

A Description of God's Grace

Examines four categories of grace

Disclaimer: The following are Dr. Jeff Stott's sermon notes and manuscript. They have not been carefully proofed for spelling or grammar. They are printed and given "as is." Unless noted, all Scripture quotes are from the New International Version.

Take your Bibles and open them to Ephesians 2:8.

What would you think if you went to buy a car and the salesman told you, you either had to push the car everywhere you went or pay extra for an engine? You would know something was wrong because cars come equipped with their own supply of power to get you where you are going. The engine is part of the deal.

You do have a responsibility to fill it with gas, turn on the ignition and steer, but your effort does not supply the power for the trip. When I see so many Christians struggling in their Christian life, living defeated lives day after day, month after month, and year after year, it soon becomes apparent they "push" their Christian lives. They don't realize that the power of the Christian life is already under the hood. Under the hood of your heart is an engine called *grace*. And that grace gives you the power to live the abundant life our Lord promised we could live.

When we talk about God's grace what are we talking about. Let me give you a quick definition. The grace of God is His inexhaustible supply of goodness by which He does for us what we could never do for ourselves even though we don't deserve it. Another way to say it, **God's Riches At Christ Expense**. God's grace is God's love being shown to people who don't deserve His love.

Quick Definition

The grace of God is His inexhaustible supply of goodness by which He does for us what we could never do for ourselves even though we don't deserve it.

Before we get to deep into God's grace you need to know about two different types of God's grace.

First, you need to know about God's shared grace. Jesus says that God causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the unrighteous as well as the righteous (Matt. 5:45). That's part of God's shared grace to all. So is the air. It is by God's grace that we have air to breath. You don't have to be a Christian to get oxygen. God let's both Christian

and non-Christian experience some of the blessings of this world. That's called shared grace. You don't have to be a Christian to be healthy. You don't have to be a Christian to get a job. These are all blessing that come to people because of God's shared grace.

We have shared grace and **secondly, we have special grace.** *Shared grace* is for everyone, but *special grace* is for only God's people. Over the years kids from the neighborhood or church frequently come over to our house. We enjoy it, and we share what we have with them. They play and have something to drink, get lunch, or whatever. But special benefits are available only to my kids. For example, my kids have keys to the house. When they get older my kids get keys to the cars. God gives common benefits to the whole human race, but the benefits of His special grace come only to His children. All these special benefits happen because of Jesus Christ as we will see. When you are a child of God there are blessings that you get to experience that non-believers will not get to experience. The child of God experiences God's special grace because He is a part of God's family.

Like all of God's attributes and characteristics we cannot fully explore God's grace in the time we have. God's grace is too big, too awesome and too amazing. But I do want us to think about four elements of God's grace that will help us gain a clearer picture and a greater appreciation of God's amazing grace.

1. Saving Grace: God blessed me by rescuing me.

First of all, **I want us to see God's saving grace. Here is where you can say, "God blessed me by rescuing me."** I didn't deserve to be saved but He saved me anyway. Without a doubt and without any compromise the only way to heaven and to be saved from our sin is by grace that comes through Jesus. Remember, grace is God doing something for us that we cannot do for ourselves. We cannot save ourselves. It took Jesus dying on a cross for us and resurrecting from the grave for us to have eternal life. Look closely at **Ephesians 2:8**, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast" (NIV). It is by God's generosity that we are saved. **Titus 2:11** says, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (NIV). When Jesus Christ showed up it was God's grace showing up.

Without God's grace there is no salvation. For example, you've been knocked overboard and now you are in a raging river. You are sure to die. There is nothing you can do to save yourself. The current is too strong to swim against and you are being pulled further away from the boat. When you thought all was lost you looked up and saw grace standing on the side of the shore. Grace throws you a life preserver and He

pulls you in. If Grace hadn't been there you would have surely been lost. Without grace there is no salvation.

