

## 1. Looking at grace – such an important concept for the Christian to understand

**J. I. Packer:** This one word 'grace' contains within itself the whole of New Testament theology.

- A. It is used some 155 times in the NT – so if you don't understand this you don't understand Christianity
- B. As I talk to some of you – about what we've been learning – I see areas we need to look at
  - 1). So I reserve the right to interrupt Galatians to fill in some of these gaps

**Transition:** We are going to look at Romans 1:1-5 which is an encapsulation of Paul's theology

**Ro 1:1-5 (ESV)** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>(2)</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>(3)</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>(4)</sup> and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>(5)</sup> through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

### 1. Our outline

- A. The foundations of grace
- B. Grace a many-sided blessing from God
- C. Grace and the growth of the Saint
- D. Grace and the glory of God

## I. THE FOUNDATIONS OF GRACE

### 1. In vs. 1-4 we see what truth of grace is erected upon

- A. He speaks of the Gospel of God – the message that tells of God's grace towards sinners
- B. Tells us this plan to save the sinner was nothing new – the OT prophets wrote about it
- C. Who did they write about – who was at the center of this plan – Jesus Christ the Son of David
- D. What would He do – He would go to the cross – die – raise from the dead to defeat death and the grave

**Point:** So grace is available to sinful man because the Son of God came – clothed in human flesh

- A. Because He died to pay the debt we owed to God for breaking His law  
And because He rose to defeat death – all who believe in Him will rise in Him to glory
- B. So Paul sums all this up in v. 5

**Ro 1:5 (ESV)** through whom (Jesus) *we have received grace...*

- 1). The blessings of God's grace come only through His Son Jesus Christ

**Eph 1:4-7 (NIV)** For he chose us *in him* before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love (5) he predestined us to be adopted as his sons *through Jesus Christ*, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- (6) *to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves*. (7) *In him* we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, *in accordance with the riches of God's grace...*

**Transition:** What do we have so far?

- A. Grace is a gift given to us by God – it comes into our life through His Son Jesus Christ

### The Meaning of Grace

#### 1. If you asked the man on the street what does grace mean

- A. You may hear “The elegant movements of a dancer – they move so graceful”
- B. It's that period in-between the date the bill is due and they finally cut off your electricity
- C. It's what you say before you eat

#### 2. What does God mean when He has His authors use this word

- A. It is underserved favor
  - 1). It is blessing given to those who don't deserve it – could never earn it – deserve the opposite

- 2). Yet out of the goodness of the givers heart – He decides to bless you

**I love this one. J. I. Packer:** Grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues.

**Transition:** I want to show you that this grace not only stoops to saves us

But this grace is necessary for everything in the Christian life – want you to be grace lovers

## II. GRACE A MANY-SIDED BLESSING FROM GOD

**Ro 1:5 (ESV)** through whom we have received *grace and apostleship...*

### 1. Paul was saved by grace and called by grace

- A. In Romans 15 he speaks of being empowered by grace to be effective in that call

**Ro 15:15–16 (ESV) speaks of:** the grace given me by God <sup>(16)</sup> *to be a minister* of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles...

**Point:** Everything is by grace – salvation – forgiveness – calling – empowering - growing

- A. Your Christian life starts by grace is sustained by grace – you end up in glory because of grace

### 2. Paul was saved by grace (How else can you explain it)

Remember his story: On the road to Damascus to persecute the church

When suddenly a light shone from heaven “Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?”

- A. Paul wasn’t moving towards Christ – seeking Him – He was trying to destroy Christ

He didn’t have any warm affections for Him – He hated Him

- B. When he was saved on that road to Damascus he was on his way to destroy the church

- 1). To murder and imprison any who claimed to be a follower of Christ

- C. But God out of love – cared for him – stooped down to him and rescued him

- 1). God intercepted him and changed the whole course of his life = *What grace!*

- 2). Reminds me of C.S. Lewis speaking of his conversion

“Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about man’s search for God. For me, they might as well talk about the mouse’s search for a cat...God closed in on me.” C.S. Lewis

- a). In grace God closed in on Paul

**Question:** Ever heard the term “Irresistible grace?”

- A. I think that’s got a bad rap – like God forces people into heaven who don’t want to be there

- 1). He chooses them and then drags them into Christianity kicking and screaming

“No! No! I don’t want to be a Christian. I don’t want you!”

