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Grace and Mercy

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### Saving Grace

by Amanda Stephanus

When I think about God and His grace, the first verse that comes to mind is Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." We serve a heavenly Father who is very liberal in His love towards us and gives us everything we need, including His grace.

We experience God's grace every day. In Matthew 5:45 we read that God "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and send rain on the just and on the unjust." The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 145:9 that God is good to all. God is not partial. He does not play favorites, and He is not selective in who receives His grace. However, the grace we enjoy every day is unlike God's saving grace. The "general" grace bestowed upon mankind is free from prerequisites. The grace of God's sustaining providence, or the grace of life itself, does not require anything of man. The reception of this grace ought to produce repentance and reverence for God (Cf. Romans 2:4 and 1:21).

God's saving grace is not so. In order to be saved by God, man must meet the conditions that God has specified. A good illustration of this is Noah. When the world gave itself over to immortality, it grieved God and God declared the impending destruction of all life (Genesis 6:5-7). However, Noah "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). Upon receiving God's grace, Noah was given instructions to follow. God commanded Noah to build an ark and gave detailed instructions as to how (Cf. Genesis 6:14). Upon hearing the instructions, we know that Noah moved with fear, obeyed God, and thus saved himself and his family (Hebrews 11:7). Every unprejudiced or honest person will agree that Noah could not be saved unless he met the prerequisites that God had set. God's saving grace was available, but Noah had to comply with its conditions in order to benefit from it.

This concept is clearly set forth throughout Holy Writ. God told Cain IF he did well, he would be accepted. God said the walls of Jericho would fall, but only IF the Israelites marched around the city as instructed. The redemption of mankind by the blood of Christ is no exception.

By His wonderful grace, God sent His Son and His Son gave His life so that we might be saved. Yet, that salvation has conditions attached to it. Faith in the gospel (Romans 10:17), repentance of sins (Acts 17:30), confession of Christ (Romans 10:10), and immersion in water (1 Peter 3:21) are the preconditions for

God's redemptive grace.

Saving grace is tethered to conditions, and without meeting those conditions one cannot be saved. Have you followed God's instruction to the saving of your soul? If so, continue to obey God's instruction and fight the good fight of faith (2 Timothy 4:7-8). If not, I encourage you to search the scriptures, obey God's instruction, and receive His saving grace.



Got Grace?

By Wilburta Arrowood

It would be awesome if we could go through life doing all things perfectly. We would be kind, helpful, never sin, and have no need for grace, for we would have earned God's good grace. Unfortunately, that is not how we live our lives. We sometimes try to convince ourselves that we are "good" and cite the fact we don't murder, we don't rob, and we do good things for others. We forget the times we say or think ugly things about others, or the "little fibs" we tell ourselves. The fact is Romans 3:23 says "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and again 1 John 1:10 says "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

As humans, we tend to rationalize. We tell ourselves what we do is such a small thing, it surely doesn't count. Sisters, my bible does not talk about big sins and little sins. Sin, any sin, separates us from God. 1 Peter 3:12 says, "for the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." I do not want to be separated from God and his love, but the verses above tell me I do sin, and I am separated.

In spite of what many believe, not everyone who dies goes to heaven. We do not automatically qualify for God's grace. Jesus speaks of being cast into hell in Matthew 18:9. "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be

cast into the fiery hell.”

That is a terrifying thought. Jesus said Hell is fiery, and that it is possible to be cast into that fire. Jude 7 speaks of the punishment of eternal fire. Just think how horrible it would be to spend eternity in an ever-burning fire—one that never goes out and from which there is no relief.

I thank God He has provided a way to avoid that consequence. We are offered the free gift of grace when we obey God. God does not force us to accept that wonderful gift, but it is there for all who choose to accept it. It is up to us to study His word

Grace has been defined as unmerited favor, or as unconditional love toward a person who does not deserve it. God sent His Son so that we might have access to His grace. In [John 1:14](#) we read “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Notice how grace and truth are linked. We must accept the truths Jesus taught in order to be eligible for His grace. Even then, we do not deserve God’s grace. There is nothing we can do to earn the grace God extends to us, and yet, He does offer that saving grace.

[John 1:12](#) says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God...” And in [Titus 3:7](#) we read, “so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Imagine being a child of God and an heir with Jesus. An heir inherits all the benefits of the estate. Along with Jesus we will inherit all the beauty and benefits of God’s realm of Heaven. When we follow His commands, we have forgiveness for absolutely all our sins, and by and learn what we need to do to be a child of God. Read and study to learn and claim your portion. the grace of God we will be able to enter Heaven. That is not what we deserve. We deserve punishment for our sins, but God’s grace, His unmerited favor, has made a way for us to have eternal joy. Have you done what God’s word requires to access that joy? Got grace?



A Merciful God—So Thankful  
by Alice Simmons

The hairdresser completes the style and eagerly waits to hear, “Perfect, good job!”

