

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 10



GOD'S GRACE EXAMINED

Scripture Texts: 2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 2:4-10; Ephesians 4:7

Grace is unmerited love and favor, the mercy of God or benefits His mercy imparts, and the life of God flowing to man. Grace, to work, requires two; it is the giving of unearned good from one to another.

Salvation cannot be earned. It is received through faith by God's grace. Grace is the free gift of God's life or His virtue, which because of His love He gives to those who need it and believe in Him. Christ died for us while we were sinners. We had done and could do nothing to save ourselves or to deserve help. Also, the saved person cannot continue to live holy in his own strength. We need help. God gives it by grace. We have only to take it. God has an abundant supply.

MEMORY VERSE: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*
—Ephesians 2:8

Who Can Have Grace?

2 Corinthians 8:9 The **rich ...became poor** in order that the poor **might be rich**. An unequal exchange! This is not **just**. No, much more. It is **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

One may say, "I do not think a wicked criminal SHOULD be forgiven." No, not SHOULD. If he should be, if he deserved it, it would be justice, not grace. But if he comes repenting to Jesus, owning that he does not deserve it, God will forgive him anyway. That is grace. God gives what we DO NOT deserve, when He SHOULD NOT. The greater the sin, the more grace pours out from Gods love to cover it. Justice would damn us all. God's grace is unmeasured.

We Cannot Earn Salvation

Ephesians 2:4-7 - It is hard to define grace because there is nothing else like it. But **rich in mercy, for his great love** comes pretty close to describing it. **When we were dead in sins ...** (Compare **Romans 5:8**). Only God loves like this. Giving what is not deserved or earned, what we are not fit for – that is grace. To earn salvation is impossible. If we think we deserve God's favor because of position, respectability, living a good life, working hard, suffering a lot, making sacrifices, raising a family, being a good neighbor, or anything else of our own, we cannot be saved. There is something for us to do, but it is only to clear the way for salvation, never to earn it. What goodness could pay for the smallest sin, when constant sinlessness is the requirement?

Raised us up – What a great raising – from death to life, to **heavenly places in Christ Jesus**, not only with Him, but in Him. Where Jesus is, it is Heaven there. This can be understood only by experiencing it. **In the ages to come** – throughout the generations when the church shall grow, prosper, and be victorious until Jesus comes back, and then beyond this life, in Heaven. His kindness continues to give the **exceeding riches of his grace**, and all **through Christ Jesus**.

GRACE AND FAITH

Ephesians 2:8-9 "Saved by grace" and "saved by faith" are often used to express the same thought, that the dependence must be upon God to do the working of saving. In this verse we see the different place which each – grace and faith occupies. It is **by grace ... through faith**. The faith of the person causes Him to reach his hand; the grace of God causes Him to place the gift of salvation in it. We are saved by grace on God's part and by faith

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on the part of man. **Not of yourselves** – If it were of ourselves, it would not be of grace. Grace means the giving of something good from one to another. What anything has of itself cannot be of grace. **Not of works**. It is tragic that so many people are trying to work their way to God when He has never reached that way. If salvation could be gained this way, what boasting and striving for first place there would be! Now no man can boast, but all praise is to God. God demands every effort of us, but the utmost will not be sufficient. His loving hand must reach down and lift us up if we are to be saved.

Ephesians 2:10 His workmanship – Whatever of good is in God’s people or is accomplished by them is done by God. When we are created in Christ Jesus, that is, made alive in Him, born again, it is **unto good works**, or for the purpose of doing good. If any believe that the fact of grace leaves us free to commit sin, this verse shows their mistake. Saved people are not sinners. **God hath before ordained** – it was His original plan – **that we should walk in them** – good works. If we do not, how can we claim to be living in His grace? We are then refusing it. Read **Philippians 2:13**.

But what is faith? Faith gives substance to things hoped for (**Hebrews 11:1**). Faith rests on belief, but it is more than belief. It is belief in action. Faith is belief which leads us to step forward and lay hold on what God has promised. The well-known hymn expresses it perfectly: “Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bid’st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God I come, I come.”

The Grace Fits the Gift

Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Grace is measured by the gift Christ gives us for service in His church. Read the context. When He gives the gift of prophecy, He gives the grace needed to be a prophet. When one is called to be a teacher, He gives the grace needed for teaching. The wisdom, strength, abilities, patience, and love given are measured by the demands made upon the life. God has a good supply of grace. Call for it. Sometimes we use it up very fast. We are saved by grace, not our own powers. Sometimes we face our holy calling with apprehension, dread, and fear, knowing we have no ability to live the life or to do the work He lays before us. Truly, we have not. But God tells us, **If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth...and it shall be given him (James 1:5)**. We need only to hold up our cup to Him, our **earthen vessel**. Read **2 Corinthians 4:7**. Into it He pours grace. He pours as much as we need, as much as our faith will take in.

Many try to live the Christian life in their own strength. They try and fail, then try again, but never reach a victorious life. We must cease striving in our own strength and let Him do the work.

The story is told of a man who said to D.L. Moody, “I would like to come to Christ, but sin has me chained and I cannot.” “Why don’t you come, chains and all?” asked Mr. Moody. The man did, and Christ broke every chain. We do not cease to need grace when saved. Every day we need God’s grace to give us power to live holy, to give wisdom, to use us, and to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

JUST A THOUGHT

Salvation is a gift, not a payment.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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