

Chapter 5

FIVE EXPRESSIONS OF GRACE

Pleasantly enough doth he ride whom the grace of God carrieth.
And what marvel if he feeleth no burden who is carried by the
Almighty, and is led onwards by the Guide from on High.

—Thomas A Kempis¹

When Marjorie asked me about the meaning of grace, the only verse of Scripture I could think of was Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” It will take eternity to understand the full depth of that verse, and if salvation was the only thing God’s grace ever did for us, we could praise Him forever just for that. But there is more to grace. Far more.

As I grew in my understanding of the Bible, I began to notice additional usages of the word *grace* that addressed issues beyond receiving forgiveness for sin and being born-again. At first I just skimmed over those passages, but I eventually realized the Holy Spirit was pointing to the fact that God’s grace is not only involved in our initiation into God’s family, but His grace is also there to help us in our continuation with God. The grace which saves us also empowers us to live productive and satisfying lives for Him.

John Newton, the author of “Amazing Grace,” communicated both of these applications in his famous hymn: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me” (initiation). He goes on to write, “’Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home” (continuation). I’m glad the grace that saved me has also brought me this far, and that His grace will continue to lead me until I am home with Him in Heaven. I’m also thankful God’s grace was not simply available to me in the past, to be saved, but is a part of me, His nature is now mine, and His grace within is ever-ready to help me live the life He wants me to live.

I want to share five areas where God desires His grace to be at work in our lives. They are not the only areas, but I believe they represent very significant areas in which God desires to transform us, enabling and empowering us to do His will. Each of these pertains to what God does as we yield to and cooperate with Him in these respective areas.

1. **Saving Grace** is God’s power and ability to justify us, forgive our sins, and make us new creatures in Jesus Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

2. **Sanctifying Grace** is God’s power and ability to purify us and enable us to live holy lives in a corrupt world.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

Titus 2:11-12

3. **Strengthening Grace** is God’s power and ability to energize and inspire us to live victoriously, to reign over the challenges and circumstances of life.

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:17

4. Sharing Grace is God's power and ability to meet our needs and take joy in giving to others.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

5. Serving Grace is God's power and ability to serve Him and others with His divinely imparted gifts and aptitudes.

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1 Peter 4:10

- Saving grace keeps us from being lost.
- Sanctifying grace keeps us from being contaminated.
- Strengthening grace keeps us from being defeated.
- Sharing grace keeps us from lack and selfishness.
- Serving grace keeps us from being unproductive.

- Saving grace is the impartation of God's forgiveness.
- Sanctifying grace is the impartation of God's holiness.
- Strengthening grace is the impartation of God's might.
- Sharing grace is the impartation of God's generosity.
- Serving grace is the impartation of God's ability.

The simplest definition I can give of God's grace is this: Grace is love acting. There is nothing passive about God's grace, just like there is nothing passive about His love toward us. God, who is love, has been and continues to act on our behalf, and His love in action is what grace is all about.

In Jeremiah 31:3 NLT, God said to His people, "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself." Can we comprehend what "an everlasting love" is?

- God's love for us has no beginning and no ending.
- God will never stop loving us.
- There is nothing we can do to make God love us more, and there is nothing that we can do to make God love us less.
- He loves us with an everlasting love!
- He draws us to Himself with unfailing love.

If God's grace, in its general sense, is love acting, then:

- Saving grace is Love Rescuing.
- Sanctifying grace is Love Cleansing.

- Strengthening grace is Love Empowering.
- Sharing grace is Love Supplying.
- Serving grace is Love Assisting.

When you understand God's grace as His love acting for you, in you, and through you, you can easily see how grace is more than an intellectual doctrine or theory. His grace is abounding toward you right now; accept and receive it by faith.

One Grace After Another

The apostle John offered this insight into the magnitude of God's grace that was released toward you through Jesus Christ. He said,

For out of His fullness (abundance) we have all received [all had a share and we were all supplied with] one grace after another and spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing and even favor upon favor and gift [heaped] upon gift.

John 1:16 AMP

You can grow in grace. As you live your life according to your spiritual DNA you can experience one grace, blessing, favor, and gift from Heaven after another. Can you sense God, in His graciousness, yearning to influence every area of your life? I'm not speaking of an emotional feeling but rather a spiritual recognition. God in His grace is calling and empowering you to grow in spiritual maturity and Christlikeness.

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

1 Peter 2:1-3

The Amplified Bible renders 1 Peter 2:1-3 as follows:

So be done with every trace of wickedness (depravity, malignity) and all deceit and insincerity (pretense, hypocrisy) and grudges (envy, jealousy) and slander and evil speaking of every kind.

Like newborn babies you should crave (thirst for, earnestly desire) the pure (unadulterated) spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured and grow unto [completed] salvation,

Since you have [already] tasted the goodness and kindness of the Lord.

We need to savor and partake of the graciousness, the goodness, and the kindness of the Lord. His grace is the nourishment and nutrition that satisfies every desire and need as we develop and mature in Him. Just like we need to have a balanced diet in terms of the food we eat, we need to have a balanced diet spiritually as well. Nutritionists tell us of the five major food groups. Perhaps we can think of these expressions of grace as the five major spiritual food groups:

- Saving Grace
- Sanctifying Grace
- Strengthening Grace
- Sharing Grace
- Serving Grace

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8)! If you partake of and grow in His grace you will be conformed more and more to the image and likeness of Jesus.