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# 1

## THE FOUNTAIN OF GRACE

There are some words with which we have been familiar from our infancy up, and probably there are few words in the English language that are so often used as this word *grace*. Many of you at your table “say grace” three times a day. You seldom go into a church without hearing the word mentioned. You seldom read any part of the New Testament, especially the epistles, without meeting the word.

There is probably not a word in the language so little understood. There are a great many who have received the grace of God into their heart but who, if they should be asked what the word means, would be troubled and confused and unable to tell. I experienced the grace of God a good many years before I really knew the true meaning of the word.

Grace means unmerited mercy—undeserved favor. If men were to wake up to the fact, they would not be talking about their own worthiness when we ask them to come to Christ. When the truth dawns upon them that Christ came to save the unworthy, then they will accept salvation. Peter calls God “the God of all grace.”

Men talk about grace, but, as a rule, they know very little about it. Let a businessman go to one of your bankers to borrow a few hundred dollars for sixty or ninety days; if he is well able to pay, the banker will perhaps lend him the money if he can get another responsible man to sign the note with him. They give what they call three days' grace after the sixty or ninety days have expired. But they will make the borrower pay interest on the money during these three days, and if he does not return principal and interest at the appointed time, they will sell his goods; they will perhaps turn him out of his house, and take the last piece of furniture in his possession. That is not grace at all; but that fairly illustrates man's idea of it. Grace not only frees you from payment of the interest, but of the principal also.

### **Its Source**

In the gospel by John we read, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. . . . For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:14, 17). Now you know that for many years men were constantly trying to find the source of the Nile. The river of grace has been flowing through this dark earth for six thousand years, and we certainly ought to be more anxious to find out

its source than to discover the source of the Nile. I think if you will read your Bible carefully you will find that this wonderful river of grace comes from the very heart of God.

I remember being in Texas a few years ago, in a place where the country was very dry and parched. In that dry country there is a beautiful river that springs right out of the ground. It flows along, and on both sides of the river you find life and vegetation. Grace flows like that river, and you can trace its source right up to the very heart of God. You may say that its highest manifestation was seen when God gave the Son of His bosom to save this lost world. "Not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

### **A Free Gift**

Notice, it is the free gift of God. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." Paul wrote fourteen epistles; and every one of them is closed with a prayer for grace. Paul calls it "the free gift of God." Thousands have been kept out of the kingdom of God because they do not

realize what this free gift is. They think they must do something to merit salvation.

The first promise given to fallen man was a promise of grace. God never promised Adam anything when He put him in Eden. God never entered into a covenant with him as He did with Abraham. God told him, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"; but when this came to pass, then God came and gave him a gracious promise. He dealt in grace with him. As he left the Garden of Eden he could say to Eve, "Well, God does love us, though He has driven us out."

There was no sign that Adam recognized his lost condition. As far as we know there was no cry for mercy or pardon, no confession of sin. Yet we find that God dealt in grace with him. God sought Adam out that he might bestow His grace upon him. He met Adam in his lost and ruined condition, and the first thing He did was to proclaim the promise of a coming Savior.

For six thousand years, God has been trying to teach the world this great and glorious truth—that He wants to deal with man in love and in grace. It runs right through the Bible; all along you find this stream of grace flowing. The very last promise in the closing chapter of Revelation, like the first promise in Eden, is a promise of grace: "Whosoever will, let him take

the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). So the whole revelation and the whole history of man is encircled with grace, the free favor of God.

Some years ago when I was speaking on this subject, a friend sent me the following: "By the grace of God I am what I am!" This is the believer's eternal confession. Grace found him a rebel—it leaves him a son. Grace found him wandering at the gates of hell—it leads him through the gates of heaven. Grace devised the scheme of redemption: Justice never would; reason never could. And it is grace which carries out that theme. No sinner would ever have sought his God but 'by grace.' The thickets of Eden would have proved Adam's grave, had not grace called him out. Saul would have lived and died the haughty self-righteous persecutor had not grace laid him low. The thief would have continued breathing out his blasphemies had not grace arrested his tongue and tuned it for glory.

"Out of the knottiest timber," says Rutherford, "He can make vessels of mercy for service in the high palace of glory."

"[Caesar's words] 'I came, I saw, I conquered,'" says Toplady, "may be inscribed by the Savior on every monument of grace." [The Savior can write:] "I came to the sinner; I looked upon him; and with a look of omnipotent love, I conquered."

“My friend, we would have been this day wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness—Christless, hopeless, portionless—had not grace invited us, and grace constrained us,” [Rutherford adds].

### **Restraining Grace**

“Restraining grace,” Rutherford says, “is grace that, at this moment, keeps us. We have often been a Peter—forsaking our Lord, but brought back to him again. Why not a Demas or a Judas? ‘I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.’ Is not this our own comment and reflection on life’s retrospect? ‘Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’”

“Oh, let us seek to realize our continual dependence on this grace every moment! ‘More grace! More grace!’ should be our continual cry. But the infinite supply is commensurate with the infinite need. The treasury of grace, though always emptying, is always full: the key of prayer which opens it is always at hand: and the almighty [distributor] of the blessings of grace is always waiting to the gracious. The recorded promise never can be canceled or reversed: ‘My grace is sufficient for thee.’”

“Let us seek to dwell much on this inexhaustible theme. The grace of God is the source of minor temporal as well as of higher spiritual blessings.

“It accounts for the crumb of daily bread as well as for the crown of eternal glory. But even in regard to earthly mercies, never forget the channel of grace through Christ Jesus. It is sweet thus to connect every (even the smallest and humblest) token of providential bounty with Calvary’s Cross—to have the common blessings of life, tamped with the print of the nails. It makes them doubly precious to think this flows from Jesus. Let others be contented with the uncovenanted mercies of God. Be it ours to say as the children of grace and heirs of glory: ‘Our Father which art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread.’ Nay, reposing in the all-sufficiency in all things, promised by the God of all grace.”