THE GRACE OF GOD



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NOTES

But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. Romans 11:6



This messianic Bible study on what the Bible teaches concerning the grace of God will deal with the subject in eleven categories.

I. THE HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS

This category deals with the original Hebrew and Greek words from which the doctrinal content on grace is derived. There are two Hebrew words and one Greek that need to be investigated.

A. Chen

The first Hebrew word is *chen*. In the Old Testament, it is used a total of two hundred twenty-five times. From the extensive use of this word, it is obvious that a number of different facets are involved in the concept of the grace of God. Ten examples of its various usages can be mentioned.

First, this word, *chen* means "pure, unmerited favor from a superior to an inferior." This usage is found in Exodus 33:19 and 34:6-9, where God, as the superior, is extending His unmerited favor to humans, who are inferior.

Secondly, it means "divine favor" (Jer. 31:2).

Thirdly, the source of this unmerited, divine grace is God Himself (Zech. 12:10).

Fourthly, chen is used in the sense of grace to the poor and contains within it a sense of mercy (Ex. 22:27).

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Fifth, it is a grace that perseveres (Ps. 116:5).

Sixth, it is a grace that provides (Ps. 111:4-5).

Seventh, it is a grace that is merciful, although it might be provoked (Ex. 34:7).

Eighth, it is a grace that hears a repentant sinner (II Chr. 30:9; Joel 2:13).

Ninth, it is a grace that is connected with spiritual redemption (Job 33:24; Ps. 26:11).

And tenth, it is a grace that is connected with physical redemption from enemies, from wars, and from sins (Ps. 4:1; 9:13; 25:16; 30:10; 31:9; 56:1; 57:1; 86:1-3; 119:132, 134; 123:3).

The best way to summarize the use of the word chen is that it is the unmerited favor of a superior to an inferior; in this case, God, the superior, expressed grace to man usually in temporal or occasionally in spiritual blessings, as well as in redemption and deliverance, in both the physical and spiritual sense.

B. Chesed

The second Hebrew word from which the concept of the grace of God comes is *chesed*. It is used a total of two hundred fifty times in the Old Testament. The basic meaning of *chesed* is "loyal love." It carries the idea of intensity in kindness and love. It has the idea of a relationship of those involved in acts of kindness. This word also has a number of different facets in the Hebrew Old Testament.

All together there are nine different ways that the word *chesed* is used, with all of them somehow related to the grace of God. First, it means "communion with God" (Ps. 5:6-7). Secondly, this word for grace emphasizes God's covenantal relationship (Deut. 7:12). Thirdly, it emphasizes grace in deliverance (Ps. 6:4). Fourthly, it means "the grace of enablement" (Ps. 85:6-7). Fifth, it carries the concept of grace in enlightenment (Ps. 119:64, 124). Sixth, it is a grace that extends forgiveness (Ps. 51:1). Seventh, it is a grace that shows itself in hope or produces hope (Ps. 130:7). Eighth, it is a grace that produces praise (Ps. 13:5). And ninth, it is a grace that promises preservation (Ps. 22:11, 19; 23:6).

To summarize the word *chesed*, it is that firm lovingkindness expressed by God toward people, particularly in the covenants that God has entered into with His people and that are firmly guaranteed by His promise. The basic meaning is "loyal love," as expressed especially in the covenants. This word for grace is connected with the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 20:6; 34:6-7; Deut. 5:10) and with the Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:15; I Chr. 17:13; II Chr. 1:8; 6:14, 42; Ps. 61:6-7; 89:33-34, 49).

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C. Charis

The third word is a Greek word, *charis*. This is the main Greek term for the concept of the grace of God, and it too is used in several different ways.

First, it sometimes means, "that which provides joy, pleasure, delight, charm, and loveliness." To have this grace means to have joy, pleasure, delight, charm, and loveliness. This is its meaning in classical Greek where it was not particularly related to God. Its classical meaning is found in Luke 4:22 and Ephesians 4:29.

Secondly, it means "good will," "lovingkindness," "favor," and "grace" (Lk. 1:30; 2:52; Rom. 11:6; II Cor. 4:15; 6:1; 9:14).

Thirdly, this grace is also an expression of thanks (I Cor. 10:30; I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:3).

Fourthly, this particular word for grace will sometimes emphasize the benefits of grace, such as the benefit of the entire spiritual condition (Rom. 5:2; I Pet. 5:12); grace giving (I Cor. 16:3; II Cor. 8:6-7); earthly blessings (II Cor. 9:8); or saving grace (Jn. 1:17; I Cor. 15:8-10; II Cor. 8:9; I Pet. 1:10, 13).

A fifth usage is a slightly different form of the same root and means "to bestow grace upon." Believers are able to bestow grace upon someone else (Lk. 1:28; Eph. 1:6).

The sixth way it is used is in emphasizing a grace gift. There are two types of grace gifts: first, the gift of salvation (Rom. 6:23); and secondly, the use of spiritual gifts. This can be seen in another form of this same Greek word that emphasizes the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor. 7:7; 12:1-31; Eph. 4:8-11, and I Pet. 4:10).

