizes that everything he is, and will ever be, depends solely on the power and plan of God. Saved by Grace, the believer lives by grace. From the realization of this unmerited divine favor comes grace orientation - the attitude of total reliance on God, adjustment to His grace policy, and utilization of limitless grace provisions. (Excerpt from Thieme's Bible Doctrine Dictionary, R. B. Thieme, Jr., page 116)

<sup>3</sup> Reversionism is the progressive regression and degradation of the believer who turns away from God's plan for his life and returns to a former viewpoint and lifestyle, that eventually renders him indistinguishable from an unbeliever. (Excerpt from Thieme's Bible Doctrine Dictionary, R. B. Thieme, Jr., page 221)



## *Grace Related to God*

### **Perfect God**

Before we explore grace related to God, we must first understand *who* God is. God is the Supreme Being of the universe, who possesses a divine nature, majesty, and eternal glory. The Scripture declares that while God is One in essence, all His attributes belong to three divine Persons<sup>4</sup>—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are commonly referred to as the Holy Trinity, or the Godhead.

The following briefly describes each divine attribute possessed by every member of the Godhead.<sup>5</sup>

### *Sovereignty*

God is the supreme ruler of the universe: “Know therefore . . . that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.” (Deut.

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<sup>4</sup> The Trinity, R. B. Thieme, Jr., inside cover

<sup>5</sup> For detailed descriptions of attributes, see Thieme’s Bible Doctrine Dictionary, R. B. Thieme, Jr., pages 86 - 89.

4:39). By God alone are all things in the universe brought into being, maintained and controlled, and made subject to His pleasure (Isa. 46:10; Col. 1:15-17).

### *Righteousness*

God is absolute good, free from sin and perfect in nature (Ps. 25:8; 34:8; 86:5). Inviolable righteousness is the very root and center of God's essence. Because God cannot compromise His righteousness without destroying His perfect character, all of His attitudes and actions conform to this flawless standard (Ps. 145:17*a*). Without absolute perfect righteousness, God would not be God. **God's perfection cannot accept anything less than the standard of His own righteousness. He can only condemn sin and reject the relative standards of human good.**

### *Justice*

God is perfectly just and fair, treating all His creatures alike, without bias or partiality (Deut. 10:17; Rom. 2:11). **In dealing with fallen man, the justice of God acts as the guardian of God's perfect character, ensuring that His absolute righteousness is never violated** (Deut. 32:4*b*).

### *Love*

The love of God is the absolute virtue and benevolence of His thinking and actions. Because God is love, He cannot, and does not, exist apart from love (1 John 4:8b, 16). **Functioning in perfect coordination with His righteousness and justice, God's love is the motivation behind every action toward mankind** (Ps. 33:4-5a). His love is eternal, unchanging, and unfailing (1 Chron. 16:34; Ps. 57:10). Even God's complete knowledge of the sins and failures of His creatures cannot disappoint, frustrate, or diminish His love. Infinitely superior to human love, divine love always functions in a rational manner, free from emotion and sentimentality.

### *Eternal Life*

God has no beginning or end (Ps. 90:2). There was never a time that God did not exist, and His life continues without termination (Deut. 32:40; Rev. 1:4).

### *Omniscience*

God is all-knowing. He knows perfectly, eternally, and simultaneously all that is knowable: both the

actual and the possible (Job 37:16; Ps. 139:4). He knows your thoughts, your motivations, and your actions. Nothing you can do will surprise Him.

### *Omnipotence*

God is all-powerful, unlimited in His ability and authority. He created the universe, holds it together, perpetuates history, and is the source of power given to believers to execute His plan (Isa. 40:26; 44:24; Zech. 4:6; Acts 1:8; Col. 1:16-17).

### *Omnipresence*

God is eternally, wholly, and simultaneously present everywhere (Jer. 23:24). His entire essence is present in nature, in history, and in all affairs of man and angels.

### *Immutability*

God is unchangeable (Ps. 33:11; 102:27; Mal. 3:6a). Regardless of circumstances, decisions, or human history, God never changes.

### *Veracity*

God is absolute truth. Truth is never diminished or compromised in God, for He is the origin of truth.