Grace didn't throw you that life preserver because you earned it. It's not that you are a good guy and He didn't want to see a good guy die. God didn't save you because you went to church enough, or because you quit some sin or because you started financially supporting something with His name on it. By definition, grace is blessing someone who does not deserve it. God saved you because He decided to bless you out of His grace. That's the nature of grace. That's God's saving grace.

God's *saving grace* is His inexhaustible supply of goodness by which He rescued you from sin even though you didn't deserve it.

2. Sufficient Grace: God blessed me by getting me through it.

Not only do we see God's saving grace, **but we also see God's *sufficient* grace. Here is where you can say, "God blessed me by getting me through it."** I didn't deserve His help but He decided to help me anyway. Look at **2 Corinthians 9:8**, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work" (NKJV). God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way you will have everything you need to excel in everything He would have you to do. God's got something for everything you need. There is no such thing as *insufficient* grace.

Many of us have suffered the embarrassment of bouncing a check because of insufficient funds. But God has no problem covering His checks. The Bible is telling us that God's grace is so inexhaustible, so awesome in its supply, it never runs out. Grace is designed not only to save you, but to keep you. When you became a Christian, God supplied you with everything you need for spiritual life and growth. The grace that saved you, will keep you saved and keep you growing. It is sufficient.

The story is told of a man who paid for an ocean cruise. The fare took all of his money, leaving him nothing for meals on the week-long trip. So he brought peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with him, and while his fellow passengers enjoyed extravagant meals and buffets every evening, he went to his cabin in disappointment and ate his peanut butter sandwiches.

The man was miserable knowing that everyone else was eating incredible food, but he knew he couldn't enjoy any of it because he had used all of his money for his ticket. At the end of the cruise, as the man was leaving the ship, one of the porters asked him, "How did you enjoy the cruise?"

He said, “Well, I loved the ride, but I was always hungry because I couldn’t afford any of the food.”

The porter looked at him in astonishment and replied, “Sir, the meals were included in the price of your ticket! You were miserable for no reason at all.”

I think when a lot of us get to heaven, God could say, “You were miserable for no reason at all. All of your answers and all the strength you needed were available in My grace. But you didn’t grow in grace and never came to understand My sufficiency. You wrestled through life on your own strength and your own sufficiency.” When you met Jesus Christ, everything you need for your Christian life was included in the salvation “ticket” He gave you. But if you don’t grow in grace you don’t know all the goodness God has supplied for you.

God’s grace is sufficient. He’s given you everything for life and godliness. Paul asked God to remove a thorn from his life three times. According to **2 Corinthians 12:9** God told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness” (HCSB).

I’m confident you have a “thorn” somewhere in your life. Maybe your thorn is a person who keeps picking on you, a problem you can’t get over, or an illness the doctors can’t heal. God says His grace doesn’t always remove these things, but it does empower you to overcome them. God’s grace is not just a “disappearing cream” you rub on problems. It raises you above the problem and gives you power at the exact point where most people would quit.

God’s grace enables us to love people we would normally hate, to have patience where we would normally give up. Grace gives us power we didn’t have before. Grace does not simply remove problems, sometimes it helps us plow through them. But it’s still grace, because we couldn’t have done it without God. God’s grace is sufficient. It will supply what we need or get us through what we need to get through.

So when we are talking about God’s *sufficient grace*, we are talking about His inexhaustible supply of goodness by which He supplies what you need to get through life’s difficulties even though you don’t deserve it.

3. Sanctifying Grace: God blessed me by growing me spiritually.

God’s grace is a saving grace, a sufficient grace, **but God’s grace is also a sanctifying grace**. **Here is where you are able to say, “God blessed me by growing me spiritually.”** It is by God’s grace that we grow in godliness and holiness. The grace of God sanctifies us. *Sanctification* is the act of becoming holy and godly, becoming more like Jesus. And this process starts when we come in contact with God’s grace and