These are three original words, two Hebrew and one Greek, and their various usages that one needs to be aware of in order to come to a knowledge of all that the grace of God means.

II. GRACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The second category of this study is a survey of grace in the Old Testament. This survey can be subdivided into three units: the patriarchal period, the Dispensation of Law, and the covenants.

A. The Patriarchal Period

During the patriarchal period, the grace of God was extended to at least five persons: Noah (Gen. 6:8); Abraham (Gen. 18:3; 24:27); Lot (Gen. 19:19); Jacob (Gen. 32:10; 33:5); and Joseph (Gen. 39:21; 43:29).

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B. The Dispensation of Law

Although theologians often distinguish between the Dispensation of Law and the Dispensation of Grace, the grace of God was extended even under the Dispensation of Law. For example, Moses was a recipient of the grace of God (Ex. 33:12-17) and so was the nation of Israel (Ex. 15:13).

C. The Covenants

The covenants of the Old Testament were received because of the grace of God. In fact, the second Hebrew word *chesed* particularly emphasizes God's loyalty to His covenants. The Abrahamic Covenant was a product of the grace of God (Mic. 7:20), as was the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 34:6 7), and the Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:14-15; Ps. 89:33-35; Is. 55:3; Jer. 31:3).

III. GRACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The third category of this study is a survey of the grace of God in the New Testament, where the greatest display of the grace of God is found. This category will be divided into six units: the Gospels, the Book of Acts, the Pauline Epistles, the Book of Hebrews, the General Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

A. The Gospels

In the Gospels, the word "grace" is used a total of eleven times, and most of these are found in the Gospel of Luke (1:30; 2:40, 52; 4:22; 6:32-34; 17:9). Outside of Luke, it is found only in the Gospel of John (1:14, 16-17).

From these eleven usages, three observations can be made. First, the word was never used by the Messiah, with the exceptions of Luke 6:32-34 and 17:9. In those cases where Yeshua (Jesus) did use the word, it carried the meaning of "thanks." A second observation comes from the fact that it is used only eleven times and primarily by Luke. It is not a word that is used generally in the synoptic Gospels except for Luke. Matthew and Mark do not use the word at all. Luke's close association with the Apostle Paul is probably the reason he is the one who uses the word most often. Paul was the great proponent and teacher of the grace of God. And the third observation is that the only other Gospel besides Luke that uses the word is the Gospel of John, and even then, it is only in chapter 1. According to John, it is recognized that the Messiah was the full revelation of the grace of God.

In the Gospels, the word "grace" carries five different meanings. First, it carries the meaning of "thanks" (Lk. 6:32-34; 17:9). Secondly, it carries the meaning "to grant a favor" (Lk. 1:28; 7:21, 42-43). Thirdly, it carries the meaning of "winsomeness," someone who is winsome (Lk. 2:40, 52). Fourthly, it has the meaning of "gracious words about grace" (Lk. 4:22). Fifth, it carries the full Christian theological

meaning of grace only in John 1:14, 16-17.

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B. The Book of Acts

In the Book of Acts, the word "grace" is used in six different ways. First, it has the meaning of "favor" (2:47). Secondly, it is used to describe God's works in the Old Testament (7:10, 46). Thirdly, it has the meaning of "non-religious favor," "favor with no religious content" (24:27; 25:3). Fourthly, it is sometimes a synonym for the gospel itself and its results (13:43; 14:3; 20:24, 32). Fifth, it is the means by which the gospel is brought to men (15:11; 18:27). Sixth, the word "grace" emphasizes God's gifts to believers after their salvation (4:33; 6:8; 11:23; 14:26; 15:40).

C. The Pauline Epistles

Paul, the greatest and most extensive teacher on the grace of God, used the word "grace" in both the opening and the closing of every one of his epistles. Since the Book of Romans is his major book on theology, it is not unusual that he used the word "grace" a great number of times in this book (1:5, 7; 3:24; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15, 17, 21; 6:1, 14-15; 11:5 6; 12:3, 6). From these references, it is obvious that Paul used the word "grace" in at least five different ways: the grace of apostleship, the grace of justification, the grace of sanctification, the grace of election, and the grace of spiritual gifts.

In I Corinthians, Paul used the word in the introduction (1:3), and in five different ways in the Epistle. First, to describe what God did for him on the Damascus road (15:10); secondly, as enablement for acceptable spiritual service (3:10); thirdly, in the sense of thanksgiving (10:30); fourthly, to emphasize the gift of the Holy Spirit, meaning the gift of salvation (1:4); and fifth, to emphasize the gifts of the Holy Spirit (12:4, 9, 28, 30-31).

In II Corinthians, Paul used the word "grace" in the introduction (1:2) and in five different ways in the Epistle: first, as saving grace (6:1); secondly, as enabling grace (4:15; 12:9); thirdly, as a thanks (1:11); fourthly, as a sphere of life in which a believer operates (1:12); and fifth, in the giving of money, which is considered as the grace of God (8:1, 4, 6-7, 19; 9:8, 14).