His “word is truth” (John 17:17*b*) and therefore, the only source of absolute truth for mankind.

It is important to remember that all of God’s attributes are perfect and infinite, and a perfect God cannot have a relationship with imperfect man, or He would not be God.

### **Imperfect Man**

As a result of Adam’s original sin in the Garden of Eden, we are born physically alive, but spiritually dead. Spiritual death describes man’s total separation from God (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1). Adam, the first man, was created spiritually alive with a body, soul, and human spirit; but he lost his human spirit when he chose to sin (Gen. 2:7; 3:6). Adam’s original sin brought condemnation to all mankind (Rom. 5:12). Every human being, except for Jesus Christ, is born physically alive, but spiritually dead.<sup>6</sup>

As a consequence of spiritual death, a barrier separates us from God; that barrier keeps us from having a relationship with Him. Consider that barrier

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpt from Thieme’s Bible Doctrine Dictionary, R. B. Thieme, Jr., page 54

to be composed of six bricks, each representing one of the following obstacles between man and God:

**1. Sin:** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Because of Adam’s original transgression, every man begins life condemned until He accepts God’s Grace gift of salvation. This is **redemption**.

**2. Penalty of sin:** “For the wages of sin is [spiritual] death” (Rom 6:23a). Spiritual death is passed down to the entire human race at birth. This penalty for the crime of being born in sin leaves all humans hopelessly in debt to God. However, the debt was paid by the perfect humanity of Christ, Who died as a substitute for us all on the cross. This is **expiation**

**3. Physical birth:** Since Adam’s fall, every human being is born physically alive, but spiritually dead (Rom 5:12). We are born without a human spirit, which we must possess to have a relationship and fellowship with God. When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we become regenerated, born again, made spiritually alive, through no works of our own. It is all God’s doing – God’s Grace. This is **regeneration**.

**4. *Relative Righteousness:*** The personal goodness, or relative righteousness of even the most noble believer cannot meet the standards of God's absolute righteousness. Compared to God's perfection, man's goodness is totally inadequate. God has solved this problem by giving us, in Grace, His own divine righteousness for those who only believe in Him. This is **justification**.

**5. *Character of God:*** In Grace, God has made provision to reconcile man to Himself without compromising His Divine, perfect character. The impeccable Jesus Christ became our substitute and was judged for all the sins of everyone who would ever live on this earth. This sacrifice satisfied God's perfect righteousness, and justice prevailed so that God is able to offer us salvation. This is **propitiation**.

**6. *Position in Adam:*** "For as in Adam all die [spiritual death]," (1 Cor.15:22a); meaning mankind is born condemned and separated from God. Man's position in Adam is only resolved by man's position in Christ, the personal and eternal union with Christ through which "all will be made alive" (1

Cor.15:22b). The instant someone believes in Christ, he is made a new creature by God the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5:17). This is **reconciliation**.

*Our Gracious Mediator, Jesus Christ*

So, how is the barrier between God and man removed? There is only one way and it is not through anything we can do.

When we look at the perfection of every aspect of God's character, and the utter corruption of every aspect of man's being, it could only be by the absolute perfection of God's love, in coordination with His righteousness and justice, that we could have a chance at a relationship with Him. God came up with a perfect plan in eternity past to eliminate the barrier so we may have fellowship with Him. This was accomplished by the sacrificial, substitutionary death of the perfect Christ on the cross. Without this gracious divine intervention, man would face eternal condemnation and separation from God. No matter what we may possess in the way of abilities, talents, or material wealth, we are totally incapable of saving ourselves, or of having fellowship with God. No one has ever been able to remove the barrier by his own



efforts or merits. Only God possesses the power, knowledge, and plan to take down the barrier, and He did it at the cross.

Jesus Christ is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person. He is both true humanity (Rom. 1:3), as well as “the [exact] image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). Only a perfect sacrifice for our sins would satisfy our perfect God. The humanity of Christ remained perfect (without sin) as He was judged for our sins for three hours on the cross. “For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just [Righteous One as a substitute] for *the* unjust [unrighteous ones], so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh [substitutionary spiritual death]” (1 Pet. 3:18a).

