

What Is Grace? Grace - 1

by Anton Bosch

The sermon explores the multifaceted nature of grace, emphasizing its role as God's enabling power in our lives beyond just salvation.

Scripture: Matthew 7:7, 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 2:9, 2 Timothy 2:1, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 12:28, James 4:6, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Gods Grace", "Christian Living"

Description

Anton Bosch challenges the common misconception that grace is only about God's unmerited favor for salvation, emphasizing that grace has a broader meaning than just mercy. He delves into the distinction between grace and mercy in Hebrews 4:16, highlighting that while mercy is freely available, grace needs to be sought and found. Grace is portrayed as God's enabling power that helps us in times of need, enabling us to bear difficulties and live out the Christian life victoriously.

Transcript

It is commonly accepted that grace is equal to mercy and that grace only has to do with our salvation. This idea is perpetuated by the Amplified Bible which amplifies the word "grace" to mean "God's unmerited favor". In fact, as I sat down to work on this study, I looked at many commentaries and dictionaries and found almost no reference to grace other than in the context of the mercy that God showed us when He saved us.

But a closer study of the use of the word in the New Testament shows that it has a far wider meaning than just a synonym for "mercy". Hebrews 4:16 makes a clear distinction between the word "grace" and the word "mercy": "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). You will notice that mercy is to be "obtained" but grace is to be "found". The Greek word for "obtain" means to "take, claim or receive". Thus mercy is something that is freely available to all who will take or receive it.

While mercy is to be taken or claimed, grace is to be "found". "Find" here is the result of a search and the Greek mood is subjunctive, meaning one may or may not find what one is seeking. Thus mercy is freely available and can be taken while grace is to be sought and found. It is evident that the grace by which we are saved (Ephesians 2:8) is free, unmerited and we did not seek for it. We know that He sought and found us and poured His abundant grace upon us. So then, Hebrews is clearly speaking about something different to mercy and different to the grace that was bestowed on us when we first were saved. All this

simply means that every time "grace" appears in the New Testament, it is not necessarily the same as "mercy" and its purpose goes beyond our salvation.

In this passage, "grace" is something we need to find to help (us) in a time of need. This grace seems to have little value or relevance when there are no needs and when things are going well. But we all go through difficult times. At such times our prayer is normally for a solution or an escape from the problems.

There is nothing wrong with asking the Lord to remove the problem or to remove us from the problem. This is exactly what Paul did. Three times he asked for the problem to be removed and still the Lord did nothing to make the issue disappear. But the Lord said to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Corinthians 12:9). So, sometimes the Lord will not remove the problem but He will give us grace and that grace will help us to cope with the difficulty. You can see that this has nothing to do with salvation since the Lord was not willing to save Paul out of his troubles but was going to take him through them.

Clearly, "grace" is more than mercy and is something that enables us to bear the problems and helps us in times of need. The word "grace" appears over 35,000 times in my electronic library and I cannot find a single definition for the word other than having to do with "God's unmerited favor", mercy and salvation. So, we will have to form our own definition for this word. Here is my attempt: "God's freely given enabling power". Maybe you can improve on that.

Grace is God's enabling power at salvation since His grace enables us to understand that we are sinners, and His grace enables us in the whole process of getting saved. But it is more than that. Grace is also God's enabling power to live the Christian life and to be the people we ought to be.

Grace empowers us to give (financially) when we think we have nothing to give. Paul speaks of "the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality" (2Corinthians 8:1-2). That is some power: to enable us to give when we have nothing to give. Surely this is best understood by the example of the widow who "out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (Mark 12:44). She had much grace. In 1Corinthians 9:8 Paul speaks of the fact that when God's grace abounds we not only have sufficient, but an abundance to share with those in need.

Paul speaks of the ministry of preaching the Gospel amongst the Gentiles as grace that had been given to him (Galatians 2:9). In Romans 12:6 and in many other scriptures he equates ministry gifts with grace. By this he means that it is grace that causes God to give us gifts, but more than that, it is His grace that empowers us to use those gifts wisely and properly. Peter confirms this: "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1Peter 4:10). Thus the gifts we have are the grace of God.

Hebrews 12:28 says: "...let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear'. We need grace to enable us to serve God in a way that He will find acceptable. Once again the emphasis is on His enabling and not on our abilities and without His grace, we will surely not serve God well or with the right attitude.

Grace is something that comes entirely from God. We cannot manufacture it, but we must seek for it at the throne of grace. Too many times we try to summon the fortitude we need or to dig into our own resources to find the strength we need to deal with our challenges. Rather, we should be fleeing to the only One who

is able to empower us.

Praise God, when we approach the throne of grace, He extends His mercy to us and welcomes us in His presence instead of destroying us. But having come to the throne, we need more than just His acceptance. We need that enabling power that will help us in our times of need. But it has to be found - not just claimed. Jesus promised that if we "Ask, (and keep asking) and it will be given to you; seek (and keep seeking), and you will find; knock (and keep knocking), and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). The problem is that mostly our time before the throne is simply too short and we often leave before the Lord can give us the grace we need.

Sometimes we don't find grace because we are too self-sufficient to even ask. Both James and Peter remind us that "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, 1Peter 5:5). Humility is when we have come to the end of our abilities we are aware of our absolute dependence on Him and His abilities. Many times we think we can handle things by ourselves and thus we don't flee to the throne of grace.

The context of 1Corinthians 12:9 says: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (1Corinthians 12:9-10).

If we want to have a victorious and fruitful Christian life we must "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Timothy 2:1)

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