In the Book of Galatians, the word "grace" is found in 1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 3:18; and 5:4. Paul's emphasis in this book is to show that God had revealed to him the uniqueness of the doctrine of grace.

In the Book of Ephesians, it is used as the opening (1:2), and then it is used three different ways: to emphasize the grace of salvation (1:7, 2:5, 8); to emphasize the grace of service (3:2, 7-8, 4:7); and to emphasize the grace of speech (4:29).

In the Book of Philippians, the word "grace" is used in the opening in 1:2 and 7.

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In the Book of Colossians, it is used as the opening (1:2), and then in two other ways: the grace of the gospel itself (1:5-6); and the grace of speech (3:16; 4:6).

In I Thessalonians, it is used as part of the opening of the letter (1:1).

In II Thessalonians, it is used also as part of the opening of the letter (1:2) and then it is mentioned again as the evidence of faith (1:12).

In the Pastoral Epistles of I and II Timothy and Titus, Paul always used grace in the sense of "saving grace." This is true in all cases except in II Timothy 2:1, where Paul speaks of grace in terms of the believer's position in relationship to God. The word is found in I Timothy 1:2, 14; II Timothy 1:2, 9; Titus 1:4; 2:11; and 3:7.

Having surveyed the use of the word "grace" in the Pauline Epistles, Paul's usage of the word can be summarized in three main points.

First, the origin of Paul's concept of the grace of God is his experience on the Damascus road. He frequently harked back to that Damascus road experience in discussing where his ideas, concepts, and knowledge of the grace of God originated.

The second point about Paul's usage of the word "grace" is that it is always used in reference to God's grace to man. Paul never used the word "grace" in reference to a man's favor to another man. It is used this way elsewhere, but not in Paul's letters.

The third point about Paul's usage of the word "grace" is that his concept of grace was multifaceted; it had at least six different facets. First, the grace of God was the grace of Yeshua the Messiah in His sacrifice (II Cor. 8:9; Gal. 2:20-21). Secondly, according to Paul, grace is absolutely free; man does not have to pay anything for it, but of course, it did cost God the life of His Son (Rom. 3:24; 5:15; Eph. 2:8). Thirdly, grace is the sin conquering power in salvation and sanctification (Rom. 5:12-21; 6:1-23). Fourthly, Paul taught that grace is freely offered to all men (Eph. 2:8-9). Fifth, grace is the sum total of the believer's blessing (Eph. 1:7; 3:8). And sixth, we live in the Dispensation of Grace (Rom. 6:14).

D. The Book of Hebrews

In the Book of Hebrews, the word "grace" is used a total of seven times to emphasize four things: the death of the Messiah (2:9); the believer's position in the grace of God (4:16, used twice); the Spirit of grace (10:29); and grace in the believer's life (12:15, 28; 13:9).

E. The General Epistles

The general Epistles are James, I and II Peter, I, II, and III John, and Jude. In the Book of James, the word "grace" is found twice, both times in 4:6.

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In I Peter, it is used to teach four concepts: first, that the prophetic content in the Old Testament was part of God's grace (1:10); secondly, the eschatological hope of grace (1:13); thirdly, grace as the concept of spiritual living (3:7; 5:5, 10, 12); and fourthly, Peter, like Paul, used the word "grace" to emphasize spiritual gifts (4:10).

In II Peter, it is found twice: in 1:2 and 3:18.

In I John, it is not used at all.

In II John, it is found once, in verse 3.

In III John, it is not used at all.

And in the Book of Jude, it is used only once, in verse 4.

F. The Book of Revelation

In the Book of Revelation, the word "grace" is found only twice: in the opening greeting (1:4) and the closing benediction (22:21).

IV. THE MEANING OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Having dealt with the original Greek and Hebrew words, and having surveyed the use of the word "grace" in the Old and New Testaments, the fourth category of this study is to derive a definition of the grace of God.

A very simple definition is: The grace of God is favor that is unmerited, that is totally unrelated to every or any question of human merit. This simple definition carries seven specific ramifications that should be noted.

First, grace is not withheld because of sin; otherwise, it would not be true grace.

Secondly, grace is not lessened because of sin.

Thirdly, grace cannot incur a debt. Good works may follow the experience of God's grace, but not for the purpose of compensation. Grace is grace; it is unmerited. It is pure love given to man with its various benefits. This is the point of Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; and 3:8.

Fourthly, grace is never exercised as a just payment of a debt according to Romans 4:4.

The fifth ramification is that grace is never the overpayment of a debt. Grace does not increase or decrease.

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Sixth, grace does not appear in the immediate divine dealings with the sins of the unsaved. This means that God deals with any sin only on the basis of mercy, not leniency. Sin is not forgiven because God is big-hearted enough to remit the penalty or to waive His righteous judgments. Forgiveness is not an immediate act of grace, rather, it is a judicial pardon in view of the fact that the debt has already been paid by another, the Messiah. Grace is mediated through the cross.