The finished work of Christ on the cross signifies salvation is available to all, but does not automatically assure the salvation of all. Only those who express faith in Jesus Christ are eternally saved (John 3:16b). No one can do anything to earn or deserve this grace and love from God. No one can be saved by his own works, such as making Christ Lord, inviting Christ into his heart, walking down

an aisle, weeping tears of repentance at the altar, confessing his sins to the congregation, living a good or moral life, or promising God to do better. No one can add anything to the salvation work of Christ on the cross. The scripture is explicit: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that [the salvation] not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2: 8-9).

It is, therefore, important to distinguish between religion and true Christianity. In religion, man seeks God through personal merit and human righteousness. In Christianity, God graciously seeks man through the saving work of Christ on the cross. In other words, Christianity is based on God’s grace. Religion is based on human works, which are considered filthy rags by God (Isa 64:6).

Unfortunately, certain churches under the “banner” of Christianity, require demonstrations of human effort to supplement their belief in Christ for salvation. They assert that it is not sufficient to simply believe in Jesus Christ for our eternal salvation. Rather, we must actively participate in

the process of being saved in order to authenticate or complete the salvation process. These distorted systems devalue the person and work of Christ, Who did all the work on the cross. False gospels thrive today because man, in his self-righteous arrogance and ignorance of Truth, sincerely believes he can, and should, contribute to his own salvation. False gospels impart that man, by man's effort, can achieve salvation. Some examples of these human works include the following:

- Verbalization: Belief in Jesus Christ as Savior is supplemented by the verbalization, or confession, of personal sins, often resulting in public expressions of regret, or declarations of guilt.
- Commitment: In order to be saved, salvation must include a personal commitment to modify one's behavior, frequently related to increased church attendance or service, discontinuance of immoral thoughts and actions, and/or the acceptance of behavioral traits usually attributed to Christians.
- Lordship: Salvation is defined by the epigram: "If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all." The phrase "not Lord at all" implies that we are not saved if Christ is not Lord in every

aspect of our lives. For salvation, however, the scripture clearly states that we need only believe in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross to be saved.

- **Ritual:** Certain ceremonies, or rituals, must accompany salvation in order to authenticate one's belief in Christ as Savior. Circumcision, water baptism, and the Eucharist are rituals commonly regarded as necessary for salvation. However, only believing in the Lord is necessary.
- **Morality:** Ethical behavior is necessary for salvation. On the contrary, man's imperfect essence is not capable of ever fulfilling God's impeccable standards.
- **Emotion:** Some form of emotionalism must accompany one's faith, although scripture does not identify any emotional expression as a precondition or requirement for salvation. You do not have to "feel saved" to be saved.
- **Church membership:** You must become a member to be saved.
- **Psychological works:** Falsely correlates faith in Jesus Christ with raising your hands, walking down the aisle, or weeping at the altar.

- Reverse invitation: Falsely states you must invite Christ into your heart or life to be saved. However, the act of inviting is an expression of human effort that devalues the person and work of Christ on the cross. Our hearts are “deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked.” (Jer. 17:9, KJV). Christ is the One who did all of the work of salvation, and He is the one Who issues the invitation to believe in Him.

It is sometimes hard to accept grace gifts of immense value. It seems too easy and we are not accustomed to getting something for nothing in this world. It can be embarrassing and even humiliating, to acknowledge that we do not deserve the gift, and we can do nothing to repay the giver. Often, we try to do favors for the giver, i.e., to be nicer, to work for them, or otherwise show them, and the world, that we deserve the gift. But as believers who have received the greatest and most valuable grace gift of all, we must become humble and accepting of the gift, instead of working to be worthy of the gift. The truth is, we are not worthy and never will be. Nothing we could ever do could earn the incredible gift of salvation. God, in His perfect love, found a way to

bless us with salvation, as well as a relationship with Him, totally apart from any good works or deeds that we have performed or could perform. When we try to do good works to justify ourselves, we are in effect saying that we don't believe what Christ did on the cross was enough and we need to add to His work. What arrogance!

