

Great Grace

Several years ago the Los Angeles Times reported the story of an elderly man and wife who were found dead in the apartment. Autopsies revealed that both had died of severe malnutrition, although investigators found a total of \$40,000 stored in paper bags in a closet.

For many years Hetty Green was called America's greatest miser. When she died in 1916, she left an estate valued at \$100 million, an especially vast fortune for that day. But she was so miserly that she ate cold oatmeal in order to save the expense of heating the water. When her son had a severe leg injury, she took so long trying to find a free clinic to treat him that his leg had to be amputated because of the advanced infection. It has been said that she hastened her own death by bringing on a fit of apoplexy while arguing the merits of skim milk because it was cheaper than whole milk.

The Book of Ephesians is written to Christians who might be prone to think of their spiritual blessings much like these people treated their finances. As a result, they will be suffering from spiritual malnutrition, because they neglect the spiritual resources that are available.

Paul writes to the church at Ephesus,

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.

(Eph. 1:1-8)

The most essential doctrine for believers to understand is that of “Grace.”
Verse 7

“...the riches of His grace.”

Grace has been defined as *unmerited favor*.

From my wife’s studies on grace, she defines grace as,
...The doctrine that justifies the ungodly and reveals over and over
the absolute nature of God and His everlasting kindness toward us.

“[Grace is] free sovereign favor to the ill-deserving”

Benjamin B. Warfield

D. L. Moody said,

“The Law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out.”

In this text every word seems to echo with grace. It begins with “**Paul**,” whose
past is a portrait of the Grace of God. He wrote in Timothy

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because
He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was
formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet
I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the
grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love
which are found in Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim. 1:13-14).

Paul speaks of God’s grace as being more than abundant, in accepting him into
Christ’s church, as a former persecutor of the church, and then putting him into
service as a promoter of the church.

He continues,

“It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ
Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am
foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the
foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an
example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.” (v. 15-16)

Paul continues his praise of the grace of God for saving him who was the
‘foremost’ of sinners, as an example of God’s grace in saving other ‘great sinners’.

Paul also testified in his letter to the Galatians,

“I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but only, they kept hearing, ‘He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.’” And they were glorifying God because of me.” (Gal. 1:22-24).

Paul was a trophy of the grace of God. In his letter to Titus Paul glorifies God’s grace in in the salvation of every man,

“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, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:5-7)

A parallel verse is in Ephesian chapter 2. The context declares all men to be sinful.

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us even when were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),” (Eph. 2:1-5).

Paul speaks of men being dead in their sins and children of wrath who are saved by grace, because God is rich in mercy. Here we see illustrated three concepts:

- Mercy – when we don’t get what we deserve.
- Justice – when we get what we deserve.
- And grace – when we get what we don’t deserve.

Being sinners and children of wrath, men deserve judgment and hell as the just reward for sin. But God, being rich in mercy, pours out His wrath on His Son on the cross. Jesus, our Savior takes our place and receives our judgment and death. Because of His mercy we don’t get what we all deserve as a result. Because of God’s grace we receive what we do not deserve: forgiveness and eternal life in Christ.

Thus God’s grace is God’s undeserved favor.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” (Eph. 1:3)

In the Greek verses 3-14 comprise one sentence and encompass the past, present, and future of God’s eternal purpose for the church.¹

All Spiritual Blessings: Divine Election, Reconciliation, Heaven

Past: Chosen by the Father :4

Present: Redeemed by the Son :7

Future: Sealed by the Spirit as a promise of an inheritance to come :13

Tozer writes,

Salvation is from our side a choice, from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest by the Most High God. Our “accepting” and “willing” are reactions rather than actions. The right of determination must always remain with God.

Aspects of Grace:

I. **Pre-salvation Grace:**

1:4-6

He Choose us – Eklego – *election* -‘chose’ aorist tense and middle voice – God’s totally independent choice - [reflexive verb] --by Himself and for Himself²

He predestined us – a determined plan and purpose

His character is gracious – to the glory of His grace.

Freely bestowed on us in the beloved.

Freely gifted on us who have been, are presently and will always be loved – in the beloved.

Grace is all about love

Rom. 8:28-29

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 5.

² MacArthur, p. 11.

I sought the Lord,
And afterwards I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him,
Seeking me!
It was not that I found,
O Savior true;
No, I was found by Thee.

John Chadwick