- B. Here’s my view of “irresistible grace” – what I believe happened to Paul

- 1). I believe Paul was actually saved during those 3 days of blindness after the encounter

- 2). He’s sitting alone in the darkness and I believe the Lord lit up the Gospel truth

- a). Paul was convicted of his sin and convinced that Christ was the only solution for his guilt

- 3). I believe when God moves in a saving way – He simply clarifies Gospel truth in our thinking

- a). The reality of our sin becomes so convicting – our guilt before God so horrifying

The truth of God’s solution in Christ so convincing

- 1a). It becomes so clear – so irresistible that we do go to Christ to be saved

- 2a). It is a free and willing choice – that God brought about by this clarity

- 4). Paul freely embraced Christ by faith and was saved

- a). He embraced Christ by faith because the truth was made plain - irresistible

**Transition:** That was Paul – what about you – were you saved in the same way? YES!

### 3. You were saved by grace

- A. I doubt you were out trying to kill God’s people and destroy Christ’s church

- 1). But you were NOT a fan of Jesus Christ – God tells us who you were

**Ro 3:10–12 (ESV)** as it is written: “*None* is righteous, no, *not one*; <sup>(11)</sup> *no one* understands; *no one* seeks for God. <sup>(12)</sup> *All* have turned aside; together they have become worthless; *no one does good, not even one.*”

- 2). It wasn't a just a passive apathy towards God – look what Romans 5 and 8 says

**Ro 5:10 (ESV)** For if while we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...

**Ro 8:7 (ESV)** For the mind that is set on the flesh (**Unbeliever**) is *hostile* to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

- a). You may have deceived yourself with some shallow religious feelings  
But when the thought of bowing to Jesus Christ as Lord came up

- 1a). You rose up against that – erected defenses to keep him from controlling you  
You said with those in Luke 19 “I will not have Him rule over me”

**Point:** You weren't seeking out God – you didn't want to find Him – you were hostile

- A. It gets worse – even if you wanted to seek Him (which you didn't)

You couldn't understand the message you needed to understand to get to Him

- 1). Listen to this – let all this drive deep gratitude into your heart for your salvation  
2). God in grace – loved you – stooped down into your desperate condition and rescued you

- B. Your terrible condition – blinded to the message that could rescue you

**2 Co 4:4 (ESV)** In their case the god of this world has *blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel* of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**God's grace stooping: 2 Co 4:6 (ESV)** For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

- 1). God flipped on the light – chased away the darkness and you finally could see  
a). That message you may have heard 100 times – so boring! Suddenly made sense  
b). That message became irresistible because you knew you were guilty  
Like those in Acts you thought – what must I do to be saved? You were led to Christ  
1a). By grace you were led to Christ – weren't forced – you went willingly  
c). That's what happens when God by grace turns on the light

- C. Saved! Forgiven! If you have one thing in your mind – Yeah it is because I did this or that....

- 1). Chase that thief out – that idea that is stealing the glory that God deserves

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“But I did believe!” – Yes you did but why?

- 1). Was it because you were searching or because God was drawing? Bible says drawing

**Who you were: Ro 3:10–11 (ESV)** as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; <sup>(11)</sup> no one understands; *no one seeks for God.*

**Jn 6:44 (ESV)** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

- a). Those who don't seek Him – won't seek Him unless they are drawn – they are hostile  
1a). Unless He stoops – draws – rescues – they are lost!

- 2). There was nothing in your humanity – in that fallen nature – that desired Him

**Eph 2:5 (ESV)** even when we were *dead* in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

- a). You were dead towards God – had no desire for Him at all  
b). Do you see how good He's been to you?

- 3). Listen to how Luke puts it in Acts 18

**Ac 18:27 (ESV)** And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, *he greatly helped those who through grace had believed,*

- a). He turned on the lights – the truth became irresistible – and they were drawn to Christ

**Thought:** I love what Paul said to the Thessalonians (Here is our hope in evangelism)

**1 Th 1:4-5 (NIV)** For we know, brothers loved by God, *that he has chosen you, (5) because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.*

- A. Many heard the gospel – the ones who God was drawing at that time heard it differently
- 1). It came to them united to the Spirit's power and with deep conviction
  - 2). It came in irresistible truth that compelled them to run to Christ to be saved
- B. They chose freely – willingly to repent and embrace Christ by faith
- 1). But they chose freely because of all that grace had done!
- C. I've seen that at the Spectrum – group of people – there are some being hit – others bored!
- 1). I remember when I was saved – message hit me like a ton of bricks – I ran up to be saved!  
I'm sure there were other unbelievers there who were bored to death
  - a). It lit up to me and I had to respond! It became irresistible

**Robert Murray M'Cheyne:** When I stand before the throne, Dressed in beauty not my own,  
When I see thee as thou art, Love thee with unsinning heart, Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
not till then, how much I owe.

**Thought:** So called by grace – saved by grace – forgiven by grace = Grace! Grace! Grace!

- A. Let's move beyond salvation – is grace still there?