surrender our lives to Jesus Christ. It is by God's grace that those sins you use to commit, you've stopped and repented of. It's by God's grace. The ability to say no to sin and yes to what is right is by God's grace. Look at **Titus 2:11-12**, "For the grace of God has appeared, with salvation for all people, [We've already talked about that, that's called God's saving grace... but look what else God's grace does] (12) instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age" (HCSB). God's grace teaches us not to live against God nor to do the evil things the world wants to do. Instead, grace teaches us to live in a wise and right way and in a way that shows we serve God. When we are saved by grace, the Holy Spirit moves in bringing grace with it into our lives. That grace then gives us a desire to live a sensible, righteous and godly life. We are not only saved by grace, we are taught by grace. The reason you are a stronger Christian today than you were ten years ago is because of God's grace. The reason you are able to say no to any sin is because of God's grace. The reason you are able to say yes to anything sensible, righteous or godly is because of God's grace. You are sanctified and spiritually growing because of God's grace. God's grace is a sanctifying grace.

God's *sanctifying grace* is His inexhaustible supply of goodness by which you are able to say yes to what's right and no to what's wrong even though you don't deserve it.

4. Serving Grace: God blessed me by equipping me for ministry.

Well... we have seen that God's grace is a saving grace, a sufficient grace, and a sanctifying grace **and now we see that God's grace is a serving grace. Here is where you can say "God has blessed me by equipping me for ministry."** Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift and they have that gift because of God's grace. **Romans 12:6** says, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us" (HCSB). If God wanted to He could have saved you and then made you useless to His kingdom. But He chose to give you a spiritual gift that you can use in His service and be a blessing to others. Do you realize that every time you use your gift you are revealing God's grace. Look at **1 Peter 4:10**, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (HCSB). When you use the gift God has given you demonstrate God's grace.

For example, let's say you have the **gift of mercy**. The gift of mercy is the ability to show sympathy and empathy for someone who is hurting. When someone is discouraged you come alongside them and express compassion and understanding. You comfort them and become an emotional and spiritual soothing ointment on their soul. When that person experiences mercy coming from you, they are in reality experiencing God's grace through that mercy. They don't deserve nor have they earned mercy but they are experiencing it by God's grace through you.

When you learn something about God, about others or about you from God's Word from someone who has the **gift of teaching** that is God's grace at work. We don't deserve to learn anything about God but He let's us learn and He let's us learn by His grace.

No matter what your spiritual gift is, whether it's the gift of administration... the gift of leadership... the gift of discernment... encouragement or wisdom, every time you use it, it reveals God's grace.

God's *servicing grace* is His inexhaustible supply of goodness by which He gives you a spiritual gift and place of ministry in His kingdom even though you don't deserve it.

Conclusion: How do I respond to God's grace?

We are *saved* by grace through Jesus Christ, we are sustained by grace because His grace is *sufficient*, we are *sanctified* by grace which empowers us to say yes to godliness and we *serve* by grace because God gives us a spiritual gift and a ministry.

How do you respond to this grace?

First, receive God's saving grace into your life. Accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You and I don't deserve to be saved. We don't deserve to have our sins forgiven and go to heaven. But, because of God's grace through Jesus Christ we can. But we have to receive Christ and His Lordship over our lives. [Lead in salvation prayer]

Second, depend on God's sufficient grace to get you through the vallies of life. You and I don't deserve God's help, but because of God's grace and love for us He wants to give us the strength and direction to succeed through our struggles. Depend on His sufficient grace.

Third, allow God's sanctifying grace to grow you into the person of God He has created you to be. You and I are no better than anyone else. The reason we are able to say no to sin and yes to God is by His grace. It is His grace that helps us to grow into the man or woman of God He created us to be.

Fourth, trust God's serving grace to use you to make a difference in other's lives through your spiritual gift. You and I don't deserve to be used by God in His kingdom. By His grace He chooses to use people like you and me. Begin to discover your gift and put it to use. When you do you will begin to make a difference in other's lives.

Fifth, praise God for His amazing grace. Tell God thanks for His incredible grace that saved you, strengthens you, and works through you.