Johnny darts through the door waving his report card, “Look Mom, look!” Mom looks it over, hugs him and says, “Perfect, great job!”

No matter what we do in life, be it education, career, marriage, or parenthood, our desire is to be the

best we can be, striving to be perfect. We all want to be perfect.

We know that at baptism our past sins are washed away. But then, we must continue to “walk in the light” (I John 1:7). “You therefore must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). As we begin the Christian life, our mission is to be the best we can be. We are a new person, excited, and determined to grow stronger every day, studying and hungering for the Good News found in the Word. Our life is happier and fuller than ever before.

God’s Word compares our Christian walk to that of a “roadway.” There are two routes to choose from in life. One is wide, broad, and congested, but the other is narrow and hard to find. One leads to life, but the other leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). There may be times in our Christian life when bad things happen that may cause us to become weak in our faith. The road seems hard to bear, and sometimes we lose the way. Sometimes we feel the wide road, filled with many people, is better because most people are going that way. We may become slack in attending worship services, studying the Bible, perhaps, even shunning our brothers and sisters, due to our shame. A good sister may approach us, encouraging us to come back. Others may call, send cards, and offer up prayers. All the while God is there, anxiously and patiently waiting for us to return to Him. He extends His mercy to all who confess sins, repent, and ask forgiveness in prayer through Jesus, the Mediator.

God, in His infinite wisdom, knew that mankind could not reach spiritual perfection. He witnessed it in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Man eventually became very evil, turning away from God completely. The promise of a Savior to come was foretold by prophets and angels. God loved His creation and desires us to be forever with Him. He sent His only-begotten Son, Jesus, as the perfect sacrifice for all sin, the Savior of the world. The blood of Jesus, the Christ, cleanses us from all sin. God’s grace (unmerited favor) and love brought salvation to all men through His Son. We all sin because we are imperfect human beings. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (I John 1:7-8). Yet, “the Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Being complete (perfect) in the Lord requires a continual growth. Although we can never attain that level of completeness, it is a goal for which we must earnestly strive. “All scripture is breathed by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, the Word of God helps sustain us as we travel our Christian walk. The Word of God was given by the Holy Spirit, and through it God instructs and teaches us how we must live and grow in our faith. His Word is the Christian’s guidebook (Psalm 119:105).

Let us not forget to ask God daily for His guidance and mercy, praising and thanking Him often in prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17). He is the God of ultimate love, full of mercy and grace, and in Him we are forgiven and saved. What a merciful God we serve. We are so thankful!



## Mercy

by Elizabeth Turner Beall

Because all of us “sin and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), we need God’s mercy. After David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, David begged for God’s mercy in Psalm 51:1-2: “Have mercy on me, Oh God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgression.” God forgave David, and granted him that mercy. Was it because David deserved mercy? No, it was because God loved David, David loved God, owned up to his sins, and confessed those sins.

God’s love for you and me is so great, so deep, that He willingly offers grace to all. None of us deserve that gift; we certainly cannot do anything to earn it, no matter how hard we try or how long we live. But once we accept that grace and obey His will, i.e. repent and confess, He gifts us again, with mercy, by not giving us what we imperfect human beings deserve. He forgives us our sins (1 John 1:9), forgets our sins (Isaiah 43:25), and throws our sins into the deepest part of the sea (Micah 7:19). For those who obey, it was His plan before the world began (Titus 1:1-2).

As we “walk in the light,” “confess our sins,” and are not willfully living a sinful life, “the blood of Christ cleanses—keeps on cleansing—us from our sins”(1 John 1:7-9). When I read those verses, Jeremiah’s words come to mind in Lamentations 3:22-23: “the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning...” God is called the “Father of mercies” (2 Corinthians 1:13) “whose mercy (steadfast love-ESV) is everlasting—endless” (Psalm 100:5). God’s mercies are new every morning because God is love (1 John 4:8), and because we as Christians have chosen to live our lives as He wants us to.

Knowing what God has done, and continues to do, for each of us, boggles the mind. How can He have such love? Why will He continue that mercy when we grow weak, act in an un-Christ-like manner, and say or do things we shouldn’t? Why will He give us that mercy when we mistreat one another? Why will He give us that mercy when we disrespect and rebel against Him? Again, it is because He loves us. When we humble ourselves, and confess those sins, He gives us mercy even though we don’t deserve it.

As God’s children, we are to be like Him. How are we doing with that? Is mercy a noticeable part of our lives? Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:6). When a brother or sister in Christ does or says something that hurts us deeply, do we become vengeful, keep score of it, or go

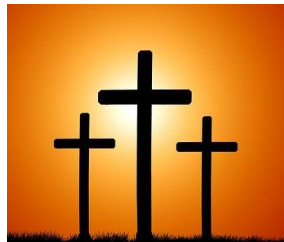
tell others about it? Do we “come back” with hurtful words or actions against that person? Prayer would be in order to ask God’s help, wisdom, and strength in handling the situation. Maybe we need to go to that person in private and discuss it with love in our hearts. Maybe we just need to lay it all aside and forget it, sincerely forgiving that person. This does not mean condone or overlook something God has called sinful. Those situations must be handled for the spiritual good of all parties.

