



Chalmette Church of Christ

January 24th, 2016

UNDERSTANDING GRACE #1 (A WORD STUDY)

Bill Boyd

At the graveside service of a godly woman, I heard a man say that his departed grandmother had “grown up in the churches of Christ before we discovered grace.” The way he said it you would think “the churches of Christ” were a denomination. He could not have been talking about the churches of Christ we read about in the New Testament. The apostles taught the truth about grace from the beginning. They also refuted false ideas about grace that were in circulation in their day. Perhaps this man in the graveyard was talking about the time before change-agents in the church discovered Baptist doctrines.

I have heard a lot of strange things about grace. Here are some things old and new I have either heard or read (not in any particular order): “You must keep the old law to enjoy grace,” “grace is for the circumcised,” “grace must be earned,” “there is insufficient grace for me,” “grace means you do not have to obey the gospel,” “salvation is by grace only,” “grace is unconditional,” “grace is only for the elect,” “grace is irresistible,” “you cannot fall from grace,” “grace means you are not under ANY law,” “there is no grace in the Old Testament,” “let us sin that grace may abound,” “because of grace, it does not matter what we do in worship (instrumental music and women preachers),” “because of grace, it does not matter what we believe about salvation (salvation without baptism),” “because of grace, it does not matter what church we are a member of (denominations),” “because of grace, it does not matter who we marry (fornication),” “grace excuses lasciviousness,” “I can only reach so high and grace reaches the rest of the way,” “you never talk about grace.” You have likely heard some of these things yourself; and, you could probably add statements to the list. But, this is enough to demonstrate the confusion believed and taught about grace.

It is not true to say that we “never talk about grace.” However, if you hear Gospel preachers talk about obedience more than they talk about grace, then remember that is what Jesus did. When the apostles preached grace they did so in the context of obedience. Grace is God’s part, and what God does by grace is not changed by what we preach. Obedience is man’s part, and “we persuade men” (1 Cor. 5:11). Preaching the truth about grace can motivate men to obey the Gospel, but I do not think confusion about grace is because “the churches of Christ have been slow to discover grace.” I think it is more likely that some have not been listening, or they have dismissed what they heard because it did not suit them.

Thomas Warren used to teach that if we wanted to understand the whole truth about what the Bible teaches about a topic, then we need to find everything the Bible says about that topic and put it together. That is a big task when it comes to a subject like grace. Nevertheless, that is what I tried to do in preparing for this series of articles. The King James Version remains the translation of my choice, and the numbers that follow are in reference to that grand old book, but for most other translations these numbers will not be far off.

In the King James Version of the New Testament, the word “grace” is found 130 times (129 of these times the word “grace” is a translation of the Greek word *charis*). The one time the English word “grace” is used where the word *charis* does not appear in the Greek text is in James 1:11, where in reference to the flower it is said, “the grace of the fashion of it.” Here the word “grace” is used for the word *euprepeia*. It is referring to its beauty.

In the Greek text the word *charis* is found 150 times. This means that twenty-one times the word *charis* is not translated “grace.” Here is a breakdown of how *charis* is translated in the New Testament: grace (129); thank, thanks, or thankworthy (8); favor (6); pleasure (2); gracious (1); benefit (1); liberality (1); joy (1); acceptable (1).

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The common Sunday School definition of the word “grace” is “unmerited favor” —but it’s never translated that way. The basic meaning of the word *charis* is simply “favor.” The idea of “favor” is in the word *charis* itself. When the “unmerited” idea is coupled with it, it comes from the context. If we would focus our attention on the inherent “favor” idea in the word “grace,” rather than the often-implied “unmerited” nature of it, we would get a better appreciation of the word itself. “Grace” is not so much about our own unworthiness as it is about the nature of God, His love, His good will toward men, and the pleasure He has in favoring us.

“If I have found grace in thy sight” is a common expression in the Old Testament. Substitute the word “favor” for “grace” in your mind when you read these passages. In Genesis 19:18-19 Lot said, “Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight...” when he plead with the angels to let him escape to Zoar rather than fleeing to the mountains. In Genesis 32:5 Jacob said, “I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight” when he was sending word to his brother Esau. He was wanting his brother to look favorably upon him. In Genesis 39:4 it is said of Potiphar that “Joseph found grace in his sight,” when he looked upon him favorably. In Exodus 33:13 Moses prayed saying, “If I have found grace in thy sight,” when asking God to go with him. In Ruth 2:10, Ruth ask Boaz, “Why have I found grace in thine eyes?” And Boaz answered by telling her of the good report he had heard of her.

