



Module : Understanding and Accessing GRACE

Session 1 : Defining Grace

Focus : Grace! Who is it?

A diamond has many sides to it and no one side individually is able to capture the blend and compendium of unique qualities that the entire diamond is able to exhibit as a whole. It takes all the sides to give an accurate description to the entirety and profound beauty and brilliance of the diamond. When something is multi-faceted, it becomes extremely difficult to succinctly define it. The best one could do is to attempt to describe the various dynamics of the diverse components that constitute the thing. Such is the case with grace.



1 Peter 4:10 indicates that God's grace is 'manifold', i.e. many-sided or variegated. His grace has many sides to it, and we cannot adequately define the totality of all that His grace is by simply focusing on one specific 'side' of this multiplex grace. The typical definition offered by many is that grace is God's unmerited favour. This definition is true, but only represents a specific 'side' or aspect of His grace. One cannot define the totality of grace by zoning in on just one dimension of it. Grace is far more than God's unmerited favour. In this writing, I attempt to give explanation to some key aspects of the practical functioning of the grace of God. Even this feeble attempt cannot in any way do justice to all that His grace embraces. In Paul's words, we are dealing with the 'surpassing riches of His grace', a grace so RICH, it is abundant, immeasurable and unfathomable (Eph. 2:7).

Eph. 2:7 so that in the ages to come He might show the **SURPASSING RICHES OF HIS GRACE** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

If we were to ask several people to define fire, we would get a myriad of differing responses.

Examples:

- A **cook** would describe it as a source of **heat**.
- A person living in **sub-zero temperatures** would describe it as a source of **warmth**.
- A **fireman** would describe it in **destructive terms**.
- The person in **darkness** would describe it as a source of **light**.
- The **goldsmith and silversmith** would see it as a source of **refinement and purification**.
- Scientists see it as a source of **energy** – solar energy that could be harnessed for a variety of uses.

A precise definition of fire would be: A process in which substances combine chemically with oxygen from the air and typically give out bright light, heat, and smoke; combustion or burning.

In each case the person's context would be the predominant influence in their perspective and description of fire. But in each case the person is describing fire in terms of an effect or benefit that fire brings, and not fire as an entity in itself. They are describing what fire does and not what fire is. Many view and define grace from the vantage point of the benefit it brings.

Examples:

- For the sinner receiving the gift of salvation, grace is unmerited favour;
- For one suffering, grace is the all-sufficient sustaining power of God;
- To Paul, who in his natural estimation was disqualified from apostleship because he persecuted the church, grace is that which rendered him eligible and qualified him for apostolic ministry;
- To the hardworking apostle, grace is the enabling strength to get God's work done.

Grace and Manna

Grace is symbolised in the manna that Israel ate during their journeying through the wilderness. This provision of sustenance for journeying was given daily. The manna typifies the enablement of God that comes to us through His Word and through the person He sends to us to teach/instruct us. When Israel saw this provision for the first time, they called it 'manna', which when translated means, 'WHAT is it?' and 'WHO is it?'.

Exodus 16:15 When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat."

Exodus 16:31 The house of Israel named it manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and its taste was like wafers with honey.

Their vocabulary failed to adequately describe this resource from Heaven. Similarly, 'grace' is difficult to adequately define in a holistic manner. Our limited human wisdom and vocabulary would never sufficiently describe this amazing Grace.

The manna sustained Israel throughout their 40 year journeyings through the wilderness, and ceased when they crossed the Jordan to take possession of the Promised Land.

Josh. 5:12 The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.

This is a picture of how GRACE is designed to facilitate and sustain our movements within the will of God for our lives until we are able to secure the ultimate intent for His will. God's ultimate intent for our lives is that we, as His sons, personally and on a corporate level, accurately reflect His nature and purpose in and to the whole of creation. Grace will ensure that we attain to this end. In our journey towards this ideal, we will need to access His grace daily. This is captured in the phrase "give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

Jer. 31:1,2 "At that time," declares the Lord, "**I will be the God** of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people. Thus says the Lord, "The people who survived the sword found **GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS** - Israel, when it went to find its **REST**."

Manna also means '**WHO is it**', depicting the truth that grace is a PERSON, the person of God Himself. Jesus equated Himself as the Bread of Heaven to the manna that fell in the wilderness (see John 6). We will demonstrate that grace, quintessentially, has everything to do with the essence of the nature of God Himself. Grace is not just something God gives us apart from the constitution that He is as God. Scripture references 'The Grace of God', as well as 'The God of All Grace'. For example:

1 Peter 4:10b "... good stewards of the manifold **grace of God**."

1 Peter 5:10b "... the **God of all grace** ... will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

We will never completely experience the manifold or many-sided 'Grace of God' without fully and intimately knowing the 'God of All Grace'.

