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The Meaning of . . .

GOD'S GRACE

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To the Reader: *Keep your Bible beside you. Read the Bible verses as you study. Most of the Bible verses are from the New International Version. You may have a King James Bible or another translation, so the words may be a little different, but the meaning will be the same. Ask God to guide your mind to know His truth. He has promised to do this for you (John 8:32).*

Ask a friend to join in the study with you. Share with a friend you may be able to help each other with something that is does not understand. Talk together about the questions. You will be blessed and so will your friend.

THE UNDESERVED FAVOR OF GOD

Read: Romans 5:20-21

Before Christ died, sin reigned and brought death. “But where sin increased, grace increased all the more” and brought righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21).

Grace is the favor of God bestowed on men and women freely, even though they only deserve death. God has said, “All have sinned and fall short of God’s glory” (Romans 3:23). “And the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

We distinguish between **common grace** and **special grace**. The first is enjoyed by all mankind. As the writer says, “The rain falls on the just and the unjust.”

The whole universe is held together “by the word of His (Christ’s) power” (Hebrews 1:2-3). God guarantees stability in this vast universe.

Read: Acts 14:8-18

After the flood, God promised Noah that the seasons would continue (Gen 8:12). He could plant crops and God promised him sunshine and the rain to make them grow.

When God used Paul and Barnabas to do miracles in Lystra, the people said, “the gods have come down to us.” But Paul and Barnabas shouted to the crowd, “We are bringing you the good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them....He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy” (Acts 14:15-17). They spoke of God’s **common grace** which comes to all mankind.

PREVENIENT GRACE

Read: John 1 John 4:10-19

“We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:10). There was nothing in us as natural men and women that would make us seek God. Paul said, “There in no one who seeks God” (Rom 3:11).

So God moved toward us in love. He moved first, while we were still in darkness and sin. Some reject His love and God lets them go their own way. Paul made no bones about it. He said of these wicked people, “God gave them over to every imagination of their wicked hearts...” (Romans 1:24,26,28).

Special grace does not start with us, but with God. He draws us, in a hundred different ways, to consider Him. His grace cannot be earned and we do not deserve it, no matter how ‘good’ we think we are.

When sin entered the perfect world God had created, He took the initiative. Right at the very moment Adam and Eve sinned, God in grace promised a remedy (Gen 3:15). He could have destroyed this universe and stated all over again, but He did not. He gave Adam and Eve another chance to repent and return to a personal relationship with their Creator.

While we were enemies, helpless, without any power to help ourselves, God sent his only Son to die for us (Romans 5:6,8).

TO THINK ABOUT

God has done everything He could do for you to make you a child of the Father in heaven. There is nothing more He can do. “For God so loved the world (of men and women) that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Now it is up to you to receive His great salvation, which He has prepared for you since the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Say “Yes” to Jesus!

The song says:

“Be in time, Be in time;

While the voice of Jesus calls you,

Be in time! If in sin you longer wait,

You may find no open gate

and your cry be just too late;

Be in time!”

to drink” (1 Cor 12:13). Here the word ‘baptize’ means ‘to place into’ or to ‘introduce into.’ This is a once-for-all act, our vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the same as being “baptized into Christ” (Gal 3:26-27). It is quite different to being anointed or having someone lay hands on your head (Acts 8:17). When John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, he saw the heavens “torn open and the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him” (Matt 3:16). The Holy Spirit filled Jesus from His birth; this time the Spirit rested on Jesus. This happened so that John was sure who Jesus was, the Messiah of Israel, “and to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15).

John’s baptism introduced the repentant sinner into the water as a testimony. It was a ceremony, the outward sign of an inward state. The person being baptized had repented of their sins and would live for Jesus from that day forward.

For their part, they had to come to His throne of grace and receive the strength they needed to help them overcome sin and temptation. And God would give them grace enough to live for Him.

ADOPTED AS SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Read: Romans 8:1-4, 15

God’s **special grace** adopts us into His family. The writer said, “Both the One who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers (and sisters)” (Heb 2:11). That is God’s grace at work in our hearts to make us more and more like Jesus.

As Paul wrote to the Philippians, “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose” (Phil 2:13).

We cannot make ourselves holy, nor can we do the works that God has planned for us to do from the foundation of the world (Eph 2:10). Only God’s **special grace** enables us to do and be what He wants us to do and be. That is sometimes called “Sufficient Grace.”