James says, “Judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13). We must be very careful in dealings with our spiritual brothers and sisters. We should always be a loving family. In fact, we are commanded to “love one another” (Romans 12; 10), “be kind to one another,” (Ephesians 4:32), “be subject to and tenderhearted to one another” (Ephesians 5:21; 4:32), etc.\* As a Christian family, world-over, our hearts should be so full of love for each other that mercy is the norm. Anything less brings us judgment from God without mercy. What a scary thought, to be judged by our Almighty God knowing we might get no mercy!

To help us be more merciful, we should pray for a heart of love that will show mercy, and always remember “the Golden Rule” (Matthew 7:12): “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them....” Being aware of how we want others to treat us in a like situation should help us stop and think before we hastily react.

Seek to give mercy so that you will receive mercy. Fill your heart with love for one another, always being aware of the way you want to be treated. Make mercy your goal. God will help you. How great it is to serve a merciful and loving God!

\*See Volume 4, No. 3 for a complete list of the “one another” commands.



Grace & Mercy  
by Elizabeth Turner Beall

Grace and Mercy were given by God  
To a lowly creature like me.  
Grace unearned....Mercy undeserved...  
Is more than my heart can see!

Why for me did God send His Son...  
That horrid death to die?  
When I so weak and sinful am...  
I'm so ashamed....I cry.

For I could never do enough  
That would to God repay....  
That Grace and Love and Mercy shown  
That I might see Heaven someday.

Matchless Grace, Mercy unending....  
And Love beyond degree....  
Makes humble my soul....And brings tears to my eyes....  
That He'd do that just for me!

For me? For me? Oh Yes, for me!  
That horrid death did die....  
And God be praised....The Vict'ry's won!  
I can live with Him on High!



Questions for Discussion and Meditation:

1. Define grace and mercy in your own words.
2. How are grace and mercy alike? How are they different?
3. a) What two road/paths do we have to choose from in life? b) Describe each. c) Why would you choose one road over the other?
4. Explain the concept of "being perfect" when we know we cannot be perfect.
5. What is the importance of that little word "if"?
6. How are grace and truth linked together?

7. What happens when a person does not accept the offer of God's grace and mercy?

Ideas for applying the topic:

1. Consider the different ways you can show mercy to your Christian sisters in your church family. Make a list and do it.
2. Evaluate your own life. How well do you practice "mercy"? Set a goal to be more merciful. Pray to have that mercy, then watch for opportunities. They will come.
3. Consider the "signs" a Christian may be "weakening" in the faith. Do you know a person who seems to be in that condition? How can you offer encouragement to them?

Prayer suggestions for the topic:

1. Pray for more mercy to be shown to each other in the church family, and in the Kingdom of God as a whole.
2. Pray that God will teach you how to be more merciful to your church family.
3. If you have a problem with a particular sister/brother, pray God to give you wisdom and strength to face the problem and get it resolved.



Fill in the blanks, then find the word in the puzzle below. (Note: All scripture is taken from the ESV):

"For by \_\_\_\_\_ you have been \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_, and this is not of your own doing; it is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God." Ephesians 2:8

"For all have \_\_\_\_\_ and fall \_\_\_\_\_ of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

"But if we \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ as He is in the light, we have \_\_\_\_\_ with one another and the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus his Son \_\_\_\_\_ us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

"If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a \_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_ is not in us." 1 John 1:10

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the \_\_\_\_\_, and His ears are open to their \_\_\_\_\_. But the face of the Lord is against those who do \_\_\_\_\_." 1 Peter 3:12

"You therefore must be \_\_\_\_\_, as your heavenly \_\_\_\_\_ is perfect." Matthew 5:48

"The Lord is not \_\_\_\_\_ to fulfill his \_\_\_\_\_ as some \_\_\_\_\_ slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing that any should \_\_\_\_\_, but that all should reach \_\_\_\_\_." 2 Peter 3:9

"The \_\_\_\_\_ love of the LORD never ceases. His mercies never come to an end; they are \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_." Lamentations 3:22-23



NEW	FATHER
EVIL	PERISH
GIFT	PRAYER
LIAR	SINNED
SLOW	MORNING
WALK	PERFECT
WORD	PROMISE
COUNT	CLEANSSES
BLOOD	RIGHTEOUS
FAITH	STEADFAST
GRACE	FELLOWSHIP
LIGHT	REPENTANCE
SAVED	
SHORT	

R	E	P	E	N	T	A	N	C	E	M
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