Let us now attempt to give some description of GRACE based on the usage of the word in Scripture.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH

Colossians 1:6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is **constantly bearing fruit and increasing**, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and **UNDERSTOOD the grace of God in truth**;

Understood = epiginosko = To know fully, as an inceptive verb, to come to know, to gain or receive full knowledge of, become fully acquainted with.

We must know or understand the grace of God FULLY or COMPLETELY. We will only attain to this if we seek to know it 'IN TRUTH'. Jesus said His Word is truth (John 17:17). Understanding the grace of God in truth implies that we must seek understanding of it BY REVELATION according to the truth of the revealed Word of God and not according to humanistic or traditional theological ideas

of what it represents. May our spiritual eyes and understanding be enlightened to know and experience God's grace that will manifest itself outwardly in our lives in 'increasing fruit' (see Col.1:6 above), i.e. God's nature, will and intent will be evident as incontestable signs that we have understood His GRACE. Grace is not understood when we are able to articulate an accurate verbal description of it, but when it has characterised the entirety of our lives in demonstrable ways.

GRACE – THE CONSTITUENT COMPONENT OF GOD AS SPIRIT

In Exodus 33, Moses, knowing that he found 'grace' or 'favour' in the sight of God, requested that if this were really true, that God should then teach him HIS ways, in order for him to fully appropriate the fullness of grace.

Exodus 33:13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people." (NKJV)

Grace is a person, not a concept. We will not access grace's fullness without seeking after God Himself and desiring to know His ways. Note Moses' insertion at the end of the verse: "And consider that this nation is Your people." He highlights the mandate to which he is called, viz. to lead God's people to their prophetic destiny. The task of leadership of the people of God is impossible without leaders being saturated with God's grace, borne out from their consistent quest to know God more. Having already found grace in God's sight, Moses desires to continue accessing it in and through understanding God's ways in order to KNOW Him. You and I would do well to do the same. Having received grace as unmerited favour, we must continue to adopt an ardent desire to comprehend the WAYS of God that afford us more intimate knowledge of His person. Accessing His person opens up to us a greater bestowal of His grace.

Moses requests of God to show him His glory, to which God responds that He will display His goodness. If you have been the recipient of God's goodness, you have seen His glory. God's glory is a vast topic, but essentially refers to the substantive nature or reputation of God. Having accessed God's grace, Moses wanted to see His glory. Grace and truth are two ingredients of God's Glory (John 1:14). There is no glory without grace. The Lord indicates to Moses that He will fleetingly pass before him and declare to him HIS name, which depicts His character.

Exod. 33:19 And He said, " I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.

When God proclaimed the name of the Lord to Moses, He emphasised the fact that He is compassionate and gracious – i.e. full of grace.

Ex. 34:6-7a Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, **compassionate and gracious**, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth; who keeps loving-kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin;

So then, we conclude that the quintessential core component in God is GRACE. God is not God if He is not full of grace. God is not God if He is not compositionally configured as GRACE. Thus in answering the question, ‘Grace - what or who is it?’ Our answer is simply: ‘GOD’.

Let us offer some further clarification to this matter. Consider that God is Spirit, as the Scriptures clearly state. All of God is Spirit. The Father is Spirit; the Son is Spirit and the Holy Spirit is Spirit. Here are some verses to demonstrate these facts:

John 4:24 **God is spirit**, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Matt. 10:20 For it is not you who speak, but it is the **Spirit of your Father** who speaks in you.

Gal. 4:14 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the **Spirit of His Son** into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father.

2 Cor. 3:17 Now the **Lord is the Spirit**, and where the **Spirit of the Lord** is, there is liberty.

Spirit by definition cannot be seen. The Hebrew term ‘ruach’ translated ‘spirit’ simply alludes to wind set in motion. You cannot see wind, just like you cannot see spirit. The fact that it cannot be seen, does not discount its existence nor the fact that it has substance or being. Because anything ‘spirit’ is invisible, does not make it insubstantial. Everything material has emanated out from immateriality. Things visible emerged out from invisibility. What is seen was made from what cannot be seen humanly. Even ‘time’ was activated from a realm of timelessness. The immateriality and invisibility of things spiritual does not deny their substantive existence.

I want to now demonstrate that grace is the substance in the entire Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) as spirit. Grace is the constituent element of God as Spirit. God as spirit has an anatomical make-up to His person as Deity called GRACE. Note the following scriptures:

Grace is described as Spirit.

Zech. 12:10a “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the **Spirit of grace** and of supplication ...”