And the seventh ramification is that grace does not appear in the immediate divine dealings with the sins of the saved, because forgiveness is on the basis of the cross of the Messiah. The means of receiving forgiveness for a believer who has sinned is by means of confession (I Jn. 1:9). Even for the saved, grace is not immediate, but mediated on the basis of the cross of the Messiah and by means of confession.

V. COMMON GRACE

The fifth category of the grace of God is a study of common grace, which will be divided into five units: the definition of common grace, the display of common grace, the means of common grace, the content and effects of common grace, and the limitations of common grace.

A. The Definition of Common Grace

Someone has written a nice, lengthy definition of common grace: "Common grace is those general operations of the Holy Spirit whereby He, without renewing the heart, exercises such a moral influence on men through His general or special revelation that sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted, and those general blessings, such as rain and sunshine, food and drink, clothing and shelter that God imparts to all men indiscriminately where and in what measure it seems good to Him."

Perhaps a more simple definition of common grace is as follows: "Common grace is the unmerited favor of God toward all men displayed in His general care for them." Common grace is God's grace or favor extended to all men in general, without distinguishing between believers and unbelievers (Ps. 104:1-35; 145:14-16; Acts 17:30; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

B. The Display of Common Grace

Common grace is displayed in three areas or in three circles of activity: first, in God's general providence of His world; secondly, in the restraint of sin in that man is never allowed to become as bad as the sin nature would permit him to become; and thirdly, in the general convicting work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7-11).

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C. The Means of Common Grace

The third unit concerns the various means by which common grace is extended. Four things can be mentioned in regards to the means of common grace.

The first means is general revelation. General revelation is God's revelation through nature, through providence, and through creation, in contrast to special revelation in the written Word of God. While one needs the Spirit of God to understand special revelation, all men can arrive at certain correct conclusions about God from general revelation. Thus, general revelation is one means of common grace.

A second means of common grace is human government. God uses human government to restrain wickedness and the lawlessness of sin. A strong government that applies punishment to evil doers is also a product of common grace.

The third means of common grace is public opinion. Sometimes God will use public opinion to make sure things are done the way He wills it. There are concepts of public opinion, such as majority opinion or the Moral Majority or other forms that God will some times use to achieve order in human society; that too is a means of common grace.

The fourth means is more direct, and that is by divine punishment and reward. Divine punishment, such as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, and divine reward, such as in the case of areas of the world that are productive and supply the physical needs of man, are also a means of common grace.

D. The Content and Effects of Common Grace

Concerning the content and effects of common grace, seven things should be noted.

First, good gifts are a product of God's common grace (Rom. 2:4). Among these good gifts are: the goodness of God (Ps. 145:9, 15-16); sunshine and rain (Mat. 5:44-45); the kindness of God (Lk. 6:35-36); food from the earth (Acts 14:16-17); and provisions (I Tim. 4:10).

Secondly, God's restraint of the evilness and lawlessness of sin is a product of common grace (Gen. 6:3; 20:6; 31:7; Job 1:12; 2:6; Is. 63:10-11; II Thes. 2:6-7).

Thirdly, the natural man or the unsaved man is able to perform some good acts. The fact that the natural man is able to do good things is also a product of common grace (II Kin. 10:29-30; 12:2; 14:3; Lk. 6:33; Rom. 2:14).

Fourthly, God does not immediately judge every sin. The delay in the execution of God's sentence against sin gives man a chance to repent.

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The fact that evil men, unsaved men, do not receive the judgment of God immediately is a product of common grace (Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

Fifth, common grace gives man some sense of the truth, the good, the moral, and the beautiful. Even the unsaved man is able to appreciate the beautiful things of this world, the truth, and the good because of common grace (Acts 17:22; Rom. 2:14-15).

Sixth, civil government exercising righteous rule is a result of common grace (Rom. 13:1-4).

And seventh, common grace is also proof of the gospel. In other words, when people see the evidences of common grace that, in turn, may lead them to the truth of the gospel; this too is a product of common grace (Jn. 16:8-11).

E. The Limitations of Common Grace

There are three specific limitations of common grace. First, it works in a rational and moral way, but not in a spiritual way. Only special grace works in a spiritual way. Secondly, common grace will not effect a spiritual change. It may lead a person to begin searching for spiritual truth, but common grace itself will not effect a spiritual change. This too belongs to another facet of the grace of God. And thirdly, it can be resisted by human will. People resist common grace when they deny the truth of God being manifest in Creation and nature.

VI. EFFECTUAL OR SPECIAL GRACE

The sixth category deals with the effectual or special grace of God, and can be divided into two units: the definition and the ramifications of special grace.

A. The Definition of Effectual or Special Grace

A definition of effectual or special grace is that it is the work of the Holy Spirit that effectively moves men to believe in Jesus the Messiah as Savior.

