

# Six Aspects of the Grace of God

by Zac Poonen

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*The true grace of God is a gift that enables us to live a life of obedience to God and to overcome sin, and it is received through humility, submission to spiritual authority, and suffering.*

**Scripture:** John 15:5, Romans 12:21, 1 Peter 1:2-3, 2 Peter 1:3-4

**Topics:** "Unity in Christ", "True Grace of God"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the true grace of God as outlined in Peter's letters, urging believers to stand firm in it amidst the prevalence of false grace teachings. He highlights six aspects of grace: grace for harmonious marriages, the use of spiritual gifts to serve others, the importance of humility and submission to spiritual authority, the role of suffering in receiving God's grace, the divine power granted for a godly life, and the unity among believers as joint-heirs of grace. Poonen encourages Christians to embrace humility to receive grace, which leads to victory over sin and fosters unity within the church, ultimately reflecting Christ's character.

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## Transcript

"This is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it" (1 Pet.5:12). Here at the end of Peter's first letter, he says that what he has written in his letter is all about the true grace of God. In these days when false grace is being preached so much, it is good to go back to 1 Peter to see what the TRUE grace of God really is, and to stand firm in it. Right at the outset, Peter tells us that all believers are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that they may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood" and for such believers, he prays that God's "grace and peace may be theirs in fullest measure" (1 Pet.1:2). Peter then urges all believers to "fix their hope completely on the grace that is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet.1:13). When Christ returns in glory, we will experience a special grace that will transform us totally into His likeness. From the beginning of our Christian life to the very end, God's work in us is entirely one of grace.

1. Peter speaks of receiving grace for a happy married life: "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." (1 Pet.3:7). God wants Christian married couples to live together in peace and harmony. Their home must be an island of peace in a strife-torn world. And for this, abundant grace is required.

2. Peter then goes on to speak of spiritual gifts: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Pet.4:10). Every spiritual gift is to be used only to SERVE others, as a means of dispensing the true grace of God to them. The grace of God is many-sided. Therefore God has chosen people from different backgrounds and with different personalities and temperaments and placed them all together in Christ's Body so that each of them can display some unique aspect of God's grace through his/her life and ministry.

3. "You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (1 Pet.5:5). Here Peter speaks about the importance of learning submission to spiritual authority in our younger days itself. If a young man is saved by the age of 20, it is usually God's purpose that he should have an effective ministry by the time he is 35 years old. But for this to be fulfilled, that man should learn the all-important lessons of brokenness and humility by the time he is 35. And those lessons can be learnt only as he submits to spiritual authority. Only thus can He receive grace to exercise spiritual authority later in his home and in the church. Young people who do not submit to spiritual authority invariably end up losing the ministry God had in mind for them. This does not mean that we don't have to humble ourselves once we are older!! Subjection to elders must be learnt when we are young. But following Jesus along the way of humility is something that we have to keep on doing until our dying day. That is the only way to keep on receiving grace until the very end of our lives. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. If we are proud, then even if all our doctrines are right, we shall end up like the Pharisees, deceived and blind concerning spiritual realities. Then we shall not be able to recognise the true prophets of God in our day, any more than the Pharisees could recognise Jesus, the True Prophet of the Lord in their day. All sin has its origin in PRIDE and SELFISHNESS. In the same way, all the virtues of Christ have their origin in HUMILITY and SELFLESSNESS. The more we humble ourselves, the more we will receive grace from God. Then we shall live in victory and manifest Christ's character more and more in our lives. If anyone does not have victory over sin, that would indicate clearly that he has not humbled himself - because all who humble themselves will certainly receive grace (1 Pet.5:6), and all who come under God's grace will certainly get victory (Rom.6:14).

4. "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." (1 Pet.5:10) .Here God is called the God of ALL GRACE. He leads His people through suffering in order that He might impart His grace to them and "perfect and establish them".Paul experienced God's all-sufficient grace through receiving a thorn in his flesh (2 Cor.12:7-10). Peter's first letter too has much to say about suffering as the means by which God dispenses His grace to us. We read that, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS WHO COMMITTED NO SIN ..... Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered In the flesh HAS CEASED FROM SIN" (1 Pet.2:21,22, 4:1). Peter reminds us that "if we suffer in the flesh, we shall cease from sin and live the rest of our life, doing the will of God" (1 Pet.4:1,2). To "suffer in the flesh" does not mean becoming sick in the body, for no-one has ever stopped sinning thereby. It does not mean being beaten and bruised for Christ's sake either, for no-one has stopped sinning that way either. It refers rather to denying the desires of Self, which are in opposition to the will of God. Sin brings a certain pleasure. To suffer is the opposite of enjoying that pleasure. If we are willing to suffer in each and every situation, then we can cease from sin. Christ suffered in the flesh, and we are to arm ourselves with the same mind. Jesus walked this way of self-denial all His life. He came to earth in the flesh and never did His own will but always the will of His Father, no matter how much suffering that may have involved (Jn.6:38). Thus He

never sinned. Now we also have the opportunity to "follow In His steps Who committed no sin" (1 Pet. 2:21,22). This is the gospel (good news) of the grace of God.

5. In his second letter, Peter reminds us that the good news is that God by His divine power has granted us "EVERYTHING necessary for a godly life" here on this earth (2 Pet.1:3,4). And if we have received a faith "of the same value" (2 Pet.1:1 margin) as Peter's, we shall receive the same grace that he received and partake of God's nature as he did. Then the character of Christ - "moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love will be ours in increasing measure" (2 Pet.1:5-11), making us fruitful and freeing us from all blindness and shortsightedness (v.8,9). Everyone who abides in Jesus will bear MUCH FRUIT (Jn.15:5). And so if these virtues of Christ are not being manifested increasingly in us, it would indicate that we are not abiding in Jesus and that we are not living under the true grace of God.

6. Those who humble themselves not only receive grace for victory, but also grace to become one with each other. Just as we saw earlier that husband and wife can receive grace together as "joint-heirs of the grace of life", even so believers too can receive that grace that makes them joint-heirs along with other believers in Christ's Body. Jesus prayed on the last night of His earthly life that we might be ONE AS HE AND THE FATHER ARE ONE (Jn.17:22). And He prayed that we experience this oneness here in this world (Jn.17:21,23). This is not a unity of understanding but a unity of spirit . Because of the sinfulness of our nature and the limitations of our minds that have been warped by sin, we may not see "eye to eye" in every matter with each other here on earth. But that has nothing to do with our spiritual unity. In our hearts, we can still be one. All lack of unity is because we want to do our own will and not the will of the Head. This has nothing to do with our understanding of doctrine. It has only to do with whether we are willing to deny our own will and do the Father's will alone. Jesus always obeyed what He heard from His Father. His food was obedience to His Father's will (Jn.4:34). Jesus was one with the Father. It is into this oneness that we too are called through the true grace of God. Jesus always overcame evil with good. Evil had no power over Him, because He was always rooted in doing good. So shall it be with us, if we too obey the word to "overcome evil with good" (Rom.12:21). When others hate us and scandalise us, we can conquer their evil by doing them good. This is possible when we receive the true grace of God. Then we shall be kept, as Jesus prayed, from the evil that is in the world (Jn.17:16), and we shall become one with all others who walk the same way. The church that Jesus is building is one that has received grace - the true grace of God - to be built together in unity, under Christ the Head. Only such a church will triumph over the gates of Hell (Matt.16:18).

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