Believers are the beneficiaries of the most gracious accomplishment and priceless treasure in human history – **our eternal salvation through faith alone in Christ alone**. We didn't earn it. We don't deserve it. But He died spiritually for us, so we can live with God forever, just by believing in Him. Such amazing grace!

## Grace Related to Self

God extends His grace to unbelievers by perpetuating life as well as revealing and making understandable the message of Christ's saving work. This is called **Common Grace** because it is available to the entire human race.

### *Grace After Salvation*

As a believer, God freely provides grace throughout our lives, through our death, and into eternity. When we depend on His grace to support us, we are content.

For those who make the non-meritorious decision to believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit takes that faith and makes it effective for our salvation. This is called **Efficacious Grace**; it produces the intended and desired result of eternal salvation. Without it, the positive volition of the spiritually dead person could never result in an eternal relationship with God.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., page 81

After one believes in Jesus Christ, the condemnation of spiritual death is removed and one is entered into a permanent relationship with God. This is called **Saving Grace**; anyone who expresses faith in Jesus Christ appropriates saving grace (Rom. 5:21; Eph. 2:8-9).

God supplies life support, protection, and spiritual resources to every believer. This is called **Logistical Grace, or Living Grace**, and from the moment of salvation, God faithfully supplies everything required for believers to advance in His plan (Rom. 8:32; Cor. 9:8; Phil. 4:16).

As the faithful believer grows in grace through metabolizing Bible Doctrine daily, he learns to depend on God's logistical grace, rather than on his own works, morality, or flawed understanding. He fully utilizes logistical grace to advance to special blessings in the spiritual life. Special blessings for the believer come when he has capacity for them because of his spiritual growth (Isa. 30:18; Rom. 5:17). These are called **Supergrace Blessings**; and may include success, wealth, or social and romantic relationships.



Progressing beyond supergrace, the believer intensifies his doctrinal intake and presses on through periods of undeserved suffering.<sup>8</sup> This is called **Ultrasupergrace**. The ultrasupergrace believer is fully occupied with Christ. Hardships merely increase his contentment through increased reliance on the Lord (Phil. 1:20-21; 3:8-14; Heb. 10:32-33; James 5:10-11).

In God's timing, the grace-oriented believer receives a glorious transition from earthly life to eternity. This is called **Dying Grace**, which is accompanied by a relaxed mental attitude, happiness, and contentment as biological life fades away (Ps. 116:15). It can be considered the "dessert" of life because, in dying grace, the mature believer has no regrets as he looks back on his life. He is totally calm and even has eager anticipation regarding where he will soon be, which is face to face with his Creator and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:8).

In heaven, unimaginable treasures of grace await, simply because he has glorified God by following the matchless plan of grace. This is called **Surpassing**

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., page 262

**Grace**, because the riches He reserves for the mature believer are beyond the normal blessings in heaven (Eph. 2:7).

As you can see, everything the believer is, or will be, depends on God's grace. The believer who recognizes this and depends solely upon the power and plan of God, is grace orientated. Saved by grace, the believer lives by grace. From the realization of this unmerited divine favor comes total reliance on God, adjustment to His grace policy, and utilization of limitless grace provision. All power for executing God's plan comes from grace (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 13:9) and without it, believers could not survive in the devil's world. Accordingly, scripture exhorts believers to "Stand firm in it!" (1 Pet. 5:12*b*). "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord" reinforces this mandate for there can be no grace orientation without humility (James 4:10). There can be no growth in grace without following the command to "grow in the grace and knowledge" of our Lord" (2 Pet. 3:18).

God, in His omniscience, knew that every believer would sin, face failures, and experience pressure

along the way to spiritual maturity. He graciously provided us the Ten Problem Solving Devices.<sup>9</sup> The first one is rebound<sup>10</sup> (1 John 1:9), so we can get back into fellowship and keeping growing spiritually. His grace never fails. He never wearies of our repetitious rebounding. He never says, “this time you do not deserve it”. We never deserve forgiveness, but He always forgives! Who are we not to forgive ourselves when the perfect God of the universe has forgiven us? Who are we to hold onto guilt and try to do penance, or feel sad for what we have done, when Christ accomplished all the work paying for our sins on the cross?