B. The Ramifications of Effectual or Special Grace

This definition of effectual or special grace has six ramifications. First, special grace is effective; it will always accomplish its goal. Secondly, it cannot be resisted, although it does not exclude the human act of believing. Thirdly, it is an act of the Holy Spirit that moves men to believe so that no man is ever saved against his will. Special grace is what causes salvation to come to a man, but the work of the Holy Spirit in special grace is to work on man's will to make him willing to believe. Fourthly, special grace works apart from the human will, but it generates that will effectively so that it moves the human will without forcing it. This is the balance between sovereignty and human will. Fifth, effectual or special grace is an instantaneous act, not a

process. And sixth, it is preceded by common grace. Man first experiences common grace before he experiences effectual or special grace.

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VII. SOVEREIGN GRACE

The seventh category of the grace of God deals with sovereign grace and can be divided into three units: the meaning of sovereign grace, election and the divine motives of sovereign grace, and the motives of sovereign grace.

A. The Meaning of Sovereign Grace

The word "sovereign" means "having the primary or highest rule." The word itself does not have an unlimited concept because God's sovereignty is limited only by Himself; God's exercise of His grace is limited by His own attributes. Therefore, the word "sovereign" is not an unlimited concept.

The point of Ephesians 1:11 is that the concept of the sovereignty of God must be correlated with the plan of God. The grace of God, especially His sovereign grace, is revealed through God's chosen plan. This plan that God has chosen is all-inclusive, but this does not mean, of course, that God sustains the same relationship to every part of that plan because, within the plan, there is creature responsibility. Furthermore, God uses a variety of means, both direct and indirect, to carry out His purpose. Thus the concept of God's sovereignty must be correlated with God's plan.

Furthermore, the sovereignty of God is a purposeful concept. It is not arbitrary, meaning "fatalistic," nor is it whimsical, meaning "left to chance." To receive the grace of God, one must believe. To enjoy the grace of God, one must be obedient. The purpose of the grace of God in relationship to man is to produce good works (Eph. 2:10). The purpose of the grace of God in relationship to Himself is that of His own glorification (Eph. 1:5-6, 12, 14). Therefore, sovereignty is a purposeful concept.

Another thing about the meaning of sovereign grace is that grace is the supreme and governing principle in God's ordering of the universe.

B. Election and the Divine Motives of Sovereign Grace

Election is a major concept within sovereign grace, and six points should be made.

First, the relationship of sovereignty to election is specifically in the realm of salvation. The Bible teaches that election is unto salvation (Eph. 1:5), and salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:8).

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Secondly, God's elective work is for the purpose of conforming the believer to the image of the Messiah; believers have been predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rom. 8:28-30).

Thirdly, if God did not exercise His sovereignty in election, no one would have been saved. Man is not capable of saving himself.

Fourthly, the question is not, "Why are some lost?" All are lost because of sin. The question is, "Why are any saved?" The reason some are saved by grace is for God's glory.

Fifth, everything God does is based upon the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11).

Sixth, because God is a sovereign ruler, nothing escapes His observation, and nothing is outside His control. Therefore, He can safely allow man the liberty necessary for responsibility (II Thes. 2:13). Thus, grace concerns origins and responsibility concerns reactions. Furthermore, concerning responsibility in relationship to reactions, three things should be noted: first, believers are not to frustrate the grace of God by substituting works (Gal. 2:4); secondly, believers are not to spite the Spirit of grace by rejecting grace's way of salvation (Heb. 10:29); and thirdly, believers should make their calling and election sure; the way of making it sure is to see if God's grace is resulting in good works (II Pet. 1:10).

C. The Motives of Sovereign Grace

There are three motives for sovereign grace. The first motive is the love of God; it is because of His love that God's sovereign grace is bestowed (I Jn. 2:5). The second motive of grace is the demonstration of His grace (Eph. 2:7). He extends sovereign grace so that He can demonstrate His graciousness. The third motive is so that the redeemed may produce good works. Those who have received God's sovereign grace and have been saved can and should produce good works (Eph. 2:10).

VIII. SALVATION GRACE

This eighth category will be subdivided into three units: the Scriptures, the divine motives of salvation grace, and the principles that cannot co exist with salvation grace.

A. The Scriptures

The Bible does indeed teach that salvation is by grace through faith plus nothing. Two passages that teach this are:
Acts 15:11: *But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.*
And Romans 11:6: *But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.*

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B. The Divine Motives of Salvation Grace

According to Ephesians 2:7, the divine motive in saving grace was good works. Concerning divine motivation, three points can be made.

First, men are said to be saved so that good works may result (Eph. 2:8-10). This is a major distinction between the Dispensation of the Law and the Dispensation of Grace. Under the Law of Moses, works were required. These works were set forth as meritorious and blessings came as a result of them (Mat. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 10:26-28). But these required works were not in the salvation sense. Believers are under grace and good works should be the result of divine blessings. Under the Law, the issue was, "Do good works so you can receive God's favor." But under grace, the issue is, "Because you have received God's favor, therefore, do good works."