TALK ABOUT

1. What is “the body of Christ” here on earth?
2. When we confess our sins and receive Jesus as our Savior, God **b**.....us by His **S**.....into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). **3.** How can we live holy lives?

GOD GAVE EVERYONE A CONSCIENCE

Read: John 1:1 9

John tells us that Jesus Christ, who is the Light, gave some of that light to every man who is coming into the world. I believe he speaks of the light of conscience.

God, because of His grace toward us, has given each one the ability to know right from wrong. We call this conscience. As we grow older, our conscience has to be trained. Paul said even those who did not have God’s law to guide their behavior as the Jews had, knew in their hearts (consciences) what was right and what was wrong (Romans 2:12-15).

GOD’S SPECIAL GRACE

Read: Ephesians 2:8-9

By **special grace** we mean the grace God gives to those who confess their sins and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior – He redeems, sanctifies and glorifies them. “God raised us up with Christ and seated us in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

Paul wrote, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...” (2 Cor 5:18).

God’s grace not only saves, but it changes us into the likeness of Jesus. As Paul said. We become new creations in Christ (1 Cor 1:5; 2 Cor 5:17).

Grace means that God takes the first step, toward us. We cannot earn it; grace comes to us freely from God. He bestows His grace on us for salvation and sanctifies us for daily living.

TALK ABOUT

1. Can we do anything to earn God’s grace?
2. Does every person have an equal amount of light in their conscience?
3. By the conscience God gave us, we can know right from wrong ___ True ___ False?

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND GRACE

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

My body twisted and turned and would not be still; my muscles were in perpetual motion; I was a victim of Parkinson's Disease.

How can I make it through the day? I asked myself and the Lord. The Lord, the Spirit, answered me with the words He spoke to Paul. Three times Paul had pleaded with the Lord to take away the 'thorn in his flesh' which was tormenting him. But God did not take it away. He told Paul, "**My grace** is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9).

Your grace, Lord? How am I going to get more of Your grace, for I certainly need it. I thought of the Christians at Galatia and how Paul had to correct their wrong thinking. They had the Holy Spirit living in their lives, but they were hindering His working by turning back to their old way of life (Gal 1:6-9).

They had turned away from Paul's message – the gospel of Jesus Christ – to the message of the Judaizers who had come to them with a false gospel. They were going back to their former religion, which "was no gospel at all," Paul said. And they were grieving the Holy Spirit. They were stifling His ministry in their lives. The Spirit wanted to minister grace for daily living, to give them strength and courage to stand against the Judaizers, but He could not.

They said that a Gentile could be saved only if he was circumcised according to the law of Moses. This error stopped the Holy Spirit from ministering the grace of God in their daily lives. They had "fallen away from grace," Paul said (Gal 5:4).

TALK ABOUT:

1. What complaint did Paul have against the Galatians?
2. Who had taught them a false gospel (Gal 5:1-6)?
3. What were the false teachers telling them to do?
4. What must we do to be saved (Rom 10:10)?

WAITING FOR YOU TO WELCOME HIM

Read: Luke 24:45-49

The Holy Spirit waits for you to welcome Him into your life. If you are a born-again Christian, you have the Spirit. God has sealed you into His

family by His Spirit (Eph 1:13). But many do not recognize the Holy Spirit or allow Him to fill their life as He wishes.

Jesus told His disciples, "Now I am going to Him who sent Me... because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment... When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth... He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you" (John 16:5-16).

Jesus told us the wonderful work that the Holy Spirit would do in our lives. He would come to us personally and "guide us into all truth." He would take things Jesus had spoken – things not easily understood – and make them plain.

SUFFICIENT GRACE

Read: Hebrews 7:25; John 16:5-12

God has declared that there is grace sufficient to meet all our needs. God's grace is there to save us now, to keep us in this life and to take us to heaven to be with our Savior for all eternity.

Grace flows from the infinite power and goodness of God. He is able to save fully or completely those who keep on coming to Him through Jesus Christ (Heb 7:25).

And we are told to "approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find **grace** to help us in our time of need" (Heb 4:16).

TALK ABOUT

1. Does God give us grace more than we need?
2. What must we do to receive grace in our time of need (Heb 4:16)?
3. What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do when the Father sends Him to fill our hearts (John 16:14)?
4. Is the Bible hard for you to understand?

BAPTIZED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 John 2:27

Paul wrote, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and were all given the one Spirit