Since grace is the policy of God towards man, He wants the highest and best for everyone.

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<sup>9</sup> The Ten Problem Solving Devices are as follows: 1) Rebound, 2) Filling of the Holy Spirit, 3) Faith-Rest Drill, 4) Grace Orientation, 5) Doctrinal Orientation, 6) Personal Sense of Destiny, 7) Personal Love for God the Father, 8) Impersonal Love for All Mankind, 9) Sharing the Happiness of God, 10) Occupation with Christ. For more information on the Ten Problem Solving Devices, see Christian Suffering, R. B. Thieme, Jr.

<sup>10</sup> Rebound is confession of known sins to God the Father. This is a grace procedure, by which carnal believers are forgiven of post-salvation personal sins, restored to fellowship with God, and are able to resume the spiritual life. (Definition from an excerpt from Thieme’s Bible Doctrine Dictionary, R. B. Thieme, Jr., page 214)

Consequently, when we make bad decisions and neglect rebound and the spiritual life, He knows exactly what to do to get us back on track. Sometimes, like good parents who love their children and want what is best for them, God punishes us when we do wrong. Sometimes it is a gentle nudge; other times it may be a divine two-by-four across our foreheads. In His omniscience, He knows exactly what we need. This is a demonstration of God's grace. You see, once you rebound and resume your spiritual life, that punishment may or may not continue. But if it does persist, it is now suffering for blessing and it is bearable.

The greatest heroes of the Bible reached maturity not by their own genius or strength, but by fully submitting themselves to the gracious hand of God. David, at one of the lowest points of his life, penned a beautiful testament to God's matchless grace in Psalm 23, acknowledging that "the LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want [and do not lack anything]." The Apostle Paul, humbled by intense suffering, recognized that "when I am weak, then I am strong," as he fully oriented to his helplessness in light of God's all-sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

## Grace Related to Others

Part of being grace oriented is not only learning to forgive yourself, but to forgive others as well. Once the believer submits to God's plan and adapts to grace procedures, he realizes that God alone does the work to meet his needs and solve his problems (2 Thess. 2:16; 2 Pet. 1:2-4). In particular, the problem-solving devices of genuine humility and impersonal love fuel grace orientation toward life. No longer preoccupied with human works and achievement, he relates God's policy to himself and others. Encouragement, comfort, and self-exhortation come from divine wisdom in his soul, not from his own flawed desires, emotions, impulses, and understanding. A relaxed attitude is the basis of his conduct, meaning he demonstrates sensitivity and tolerance toward the weaknesses of others (Eph. 4:31-32; 1 Cor. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:5). He radiates Thinking Grace (gentleness; the mental attitude of giving others the benefit of the doubt) and Overt

Grace (goodness; to forgive as Christ forgave). By winning the battle over legalism and pride, he invisibly, often unknowingly, represents the grace attitude of Christ to the world (2 Cor. 1:12; 8:9).

Genuine humility is a foundational Christian virtue through which the believer recognizes that he belongs to a plan centered, not in himself, but in God. It is an attitude of honor and integrity that places virtuous values above egocentric desires, responds to truth, and submits to legitimate authority. It is not to be confused with humiliation or lowliness in rank, and must never be defined in terms of legalism, self-effacement, or asceticism, which are all forms of arrogance. Humility is both a system of thinking and a way of life. As a system of thinking, humility is freedom from arrogance; as a way of life, humility is submission to legitimate authority. Everyone, believer and unbeliever alike, must set aside pride and learn obedience in order to adjust to life in general and live respectfully alongside others.

The humble person, instead of clinging to an inflated self-image, is receptive to objective truth and is, therefore, teachable. Teachability means capacity to

listen, to learn, and to respond to authority without feeling threatened or inferior.

Since humility is not inherent from birth, it must be learned under a stable system of order and discipline administered by legitimate authority (e.g., parents, teachers, law enforcement). For a young child, the home provides the structure and environment for parents to enforce their child's response to authority. A parent's role is to restrain the child's sin nature through fair, consistent training and discipline. Children are not mandated to agree with, or even love their parents, but to "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6: 1-3). By submitting to a system of enforced humility in the home, a child can acquire virtue and learn to assume responsibility for himself. If, however, a child fails to learn humility in the home, he will someday learn it the hard way from the police officer, the judge, a tough drill sergeant, a demanding coach, or an exacting employer.