Secondly, works are a proper test of saving faith in that one shows his faith by his works (Jas. 2:14-26).

And thirdly, the believer's works are indicative of the attitude of his heart toward this grace of God.

C. The Principles That Cannot Co exist with Salvation Grace

There is no co-existence possible between certain principles and the grace of God. Three such principles can be mentioned.

First, any sense of human obligation to attain God's grace cannot co-exist with grace, because God must be free to exercise grace without the slightest limitations due to human sin. Grace would not be free grace if the benefits were withheld because of sin.

Secondly, there cannot be any sense of human repayment; grace cannot remain grace if an obligation for repayment is created or imposed by its benefits. According to Romans 6:23, grace is a gift.

Thirdly, there cannot be any recognition of human merit, according to Ephesians 2:10. Grace is not grace if it is earned.

IX. THE BELIEVER'S STANDING IN GRACE

Two main passages emphasize that those who are believers are standing in a new position; they are standing in grace. The first passage is Romans 5:2: *through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*
Here Paul writes that believers are standing in *this grace*, and they attained that standing *by faith.* Their standing in *this grace* provides the *hope of the glory of God*; that some day the believer will be glorified, even as they have been justified and are now being sanctified.

The second main passage that speaks about this standing in grace is I

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Peter 5:12: *By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written unto you briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein.*

As Peter concludes his first epistle, he points out that the reason he wrote it was to testify concerning the truth of the grace of God in which these believers were standing. They were standing in the grace of God, just as believers are today.

There are two implications to the believer's standing in grace. First, the keeping power of God through grace is included in every consideration of the principles of grace. Because of this, a disposal of three things is required. First, there must be a disposal of every condemnation that divine righteousness could impose because of sin. According to John 3:18; 5:24; and Romans 8:1, there has indeed been such a disposal. The point of these passages is that believers are no longer standing in condemnation, they are standing in grace. It is the unbeliever who has the wrath of God abiding on him. Secondly, there must be a disposal of every human obligation. The giving of this standing in grace does not obligate anyone to repay God for this grace. There are obligations, of course, but these obligations are not for the purpose of repayment. This grace is an absolutely free gift, which requires no repayment. And thirdly, there must be disposal of every human merit, because human merit cannot achieve this grace of God.

The second implication is that the keeping power of God through grace is implied in every revelation wherein the truth that grace reaches into the coming ages for its consummation is presented. The grace believers have right now reaches into the coming ages for its total enjoyment (Jn. 6:37; Phil. 1:6).

X. LIFE UNDER GRACE

Believers are now standing in this grace, they are now in the Dispensation of Grace, and are under grace. What is life under grace all about? The category of life under grace can be discussed in seven units.

A. The Basis of Life Under Grace

Concerning the basis of life under grace, two things should be mentioned. First, believers must clearly recognize that they are under grace, not under the Mosaic Law (Rom. 6:14). Believers must always remember that the life they now lead is not on the basis of the Law, but on the basis of the grace of God only. The contrast is that, under the Law, it was taught, "Do it because you have to" and "Do it in order to be blessed." But under grace, it is the opposite, "Do it because you want to," and "Do it because you have been blessed."

Secondly, while believers are free from the Law of Moses, they are not free from law altogether. They must now operate under a different law,

the Law of the Messiah (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).

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The basis of life under grace is the clear cut recognition that believers are under grace, not under the Law; they are free from the Law of Moses, but are under the Law of the Messiah.

B. The Provisions of Life Under Grace

Just as the Mosaic Law provided a particular rule of life, even so, the Law of the Messiah also provides a particular rule of life under grace.

For example, this is the point of Titus 2:11: *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.*
The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, and this grace that brought salvation carries with it a particular rule of life: the Law of the Messiah. Just as the Law of Moses contained a system of rules of life, the Law of the Messiah contains a system of rules and principles for the conduct of the believer. Because the Law of Moses is excluded as a rule of life, the believer's daily life is to be directed by the teachings of grace. Too many believers are confused in this matter.

Frequently, believers go back to certain points of the Mosaic Law in order to find a rule of life for themselves, but that is not the proper place to go. Believers are no longer under the Mosaic Law, but are under grace; therefore, the law they should go to for a rule of life is the Law of the Messiah. This is the present system of rules and principles for believers' conduct. Again, the Law of Moses is excluded as a rule of life. Today, the believer's daily life is to be directed by the Law of the Messiah, which is a product of grace.

Along with the provision of the Law of the Messiah, which contains both positive and negative commandments, comes divine enablement. Divine enablement is provided so that the believer can keep God's standards. So on the one hand, God has given the Law of the Messiah providing believers with the rules and regulations to obey, providing a rule of life for this age. On the other hand, however, comes divine enablement, so that believers can keep the righteous standards of God (Jn. 7:37-39; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; I Cor. 2:12; 6:19; Gal. 3:2; I Thes. 4:8; I Jn. 3:24; 4:13).

