

WHO NEEDS GRACE?

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I was speaking last week about the importance of being humble. “Pride is your greatest enemy: humility is your greatest friend”.

Jesus said if you want to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God ... you must be as humble as a little child. Jesus Himself is a great example of humility.

One important passage:

James 4:4-7

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit which dwells in us yearns jealously”?

6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:
“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

God actively resists the proud. We have to actively resist the devil.

God gives more grace — to the humble.

See also the following verses:

Proverbs 3:34

34 Surely He scorns the scornful,
But gives grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:5

5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for
“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”

But ... do we really know what the Bible is talking about when it mentions “grace”?

Do you need more? Or do you have enough? Does it make any difference? Could we manage without it?

Do we ask for more grace? Seek God’s grace? Do I value God’s grace?

Or perhaps — do most of us never give it a thought?!

Let’s review!

Most of us probably struggle in many areas in life? We have lots of challenges — our health ... relationships ... money ... state of our countries ... corruption ... crime. It is hard some times to keep going ... to stay positive ... to grow and flourish with all of the problems that surround us. The reality is ... we don’t really have the inner strength and power on our own. We need outside help!

GRACE! 😊

Grace is a very important topic in the Bible. The English term appears more than 170 times in the Bible — of those it appears over 130 times in the New Testament alone.

It comes from the Greek word “Charis” which appears more than 230 times in the New Testament ... it is a common word ... it crops up a lot. So it must be quite important?

Before we look closely at what it is ... notice:

1 Corinthians 1:1-4

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

3 **Grace (charis) to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

4 **I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,**

Grace ... grace. Just polite (and meaningless)? Or was Paul thankful for the grace they had — and desired more?

1 Corinthians 16:23

23 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

Grace ... grace. Paul opens and closes his letter. It is on his mind!

This was the second last verse of I Corinthians — Paul's parting wish and prayer.

Galatians 1:3

3 **Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Galatians 6:18

18 Brethren, **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.**
Amen.

Ephesians 1:1-2

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Ephesians 6:24

24 **Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.** Amen.

Grace ... grace. Paul is always thinking about grace.

Also in the Books of Roman ... Colossians ... Philippians ... Thessalonians. Paul never overlooks the topic!

He knows they all need grace ... more grace ... if they are to live fully as believers.

So Paul is calling down a blessing on them. And it's real. Not some meaningless religious platitude. Paul knows grace is vital! He is calling for that blessing on them.

Let's check the end of the Bible.

Revelation 1:4-5

4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come,

and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

Grace from the Father. Grace from the Son.

Even the final verse!

Revelation 22:21

21 **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.**

But nothing so far tells us what grace is ... but frequently mentioned by the New Testament writers.

It was at the forefront of their minds. What about us? Is grace on our minds today?

Acts 14:1-3

1 Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles (other people) and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

3 **Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word (message) of His grace,** granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Acts 14:3 (NIV)

3 **the message of his grace**

Paul preached on the grace of our Lord Jesus.

Acts 20:17, 22-24

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

22 **And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,**

23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

24 **But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the *grace* of God.**

Acts 20:32

32 “So now, brethren, **I commend you to God and to the word of His *grace***, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Paul preached a Gospel and Message of Grace.

But note what grace does ... it is able to “build you up and give you an inheritance”.

Other translations: “to give you strength”. Divine power — divine strength.

It’s often said: Grace is “unmerited favour”. But ... it’s much more than that.

I’m asking you again. Do you think of grace?

2 Peter 1:1-2

1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 ***Grace* and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,**

2 Peter 1:2(NLT)

2 **May God give you more and more *grace* and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.**

2 Peter 3:17-18

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, **beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;**

18 **but grow in the *grace* and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

Paul ... John ... James — and now Peter — all make many references to grace. Over 240 times in the Greek.

Peter says we are to grow in it. And have more and more. James said God gives more grace to the humble.

So. What is grace? Commonly — “unmerited favour”. True — but very incomplete. Grace is much wider in meaning. Not just God’s attitude toward us — but much more — God working dynamically in us.

My definition: “**The power of God ... operating in the inner man to strengthen us ... to establish us ... and to keep us from falling**”.

God’s grace ... or power ... working in us should help us be very different from others around us (or from ourselves b.c. — before conversion).

2 Timothy 2:1

1 You therefore, my son, **be strong in the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus.**

2 Timothy 2:1 (TPT)

1 Timothy, my dear son, **live your life empowered by God’s free-flowing *grace***, which is your true strength, found in the anointing of Jesus and your union with him!

Timothy needed strength and help. Not by positive thinking — but the dynamic power of God’s grace.

We aren’t supposed to “go it alone”! We don’t have the strength.

1 Corinthians 15:7-10

7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 **But by the *grace* of God I am what I am**, and **His *grace*** toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, **but the *grace* of God which was with me.**

Grace mentioned 3 times in verse 10.

Paul worked more actively and energetically than all of the Apostles — yet — really it was the grace of God working in him (the power of God in the inner man ... to strengthen him).

Paul wants the believers to share that grace. It's dynamic and gives power to the weak.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

9 **And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 **Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Paul recognises that real strength comes via Jesus' grace. The strength of Jesus can work through Paul when he recognises he doesn't have the power in himself.

Us too. As long as we try to do it all in our own strength — we are likely to fail and fall.

But to rely on the grace of God gives us great strength "in the inner man". If we can get ourselves "out of the way".

If it seems like an endless struggle ... perhaps we're being too self-reliant? If that's our problem ... let's read what Jesus has to say.

Matthew 11:28-30

28 **Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

29 **Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly (humble) in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

30 **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**

Matthew 11:28-30 (THE MESSAGE BIBLE)

28 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? **Come to me**. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. **I'll show you how to take a real rest.**

29 **Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.** I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.

30 **Keep company with me** and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Ephesians 6:10

10 Finally, my brethren, **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

How?

It parallels:

2 Timothy 2:1

1 You therefore, my son, **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**

If Jesus stands ready to strengthen and establish us through His grace — why wouldn't we draw on it?

Ignorance perhaps? Rarely consider God's grace ... even though the New Testament writers refer to it around 200 times? We are leaving ourselves without a resource that God has put in front of us.

James and Peter mentioned that we can receive "more and more" grace. How do we receive more grace from God?

- A. Be humble! God gives more grace to the humble. Don't be obstinate and proud.
- B. Think about it ... read about it.
- C. Go to the Place of Grace ... and ask for it.

Hebrews 4:14-16

14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,** let us hold fast our confession.

15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses,** but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

We have weaknesses ... temptations. Come to the Throne of Grace — to obtain grace “just at the right time”.

Hebrews 14:16 (AMPLIFIED BIBLE)

16 **and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].**

Grace is more than just “undeserved favour” — though that is pretty good on its own. 😊

Grace is God’s divine power — working in the inner man — to strengthen and empower us — to live fruitful lives.

As Hebrews chapter 4 says: it’s “amazing grace”!

But — only if we use it!