Heb. 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant,

wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

All exchanges between God and man take place between His Spirit and the spirit in man given to him by God. Hence Paul is deliberate in his apostolic impartations of grace to the readers of his letters in that he consciously directs grace to the spirit in man. The spirit in man is the most ideal receptor of grace, since grace itself comprises of Spirit.

Phil. 1:25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Later, we will illustrate that grace is communicated and transmitted in and through the WORDS of God, which “are SPIRIT and life” (John 6:63).

When Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth as the ‘word made flesh’, He exhibited God’s glory, FULL of grace and truth.

John 1:14 And 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.

If a vessel like a glass is FULL to the brim of water and we topple the glass, what flows out ? Water naturally. Now if it were possible to empty God of the substance which comprises Him and fills Him, what you do think will flow out from Him? GRACE of course! This is exactly what the Bible teaches. Here is the text:

John 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

The FULLNESS that God has is called GRACE. We become recipients of this fullness in regular impartations and endowments of ‘grace UPON grace’ or ‘grace FOR grace’ (KJV).

Grace is the anatomical and compositional constituent make-up of God, who is Spirit. This grace is communicated through His Word. This Word became flesh and became visible, portraying the glory of God, full of GRACE and truth. Grace is that Divine property within God that presses to be seen in human vessels in order to put on display the glory of God.

HEBREW AND GREEK UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE:

Let us briefly examine the Hebrew (O.T.) and Greek (N.T.) words translated 'grace'.

In the Old Testament :

- Grace = Chen**
- = Favour, acceptance.
 - = Some special standing or privilege with God or people (e.g. Esther 5:2)

In the New Testament:

- Grace = charis**
- = That which causes joy, pleasure, gratification, favour, acceptance, for a kindness granted or desired, a benefit, thanks, gratitude.
 - = The divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life
 - = The absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the giver.

The Hebrew and Greek words above give attention primarily to the effects grace produces in the son of God. We will give coverage to these later in this teaching. When we become recipients of grace, it has an influence upon our hearts and becomes overtly reflected in our behaviour and operation in the world. We start to enjoy favour and special standing with God and men. It wells up joy and contentment within our hearts, causing us to respond reciprocally with expressions of gratitude to our God, who Himself is extremely benevolent and generous in His disposition of grace and His willingness to grant it. In granting His grace, He is granting Himself.

Here is a profound explanation of grace offered by Thamo Naidoo, a servant of God who does the work of an apostle:

"Grace is that Divine invisible, immaterial property or veritable substance in the Godhead that empowers you to function as a representation of God, and also resources you, thus enabling you to function in a particular way to get work done according to the plan of God."

God's grace is the substance and property by which God, as a Spirit being, is constituted. This divine, supernatural endowment or deposit is imparted to a person, enabling that person to become all that God has destined them to be, and empowers them to successfully execute His will upon the earth. It bestows upon the recipient enablement, empowerment, favour, acceptance and privilege, causing joy and contentment as the person develops into the fullness of his predetermined identity as a son of God.

Grace facilitates one's progressive development into the fullness of his personal calling, mandate and assignment in God, and above all causes the persons to efficiently and successfully fulfill the purposes of God attendant with his life and that of others.

We serve a God, FULL of grace, whose manner, borne out from His nature and composition, is to be gracious, imparting this nature expressed in favour, kindness and special privilege/standing to repentant sinners and to those who already know Him.

Turn to me and BE GRACIOUS to me,

After YOUR MANNER

with those who love Your name.

Psalm 119:132

God is benevolent and generous is His intent to impart the GRACE within Himself to us. He is inclined and disposed to bestowing upon us His GRACE. It is His goal that we, His sons be filled with His grace in ever increasing measures. As we continue in this series, I pray that we all would 'GROW IN GRACE'. In subsequent sessions, we demonstrate how to do this.

Great grace, mercy and peace from Christ be yours in ever increasing measure.

With love in Christ,
Randolph Barnwell

Stay in Touch via my Website and Social Networks

'Follow' Randolph Barnwell personally via Facebook or Twitter to receive regular inspirational and encouraging short posts and tweets highlighting key life principles from God's Word. You may also freely download notes and audio files of each session from www.randolphbarnwell.com. Additional materials on various topics are also available for download here. Enquiries: randolph@gatedc.co.za

Visit and 'like' the 'GATE MINISTRIES Durban Central' Facebook page OR 'follow' Gate Ministries Durban Central on Twitter and keep informed as to themes that will be taught each week. To regularly receive our free bible study notes, ensure you are on our email distribution list – send a request to info@gatedc.co.za.

Other excellent and empowering resources are available from:

thamonaiddoo.com ; apostolicleader.co.za; soleyn.com; josephmaterra.org; touchthenations.co.za; lifeenterprise.co.za; elijahmorgan.eu; gmh.co.za; godihear.com; egen.co; peace.org.au