Genuine humility develops when a person becomes self-motivated - responsive from the volition of his own soul - to accept authority and instruction. With

this honorable mental attitude, the genuinely humble person does not shy away from responsibility, but enhances opportunity, aims for excellence by means of self-discipline, and accepts the outcome of his personal decisions. He advances through life inside the boundaries of his own abilities and limitations, and makes no demands for equality with others. The ongoing demonstration of this humility is a relaxed mental attitude toward all people and circumstances, in addition to poise and courage under pressure.

Humility is the basic ingredient for happiness and blessing in the spiritual life. The biblical mandate found in James 4:10, “Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord,” is a charge to all believers to be oriented to grace. This is not a command to demean oneself, but to understand one’s own helplessness and appreciate what God’s infinite grace and power can provide. The believer with humility submits to the authority of God and his pastor-teacher, learning to evaluate every aspect of his life in the light of the Word. The humble believer recognizes his spiritual failures, recovers (by rebound; acknowledging personal sins to the Father - 1 John 1:9), and continues to move forward in the



plan of God. With correct priorities and doctrinal objectivity, he expresses thoughtfulness toward others and avoids the arrogance of self-promotion (Prov. 11:2; Phil. 2:3-4). This consistent mental attitude of humility becomes the basis, not only for his promotion in the spiritual life, but for heavenly rewards that glorify Christ throughout eternity (Prov. 29:23; Luke 14:11; James 4:6, 10; 1 Pet. 5:5-6).<sup>11</sup>

Impersonal love is an unconditional, relaxed mental attitude towards the entire human race - including self. Unlike personal love, which loves based on the attractiveness and attributes of the object of that love, impersonal love is based on the integrity and capacity of the subject (the one *doing* the loving). Impersonal love is a relaxed and objective mental attitude toward everyone: friend or enemy, worthy or unworthy, pleasant or obnoxious. Impersonal love solves problems in personal relationships. The believer with impersonal love is able to accept all people as they are, without demands for reciprocation, without reaction or retaliation, and without incurring mental attitude sins. Whether

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<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from Thieme's Bible Doctrine Dictionary, R. B. Thieme, Jr., pages 129 - 130

encountering love and admiration, or hatred and reproach, this unconditional attitude of grace is stable and enduring (Col. 3:12-14; 1 Pet 3:8-9).

God does not command His children to have personal agreement or admiration for all people (an impossible task among imperfect creatures), but He does command them to demonstrate virtue toward all, believer and unbeliever, known and unknown. Impersonal love in the soul is the only way to fulfill the divine mandates to “love one another” (John 13:34-35), “love your neighbor” (Lev. 19:18; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14), and even to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:43-46). Moreover, unconditional love is the professional obligation of all members of God’s royal family who are to honorably represent Christ in the devil’s world (Eph. 5:1-2). Such love is nurtured, motivated, and strengthened by the believer’s ever-increasing knowledge of the Word, grace orientation, and personal love for God.<sup>12</sup>

When we combine genuine humility with impersonal love, they present a powerful example of grace to

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pages 136 - 137

the world. Genuine humility, gladly and voluntarily, thinks and does what is right. You realize God knows and sees all, and you want to do what is right in His sight because it pleases Him. Impersonal love shows grace, patience, and kindness to all, even towards those who wrong you, or treat you poorly. You understand that God knows the situation, and He will deal with those who treat you unjustly in a manner that is far more effective than anything you can do. Leave the situation in His almighty hands. Relax, and reflect God's grace.

## Summary

I hope you now realize that grace is a free and undeserved gift from God. In some way, He provides grace for every moment in your life. God has graciously given you everything you need to live and to grow spiritually. He wants you to grow, and He is anxious to pour out His gracious blessings to you. He wants your life to reflect the incredible inner peace that our Lord expressed under extreme pressures during the First Advent. Accepting His grace through salvation, staying in His plan by learning and applying Bible Doctrine, and treating others graciously will certainly increase your happiness and glorify Our Lord.