#### 4. We serve by grace

- A. We've seen Paul adds grace to his call to service

**Ro 1:5 (ESV)** through whom we have received *grace* and *apostleship*...

**Ga 1:15–16 (ESV)** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and *who called me by his grace*, <sup>(16)</sup> was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order *that I might preach him among the Gentiles...*

- B. We can add empowered and enabled to serve by grace – whatever the call is
- 1). God has not left us alone – He has gifted us by grace to enable us to fulfill that calling  
**Ro 12:6 (ESV)** Having gifts that differ *according to the grace* given to us...  
**Why? Ro 15:15–16 (ESV)** Paul speaks of: the grace given me by God <sup>(16)</sup> *to be a minister* of Christ Jesus...
    - a). You can fill in that gap - To be a Pastor – Sunday school teacher – usher  
To be in the sound crew (chasing down problems with a godly attitude)  
To be a greeter (so people see Christ in you)  
To be a godly husband – wife – parent – grandparent – teacher – employer - employee  
To be a neighbor that brings Him glory – you're planted there as a missionary
    - b). God has gifted you in a way to do what He has called you too for His glory
- C. You cannot serve God acceptably apart from grace – you'll do it in your own power  
**Heb 12:28 (NIV84)** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, *let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably* with reverence and godly fear.
- 1). I go in fear and trembling to the Spectrum on Friday nights – depending upon Him
  - 2). I enter the pulpit so burdened for you to understand – but I need grace for that to happen
    - a). If I enter independent of God you get me – no anointing! Just me! You DON'T want that!

**Point:** Salvation – forgiveness – calling – power to be effective

- A. It is what is given to us when we have times of need

**Heb 4:16 (ESV)** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and *find grace* to help in time of need.

- 1). God helps us by giving us grace – Unmerited favor floods into our life to sustain us – support us

**Thought:** But don't think of grace as some impersonal power

- A. It is God Himself coming to us – He is supporting us – grace is not an impersonal power  
**John Trapp:** Grace in the New Testament is not an impersonal energy automatically switched on by prayer and sacraments, *but the heart and hand of the living almighty God.*
- 1). God by grace comes to us – stoops down to help us – to enable us
  - 2). He does that by grace even though we don't deserve it – unmerited favor
- B. When I ask for grace to help in evangelism – I'm asking for Him to come to me – Him to help me
- 1). He does that by grace – I can't earn that – His Son earned that for me
- Transition:** Now let's talk about growing as a Christian – I think there is some confusion here
- A. Grace saves me – but what about the sanctification process – growing in Christlikeness - holiness
- 1). We do have a part in that – but it is still by grace – let's try to understand this

### III. GRACE AND THE GROWTH OF THE SAINT

Ro 1:5 (ESV) through whom *we have received grace* and apostleship *to bring about the obedience of faith...*

#### 1. Grace not only saves you – it also produces obedience in you

**TURN: Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)** For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. (12) It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

- A. When we are saved by grace – *that grace is not passive in us – it moves us towards holiness*

**Thought:** Here is the answer to those who take the teachings of grace and say things like...

“Great! Then I can do whatever I want and still be fine. Still be blessed. Grace baby!”

- A. My answer to that – if that's really how you feel – your salvation is in question

Because the same grace that saves you teaches you to say NO to ungodliness

**Thomas Brooks:** As heat is opposed to cold, and light to darkness, *so grace is opposed to sin.*

- B. Grace is always operating in you to move you towards a greater Christlikeness not sin

**Rom 6:14 (NIV)** sin shall not be your master, *because* you are not under law, but *under grace.*

**Transition:** But I want to talk about a problem I see in the body today

- A. People who are saved by grace who don't want to sin – but the thrill of Christ is missing

1). They know Christianity should be deeper – more exciting than it is – what's gone wrong

- B. I think many times it is because of a rejection of what grace is doing in the life

#### 2. Grace is always tugging us towards holiness/Christlikeness

**Intro:** Let's look at what God does by grace to move us towards holiness (a reminder)

- A. By grace God has given us a new nature and the Holy Spirit who takes up residence in us

**Ezek 36:26-27 (NIV)** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (27) *And I will put my Spirit in you (now watch what the Spirit does) and move you* to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

1). Grace puts the Spirit in us – the Spirit moves us towards God's purposes in life – How?

**TURN: Php 2:12-13 (ESV)** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>(13)</sup> for *it is God who works in you, both to will and to work* for his good pleasure.

