

## Grace

According to Webster's Dictionary 1828 - Online Edition, "grace" has 23 definitions. As you would expect they overlap each other. We are going to look at some of them in detail.

We are going to look at the second definition first.

*Appropriately, the free unmerited love and favor of God, the spring and source of all the benefits men receive from him.* We will begin with a review of some of the characteristics of God: He is all powerful--He does not need our strength to get anything He plans to do done. He is all knowing--He does not need our advice on anything. Nothing ever occurred to God. He is always present everywhere--He does not need our help keeping an eye on problems. In summary, He does not need us. He got along fine before He created us. He managed everything well before we were born and will be the same after we are gone from this earth.

Now look at man in comparison to God. We are made (by God) in His image. The image is never superior in all characteristics to what it is imaging. A statue may be larger then the object it portrays, but far inferior to it in other aspects. We lack the abilities of God above. We can not control our height, gender, health, length of life, food supply, weather, to name a few. God controls what happens to us: whether we will...be late for the accident to work, or get to work before it happens, or be involved in it. If we drive recklessly, we are tempting God and should give ourselves credit for the result if it is bad. If you get there safely in spite of your careless driving, God should get double credit for protecting you. Basically, we have very little control, so God decides what we get in most areas. Since God loves us, we get far better treatment than we deserve. We often "drive recklessly" in Gods eyes and he does not treat us like Satan treated Job in **Job 1 and 2**. The treatment that we get from God is grace because there is nothing that we can do for Him to obligate Him to ourselves.

*3. Favorable influence of God; divine influence or the influence of the spirit, in renewing the heart and restraining from sin.*

Since we inherit a sin nature and we have a heart that is as Jeremiah put it: **Jer 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?** In other words; if we follow our heart, no one knows how wicked we can become. The Bible has enough examples to show the truth of the verse. Jeremiah was thrown in a pit with mire, **Jer 38:6 - Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.** I have read that the mire in this case was sewage. Herod killed all the babies under 2 years of age in Bethlehem, **Mat 2:16 - Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.** There are many other examples, but the closest to knowing how wicked the heart can be was the crucifixion of Jesus. The authorities had enough evidence to know that He was the Son of God, but they put Him to death anyway. We do not go to God to overcome our wicked heart, He comes to us as in the Garden of Eden, **Gen 3:8 - And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. 9 - And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?** It is by God's grace that we do not follow our wicked heart.

*4. The application of Christ's righteousness to the sinner.*

*5. A state of reconciliation to God.*

These say almost the same thing, one from God's point of view and the other from man's side of the grace. To illustrate: imagine a college course where the only way to pass was to get

a 100% average on tests. There are no bonus questions, so you can not get anything wrong and pass the course. This is God's standard of obedience for man. In the beginning the course was easy, only one easy rule--do not eat the fruit of only one tree. Adam failed the course and he could not take it over and pass. As the wickedness in our hearts showed itself in more and more ways, rules had to be added to control our behavior. The test that we face now has many more questions and we still need to get them all right to pass. It is even harder than that to pass. We get points taken off because of questions missed by our parents Adam and Eve. By now you should be asking, "Who can pass?" The answer is, "No one without the help of Jesus." He erases the points and the wrong answers we gave to the questions, puts in the right answers, and we pass. Jesus represents "grace" in this illustration. The Old Testament law would be the questions and our works would be the answers. The verse that goes with the illustration is **Eph 2:8,9 - For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.** The faith part is knowing that we cannot save ourselves and that Jesus/Grace causes us to pass the "course" or gain eternal life.

In conclusion, I once heard a pastor say that all we deserve is Hell, but thanks be to God, what we get if we accept His free gift is an eternity in Heaven with the God who loves us so much that He gave Himself as the sacrifice for our sins.

Grace is deserving Hell, but receiving Heaven instead!