To summarize the provisions of life under grace: first, God provided the Law of the Messiah that spells out what believers should and should not do, but also gives them principles to follow. And secondly, He has provided divine enablement so that believers can effectively fulfill the demands of the Law of the Messiah.

C. The Precepts of Life Under Grace

The precepts of life under grace are based upon what has already been spoken about, the Law of the Messiah, which spells out the conduct of life that believers ought to lead. Just as the Law of Moses

had many individual commandments, even so, the Law of the Messiah has many individual commandments. These precepts can be categorized in four different ways.

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1. Positive Commandments in the Law of the Messiah

Positive commandments are found throughout the New Testament. There are actually many positive commandments in each of the Epistles, except for Philemon, which is a personal letter to a friend. The following list is one example from every book from Romans to Revelation that contains a positive commandment:
Romans 13:1
I Corinthians 11:28
II Corinthians 6:17
Galatians 6:2
Ephesians 5:22
Philippians 4:9
Colossians 4:6
I Thessalonians 5:16-18
II Thessalonians 3:12
I Timothy 2:8
II Timothy 4:2
Titus 2:7
Hebrews 10:24
James 1:5
I Peter 2:21
II Peter 3:18
I John 2:6
II John 5
III John 11
Jude 22
Revelation 2:5

2. Negative Commandments in the Law of the Messiah

There are also many negative commandments that believers should not do. The following list is one example from each of the New Testament books from Romans to III John, except again for Philemon, that contains a positive commandment:
Romans 12:2
I Corinthians 6:7
II Corinthians 6:14
Galatians 5:13
Ephesians 4:30
Philippians 2:4
Colossians 3:21
I Thessalonians 5:19
II Thessalonians 3:13
I Timothy 4:7
II Timothy 1:8
Titus 2:10

Hebrews 10:25
James 4:11
I Peter 3:9
II Peter 3:8 9
I John 4:1
II John 10
III John 11

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3. Principles in the Law of the Messiah

Besides positive and negative commandments, there are both positive and negative principles in the Law of the Messiah that should be followed, as well as principles that deal with real biblical situation ethics.

In the case of doing something that would offend a brother, Paul used the example of the eating of meat. If the eating of meat would offend a brother, then the believer must refrain from eating meat in his presence. Of course, that is neither a positive or negative commandment. The Bible does not say that one must eat meat nor does it say that one cannot eat meat. Meat itself is a neutral element, so normally, all are free to partake. But when partaking of meat will cause offense, the principle to be followed is that one is to refrain from eating meat. This is a situation ethic. Thus, besides positive commandments and negative commandments, there are also principles in which one must use wisdom to determine how he should act in a given situation.

4. Additional Rules Given by Rulers

Fourthly, there is one more category concerning precepts, and that is rules given by rulers. The Bible teaches that believers are to be in subjection to those who are in positions of authority, especially those who are in authority over a local church (Eph. 4:11-12; I Tim. 3:5; Heb. 13:7, 17).

D. The Questions to Ask When Living Under Grace

In dealing with precepts that are principles, how does one determine which way to go? To come to an answer, it may be wise to ask these five questions before participating.

First, "Is it a weight, that is, something that would hinder the believer's life?" This is not a case of dealing with something that is a known sin, for sin always hinders the believer's life (Heb. 12:1). This is the case of something that is itself neutral, but doing it hinders one's personal spiritual life. One specific activity may hinder the spiritual life of one believer, but not another.

Secondly, "Is it a habit that enslaves?" (I Cor. 6:12) For example, the

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Bible never speaks about smoking. The Bible does not deal with the use of tobacco, but can someone smoke regularly and not become addicted to it? As any smoker can tell you, the answer is "No!" What a terrible time those who are already addicted to tobacco have in trying to quit. The question again is, "Is it a habit, and does it enslave?"

Thirdly, "Is it a stumbling block?" This question is especially important in relation to other saved people. Will it cause a fellow believer to stumble in his faith? (I Cor. 8:1-13). This is not a case in which someone might just feel offended by it, because it is almost impossible to do anything these days without someone being offended. The question is, "Will it cause a fellow believer to stumble in his faith?" not whether he will simply be offended by one's action.

Fourthly, "Is it winsome?" This is the question to ask in relationship to the unsaved. Will it hinder an unbeliever from coming to the Messiah or will it draw him to believe on the Messiah? (I Cor. 9:19-21; 10:32; Col. 4:5).

Fifth, "Does it display God effectively?" or "Does it glorify God?" Will it bring Him glory? (I Cor. 10:31).

These are questions believers are to ask themselves when confronted with an issue that in itself is neutral; it is here that the divine wisdom provided by grace must be applied.

E. The Power Behind Life Under Grace

Grace provides the power to live life under grace. This power comes from the Holy Spirit, and there are two points to note here. First, the Spirit indwells all believers (Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 6:19). And secondly, the Spirit indwells all believers permanently (Jn. 14:17).

By virtue of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, believers have the power to live the life under grace and to keep the precepts of it.