The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines “axiom” as a statement or proposition that is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-evidently true. The following Seven Axioms of Grace as well as the Grace Principles, present a succinct summary of our study.

### ***Seven Axioms of Grace***

1. God is perfect; His plan is perfect.
2. A perfect plan can only originate from a perfect God.
3. If man can do anything meritorious in the plan of God, it is no longer perfect. Then grace is not grace - it is canceled out.
4. A plan is no stronger than its weakest link. For this reason, grace excludes human merit, human ability, and human good.
5. Legalism, or human works, is the enemy of grace.
6. Works of human righteousness have no place in the plan of God.
7. Human good is associated with the mental attitude of the sin of pride. Just as grace orientation is the source of bona fide service in the Christian life, so is pride the source of human good.

### ***Grace Principles***

1. Definition of Grace: Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the cross. Grace is the plan and work of God on behalf of mankind.

Under grace, God provides a spiritual life as a vehicle through which the believer can have a relationship with Him. He provides the materialistic substance for the believer to live, and the apparatus for assimilating the mind of Christ.

2. Grace depends on the essence, or character, of God. Grace is what God can do for man and still be consistent with His own character.
3. Grace is the opposite of legalism. Legalism is man's work or ability intruding upon God's plan. Legalism is the enemy of grace.
4. Under grace, God entered believers into union with Christ at salvation so that His inheritance becomes our inheritance; His power can become our power; His spiritual life can become our spiritual life.
5. Every believer has tasted grace at least three times. First, the Holy Spirit makes the Gospel understandable to us as unbelievers (common grace). Second, the Holy Spirit takes our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and makes it effective for salvation (efficacious grace). Third, God gives

us forty grace gifts at salvation.<sup>13</sup>

6. Disorientation to grace is the believer's greatest occupational hazard in this life (Gal. 5:4). This results in arrogance – thinking that your standards are greater than God's standards.
7. God is constantly waiting to pour out His grace on every believer in this life (Isa. 30:18-19).
8. God has provided everything for salvation; man responds in a non-meritorious manner, by faith alone (Psa. 103: 8-12; Rom. 3:23-24; 5:20; Eph. 2:8-9).

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on the forty grace gifts given to us at salvation, see *The Plan of God*; Appendix, forty things God provides every believer at the moment of salvation. Compiled by Lewis Sperry Chafer; revised by R. B. Thieme, Jr., pages 31 - 36

## Examples of Grace

We can define what grace is, but since God is infinite and man is finite, it is impossible for anyone to fully comprehend the true magnitude of God's grace. However, below are examples which will help illustrate grace in action.

### ***Example 1:***

#### ***Grace Related to God***

*Imagine for a moment you are seated in a courtroom. You are on trial for murder, a crime that carries the death penalty. The evidence against you has been delivered to the jury and your attorney has presented your defense. Now you await the jury's verdict.*

*A hush falls over the courtroom as the jury foreman steps forward. You rise to your feet and face the judge. You know one fact no one else in the courtroom knows for certain: you committed the crime. As the jury foreman announces the verdict of guilty, you are not surprised.*



*The judge pounds the gavel and pronounces your sentence. You cannot escape the penalty and your lawyer cannot protect you. You are helpless to save yourself.*

*But as you are led away from the courtroom in handcuffs, a man steps forward. This man is a stranger to you. “I will take your punishment,” he says. “I will be your substitute.”*

*The judge leans forward to question him. At last, satisfied by the man’s qualifications, he accepts the stranger as your substitute. The handcuffs are removed from your wrists and put on his. While this man undeservedly goes to his death in your place, you are set free. You are allowed to live—even though you are guilty—because someone else has taken your punishment.<sup>14</sup>*

This is a dramatic picture of God’s grace related to us. God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be your substitute and free you from the “death penalty.”

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<sup>14</sup> Excerpt from *A Matter of Life and Death*, R. B. Thieme, Jr., pages 1 - 2

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten [uniquely born] Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten [uniquely born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18).