- A. The Spirit God works in us those holy desires to do what God wants us to do

- B. Then gives us the power to work out those desires

**Then: Php 2:13 (ESV)** for it is God who works in you, both to will *and to work* for his good pleasure.

**Phil 2:13 (NIV)** for it is God who works in you *to will and to act...*

**Phil 2:13 (NLT)** For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him *and the power to do what pleases him.*

**Point:** See the grace there – God has gone before us – working in the desire to do what we need to do

**A. W. Tozer:** God is always previous, God is always there first, and if you have any desire for God, and for the things of God, it is God himself who put it there.

- A. There is that tug. Grace is moving you towards obedience  
AND towards those things that strengthen you so you can obey – those things that give you life
- B. What would they be? Bible, prayer, fellowship (committed to church), serving in church
  - 1). Grace is moving you towards those things – you feel that tug – need to read Bible, pray
- C. But we have a choice to go along with that or reject it – suppress what grace is doing
  - 1). We can't earn grace but we can reject what grace is doing  
**Php 2:12 (ESV)** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,*  
a). Work out what God is working in by grace – for God is working in you...  
2). Respond to what God is working in – that tugging towards the spiritual disciplines  
b). That's a tug of grace – a tug of love – He wants you to soar – not be burdened
- D. Then WHEN *we choose* to act on that – Grace gives us the power to act

### 3. This explains the spiritual greats – my heroes – Lloyd-Jones, HT, CHS

- A. What made them so great – so used – we're they special – did God love them more
  - 1). No! They were men and women of like passions as us – frail men and women  
**Hudson Taylor:** “All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them”
- B. I read a lot of biographies – they inspire me – there is a common thread between these great saints
  - 1). They all said “Yes” to that tug towards the spiritual disciplines  
*They ALL were men and women of the Bible and prayer*  
a). Fail here – reject that tug and welcome mediocrity into your life – expect nothing else  
b). God doesn't want that for you – He lovingly tugs – to move you towards the disciplines  
1a). But you can reject that – stay spiritually depressed – be defeated by the flesh  
Never be used by God – your choice – foolish choice but you can make it  
2a). You're in the same place you were 5 years ago – defeated - discouraged

**Point:** But if you will simply say yes – respond to God - surrender – you will soar

- A. You MUST be intentional – stop waiting for something to happen to change where you're at
  - 1). Make the choice – work it out – and God will empower you!
- B. We must all lose the excuses that keep us chained to mediocrity – you MUST drop those
  - 1). Put God first and He will sort the rest out – trust Him for that
  - 2). Martin Luther – *I have so much to do today. This will require at least 3 hours in prayer.*  
a). He spent more time not less – realizing put God first – He will work it out  
He will make your time more effective – He will bless

**Transition:** Let's end with the end result of all this

## IV. GRACE AND THE GLORY OF GOD

**Ro 1:5 (ESV)** through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith *for the sake of his name among all the nations,*

### 1. People who walk by grace fall in love with God

- A. They are amazed at this God who so unconditionally loves and accepts them
  - 1). The fall in love with God in return  
1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us
  - 2). This starts a chain reaction – we want to live for Him – honor Him



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- a). We start responding to those tugs that move us towards the Bible – prayer - fellowship
    - b). Real life starts flooding in – God’s life – filled with joy, peace and contentment
  - B. And we start living the kind of lives that bring God glory
    - 1). Joy in a depressed world  
Peace in an anxious society  
Contentment in a nation that is given to covetousness – I NEED MORE!
    - a). We will shine! The result of grace being understood and embraced
  - Question:** Where do I start – start with the Word and prayer – be intentional here
  - A. Find Jesus in the Scriptures – gaze upon Him and what else will you see
 

**Jn 1:14 (ESV)** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, *full of grace and truth.*

    - 1). What will happen as we gaze upon Him? We will receive. What?
 

**Jn 1:16 (ESV)** For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
    - 2). How will the Spirit move in us as we are doing this?
 

**2 Co 3:18 (ESV)** And we all, with unveiled face, *beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.*

      - a). As we gaze upon Him the Spirit changes us more and more into being like Him
  - B. Then go to the source of grace in prayer – spend time with Him – you will know grace
    - 1). You will be changed – you become like who you hang around – choose carefully
  - C. Just respond to those tugs of grace – they come from love – having your best in mind
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## CONCLUSION

### 1. Another reminder about grace

- A. Our Christianity begins with grace – is sustained by grace – we will be in glory because of grace
- B. But grace tugs at us to do those things that cause growth – lead us to Christ
  - 1). You can be saved and not enjoy the journey to glory – so many are like that
  - 2). Respond to what God is doing by grace – tugging at you to read – pray – seek Him!
    - a). Seek Him and you will find Him Scripture says  
Find Him and His life floods into you
    - b). Reject what grace is doing and you embrace mediocrity