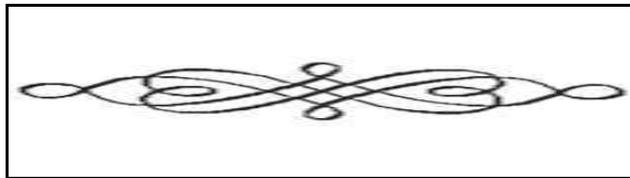
The first time the Greek word usually translated “grace” is used in the New Testament is Luke 1:30 where the angel said to Mary, “thou hast found favour with God.” It is the word “favour.” It is used again in Luke 2:52 where the text says, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” There were reasons that people liked Jesus, and God was pleased with him. In Acts 2:46-47 it says of those in the early church that they had “favour with all the people” —they were making a good impression. In Acts 7:9-10 it is said of Joseph that God was with him and “gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” He was an impressive young man, and so also it says of David in Acts 7:46 that David, “found favour before God.” In these passages the word repeatedly translated “favour” is the word usually translated “grace” (*charis*). Thinking of the word “favour” when we read the word “grace” helps us better understand and appreciate Paul’s salutation at the beginning of all his epistles when he says “Grace be unto you,” and his benedictions at the end of every one of them when he says, “The grace of the Lord be with you.” He wanted the Lord to continue to look favorably upon them, to be pleased with them, and to continue to bless them.

This kind of good will is often demonstrated by a gift. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 Paul wrote, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.” The word translated “liberality” is the word usually translated “grace” (*charis*). In 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 he wrote, “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.” Here the word usually translated “grace” is translated “gift” in verse 4.

In all these examples, the word “grace” is more of a compliment to the character of the giver, than a commentary on the worthiness of the receiver. This should help us better understand and appreciate passages like Ephesians 2:4-8: “By grace are ye saved through faith...it is the gift of God.” It is out of God’s good will toward man that he extends salvation to man.

News & Notes

- The Men's Prayer breakfast was a great success! We had a large turn out from our area congregations. A big thank you to all those that helped make this a successful Prayer Breakfast.
- There will be a Ladies Class beginning on Monday, February 1st at 6:30 at the building.
- Please keep Jackie Gamble in your prayers. She came forward on Wednesday evening asking for strength.
- Please keep **Cy Stafford** in your prayers at this time. He was diagnosed with Acute Leukemia and is not expected to live. He is the brother to Tony that worships here from time to time. Cy has worked diligently for the Kingdom with the Tanzania Missions and has led many souls to Christ.
- To be announced soon will be our annual Ladies Day with Dee Parramore as our speaker.
- Please keep **Sherry Towle, Alice Riley, Margo Rodney, Malcolm Vazquez, and John & Bessy Hulsey and Ryder Howard** in your prayers at this time as they are each battling different illnesses.



January Birthdays

28th-John Early

29th-J.V. Russell

February Anniversaries

13th- Malcolm & Marlene Vasquez

February Birthdays

4th-Mary Wyatt

9th-Joe Williams

17th-Bruce Scariano

18th-Claudia Smith

20th-Bree Brock

26th-Crystal Russell

26th- Johnnie Wagner

Prayer List



Diane & Lewis Dedman
Alice Riley
Clifford Markum
Sherry Towle
Margo Rodney
Ella Gillard
Krisztian Montague
Addressan Jenkins
Joel James
Ryker Amaya
Carol Calix
Julio Calix
Marie Pennington
Elizabeth Smith

***All of our brethren scattered across
the United States & our troops in
Iraq**



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Services of The Church
Sunday

Bible Classes 9:00 am

AM Worship 10:00 am

PM Worship 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 pm

Elders

Mark Lance 504-250-8492

J. V. Russell 504-277-0251

Charles Whitley 504-277-4717

Butch Snyder 504-682-0051

Evangelist

Mark Lance 504-250-8492

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Scott Russell 504-232-4120

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Mike Swanner 504-271-2465

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