F. The Purpose of Life Under Grace

Simply put, the purpose of life under grace is sanctification. Sanctification is to conform the believer more and more to the image of the Son of God.

Therefore, if one understands the basis of life under grace, that it is based upon grace and not law; if he understands the provision of life under grace, that it is the Law of the Messiah and the divine enablement to keep it; if he clearly understands the negative precepts, the positive precepts, and the principles of life under grace; if he knows the questions to ask; and if he understands the power by which life under grace works, then he will fulfill its purpose: sanctification.

XI. CONCLUSIONS

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In drawing conclusions concerning the grace of God, five points can be made: grace is God's unmerited favor to sinners; grace offers salvation as a free gift to all who believe; God has the ability to show grace; grace cannot be earned, deserved, or bought; and God's grace is unlimited.

A. God's Unmerited Favor to Sinners

Grace is God's unmerited favor to sinners who deserve the exact opposite. The very nature of grace is unmerited favor. As soon as one feels he can earn it or that God is obligated to give it to him, it ceases to be grace.

B. God's Offer of Salvation As a Free Gift

God's grace offers salvation as a free gift to all who put their faith in His Son, Yeshua the Messiah. The grace of God is always being offered to all men, but it is limited to those who will actually put their faith in His Son.

God's grace is a free gift, but like any gift, it must be received. Just as when one purchases a gift and decides to give this gift freely to another, in order to enjoy this gift, that person must receive it, for he is also free to reject it. Thus, God's grace is offered freely to all men. However, the reception of it is limited to those who receive it by faith. God's grace offers salvation as a free gift to all who put their faith in His Son, Jesus the Messiah.

C. God's Ability to Show Grace

God is able to show grace to sinners in this way because the Lord Yeshua died as a substitute for sinners on the cross of Calvary. God's grace must not be separated from His other attributes, such as the attribute of righteousness and the attribute of justice. These attributes require that He punish sin. Where He must punish sin, grace cannot be extended.

Because of Jesus' substitutionary death for the sinner, God the Father judged sin on the cross, thereby satisfying His attributes of justice and righteousness, He can therefore extend His grace to the sinner.

D. God's Grace Cannot Be Earned, Deserved, or Bought

The very nature of grace is that it cannot be earned, deserved, or bought, either in whole or in part. Grace cannot be earned because it then becomes one's salary, one's repayment. Grace cannot be deserved because, as soon as it is deserved, God's grace is no longer truly grace; it then becomes something that God would be obligated to give. And grace cannot be bought because, if it is something that has been bought, it is no longer what the Bible teaches it to be: God's free gift. Neither can grace be divided in such a way that certain aspects of

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grace can be earned, deserved, or bought, while other aspects cannot. Grace cannot be earned, deserved, or bought, either in whole or in part.

E. God's Grace Is Unlimited

The unlimited grace of God is brought out in the Scriptures in six different ways: the manifestation of God's grace, the manifestation of grace in salvation, the believer's standing under grace, the believer's sphere of operation, the provision for daily needs, and God's uncompromised grace.

1. The Manifestation of God's Grace

God has done a work by which grace has been manifested. This point is taught by four passages.

Romans 5:15: *But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many.*

Romans 5:17: *For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ.*

II Corinthians 8:9: *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.*

And Titus 2:11: *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.*

2. The Manifestation of Grace in Salvation

The second way of showing that the grace of God is limitless is that the grace that has been manifested to all men has been manifested in salvation. This is taught in three passages.

Romans 3:24: *being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 5:20: *And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly.*

And Ephesians 2:5-8: *even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

3. The Believer's Standing Under Grace

The third way to show that the grace of God is limitless is that the

believer's standing today is under grace. This is brought out by two passages that emphasize the fact that believers are no longer under the Law, but under grace.

Romans 5:2: *through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

And Romans 6:14: *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace.*

4. The Believer's Sphere of Operation

The fourth way that shows that the grace of God is limitless is that God's operative principle for believers today is the principle of grace. This is the sphere in which believers are to operate, not in the sphere of Law. This is brought out in Galatians 5:4: *Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace.*

The point of this verse is not that one can lose his salvation, rather, it is that the believer has the choice to operate either within the sphere of the Law or the sphere of grace. The point of this Galatians passage is that God's operative principle for believers today is the sphere of grace.

5. The Provision for Daily Needs

The fifth evidence of the fact that the grace of God is limitless is that God provides for daily needs by virtue of His grace. This is taught in Hebrews 4:16: *Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.*

By approaching the throne of grace on a daily basis, one can appropriate grace to meet his daily needs.

6. God's Uncompromised Grace

The sixth way that shows that the grace of God is limitless is that grace cannot be compromised. This is brought out in Romans 4:13-16: *For not through the law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he should be heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect: for the law works wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression. For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.*

As it is for Abraham, so it is for all. They obtain the enjoyment of God's grace by faith, because grace cannot be compromised to be achieved by works.✡

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MBS022, 047, 050, 051, and 186.