

Grace and Knowledge

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We are here at the Feast to learn about God – The Nature of God, The Plan of God, and The Way of God. The Apostle Peter adjures us to learn about God (2 Pt3:18). This seems quite straight forward, but there is more to it than first meets the eye. Grace is a fundamental character attribute of God. Grace is the fundamental operative principle governing God's dealings with human beings. But, **what exactly is “grace” and what is the relationship between “grace” and “knowledge”?**

Definition of God's Grace: After the Golden Calf incident where the people “broke the Sinai Covenant”, God was rightly in a position to destroy the nation. Only the intercession of Moses saved the nation (Ex32:30-33, 33:12-16). In this passage, the Hebrew word “**hen**” occurs 4 times: “**grace**” (NKJV), favour (ESV). Moses appeals to God's grace to pardon the nation, God acquiesces to Moses' request and provides the definition of “grace” (Ex33:17-19, 34:6-7). The word “**gracious**” is from the verb form of “**hen**”, “**hanan**”. NKJV is particularly bad in verse 7: ESV has “steadfast love” for “**hesed**” whereas NIKV continues with the traditional translation “mercy” – which is incorrect (from LXX via Vulgate to KJV). The Hebrew word “**raham**” means mercy (the first rendering in verse 6); “**hesed**” means “**covenant love**” – God's unfailing commitment to perform his side of a covenant. **God's “grace” and “mercy” are related, and they are expressed by his “covenant love”**. This definition of God's grace is repeated many time throughout the Bible.

The Application of God's Grace: the **Apostle Peter** has a lot to say about “grace” (1Pt1:2b-3,10,13, 5:5b,10a). Peter relates “**grace**” and “**mercy**” – our “hope” is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “**Salvation**” is available only through God's grace, and it will occur at the return of Christ. “**Humility**” is a prerequisite for God's grace. Grace is fundamental to the Nature of God. **This is the first aspect of “grace” which God requires us to learn:** the Nature of God and his “covenant love” and “mercy” in extending his “grace” to us as sinners. Secondly, **God requires us to take-on this attribute of his**. We are to become like God – to learn the Nature of God (1Pt2:19-21, 4:10, 2Pt1: 2-4a). Human suffering is a part of life – as **Jesus learned through suffering**, we can use our suffering to learn to be like him. God requires us to be “**good stewards**” of the grace he has extended to us. To do this we must acquire “**knowledge of God**” which will lead us to “**become partakers of the divine nature**”.

The Knowledge of God: The **Apostle Paul** asserts that all human beings should know that God exists based on the creation (Rm1:20). **King David** asserts that the creation provides knowledge about God (Ps19:1,4a). But **observational knowledge is just the beginning** – David goes on in Psalm 19 to specifically identify the “**teaching of God**”, *torah*, as more important (Ps19:7-8). The “teaching of God” is **the contents of the entire Bible**. Our job in this life is to come to an understanding of the entire Bible, so that we can teach others in the World Tomorrow. The Apostle John reports **some of Jesus last words**. Jesus emphasizes to Peter that his primary responsibility is to teach the knowledge of God, “**feed my sheep**” (Jh21:15-17). Jesus' final words are “**follow me**” (Jh21:19b). To “follow” Jesus we need to understand his entire teaching throughout the whole Bible (Lk24:27 see also John 5:39,46-47, 6:68).

Pitfalls in Knowledge: The Apostle Paul warns us to avoid “speculation”, “myths”, and “controversies” (1Tm1:3-4, 4:7a, 2Tm2:14-16, 4:3-4, Titus 3:9). Jesus is explicit to avoid “traditions” (Mk7:1-8). It is incumbent on us to **know what the Bible actually says** and not add to it or take away from it (Dt4:2 see also 12:32, Rv22:18-19).

The Intersection of Grace and Knowledge: The **Apostle Paul** gives an explicit example of **how “grace” and “knowledge” are related to each other** (1Cr8:1a,4a,7-11). Paul's point is that we are not all at the same level of understanding at any given time. This lifetime is too short to come to a complete understanding of the entire Bible – but we must work towards it. Paul adjures us **NOT to let “knowledge” or “lack of knowledge” stand in the way of “brotherly love”**. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “**love one another**” (Jh15:12-17). This is also Peter's point when he said, “**grow in grace and knowledge**” (2Pt3:14-18).

Grace and knowledge are integrally related. **Grace is fundamental to the Nature of God – God requires us to understand it and attain it**. The Bible contains the knowledge of God which we need. But “**love**” **trumps all** – God requires us to grant grace to each other as we grow in knowledge.