### ***Example 2:***

#### ***Grace Related to Self and to Others***

*On the appointed day in the spring of A. D. 68, the Apostle Paul was escorted through the gates of the Mamertine prison and out along the Via Appia toward the coast. Stopping somewhere between Rome and the bustling seaport of Ostia, Paul watched the lictor unbind the ax from the fasces. Then Paul knelt and was beheaded.*

*Decapitation is painless. The nerves are simply cut—cleanly, quickly. The only possible problem is mental anguish in anticipation, but that was no problem to Paul. The greatest apostle, the man who had “fought the good fight,” “finished the course,”*

*and “guarded the doctrine,” departed from the body with the highest of honors to be face to face with the Lord.<sup>15</sup>*

Paul was an ultrasupergrace believer. He was experiencing dying grace. He was not upset or anxious. He was relaxed and looking forward to being face to face with his Lord and Savior. While Paul watched the executioner prepare the ax, he did not panic or break out in a cold sweat. I am sure Paul was not focused on himself, but on the Lord and the Bible Doctrine resident in his soul. The death of Paul is a marvelous demonstration of how the application of Bible Doctrine and dying grace keeps us perfectly relaxed and happy in what the world sees as a time of maximum pressure and sadness.

Perhaps impersonal love “kicked in” and Paul gave the gospel to the lictor, the man that would put him to death. This is just speculation, but I would not doubt if Paul wanted to tell one more person about the Lord Jesus Christ before he left this world. I do not offer this assumption lightly. In Acts 16:25-34, after being beaten and unjustly thrown into jail, Paul

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<sup>15</sup> Excerpt from *The Integrity of God*, R. B Thieme, Jr., pages 134 - 135

and Silas saved the life of their jailer who was about to commit suicide. After a violent earthquake, there was potential for all the prisoners to have escaped. The penalty would have been a miserable death for the jailer, so he thought he would suffer less by killing himself with his own sword. However, Paul and Silas stopped him and gave him the gospel, which resulted in not only the jailer's salvation, but also the salvation of the jailer's family.

The impersonal love exhibited to the jailer and his family is an incredible demonstration of grace toward others. Paul could have just walked away but decided to help his jailer, not only by talking him out of committing suicide, but also giving him the gospel so he and his family could be saved for all eternity.

When we exhibit grace to others, it frequently takes them by surprise—pleasant surprise. When we are gracious, we not only glorify God, but our example may inspire conversations that will meet the spiritual needs of those with whom we come into contact. Those spiritual needs may include providing the

gospel of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and/or the absolute truth of the Word of God.

Every blessing we have ever had, every wonderful thing we have ever discovered, every worthwhile thing in this life, are the results of God's amazing grace. Since grace belongs to God, since it is an expression of His character and His Person, and since grace is the key to our capacity to love Him, I trust that God the Holy Spirit will make these things very real to you as you study and learn about this matchless gift.

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Titus 2:11).



### *From the Author*

Any book about grace would be incomplete without acknowledging the doctrinal men whose faithfulness to studying and teaching the Word of God enabled my own spiritual growth.

I have had the honor and privilege of studying under the Reverend Joe Griffin of Grace Doctrine Church in St. Louis, Missouri since his installation there in 1985. His faithfulness to studying and teaching God's word to his congregation has been inspiring. His love for his congregation is exemplified through his faithfulness to his spiritual gift. Thank you, Joe, for your friendship and guidance the last 39 years.

Additionally, without the guidance of Rick Hughes, one of the preeminent Evangelists in this country, Philippi Freedom Ministry would not exist today. His love of the study of the Word of God and his priority to make sure the gospel was presented throughout the schools of America, was an example to be followed and emulated. It's an honor to have had the opportunity to learn from you, Rick.

Finally, you can't write anything about grace without mentioning Reverend Robert B. Thieme, Jr, the pastor of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas, from 1950-2003. His advances in the literal-grammatical-historical method of biblical analysis produced cutting-edge expositions of God's immutable truth to believers throughout the world. His due diligence in studying and teaching the Word of God for over 50 years led myriads to spiritual maturity and from his ministry, we now have Reverend Robert B. Thieme, III, who has continued to teach the Word of God diligently and faithfully for the last 20 years. It is truly humbling to be associated with these men.



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