

GRACE
(The Riches of Divine Grace)

In a study of key grace doctrine words, it is important to grasp the grace doctrine. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, in his *Systematic Theology*, devoted 41 pages to the study of The Riches of Divine Grace and we think it is very fitting to develop this theme (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, pp. 225-266).

The main Greek word translated “grace” is *charis* (χαρις). The basic meaning of this word is to regard something with lovely, gracious, kindness and favor (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 479).

This specific word “grace” is used in the New Testament 160 times. **The word is not used one time by Matthew or Mark** (All calculations based on Greek word listing of W. F. Moulton, A. S. Geden, H. K. Moulton, *Concordance to the Greek Testament*, Fifth Edition, pp. 1003-1004).

- 1) Eight times by Luke in Luke
- 2) Three times by John in John
- 3) Seventeen times by Luke in Acts
- 4) Twenty four times by Paul in Romans
- 5) Ten times by Paul in I Corinthians
- 6) Thirteen times by Paul in II Corinthians
- 7) Seven times by Paul in Galatians
- 8) Twelve times by Paul in Ephesians
- 9) Three times by Paul in Philippians
- 10) Five times by Paul in Colossians
- 11) Two times by Paul in I Thessalonians
- 12) Four times by Paul in II Thessalonians
- 13) Four times by Paul in I Timothy
- 14) Five times by Paul in II Timothy
- 15) Four times by Paul in Titus
- 16) Two times by Paul in Philemon
- 17) Eight times by the writer of Hebrews
- 18) Two times by James in James
- 19) Ten times by Peter in I Peter.
- 20) Two times by Peter in II Peter
- 21) One time by John in II John
- 22) One time by John in III John
- 23) One time by Jude in Jude
- 24) Two times by John in Revelation

(57)

From this word usage, we may calculate the following:

Luke uses the word a total of 25 times (8 times in Luke; 17 times in Acts).

John uses the word a total of 7 times.

Peter uses the word 12 times.

James uses the word 2 times.

Jude uses the word 1 time.

The Apostle Paul uses the word 95 times (if 8 uses of Hebrews are his, 103 times).

The writer of Hebrews uses the word a total of 8 times.

It is clear that the Apostle who truly develops the theme of grace is the Apostle Paul. He uses the word two times more than all of the other writers combined. So to understand grace, we must carefully study Paul. Dr. Ryrie observed, “The most important stage in the development of the New Testament doctrine of grace is the writing of the Pauline Epistles (*The Grace of God*, p. 31).

From Paul’s writings we may develop accurate understanding of grace facts:

Pauline Grace Fact #1 - Grace has nothing to do with works. **Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:24; Rom. 11:5-6**

From these Pauline texts we must conclude that if human works are involved in any way, it is not and cannot be grace. The grace of God has absolutely no connection to what a person has or has not done. In grace, human works are a non-factor. Human works are not in the picture. Under law, human works are very important, but not under grace (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).

A gift that is based on works is not a gift; it is an earned paycheck. If it is based on achievement, it is not a gift; it is a reward. **Grace is neither paycheck nor reward.** It has no connection to works whatsoever.

Pauline Grace Fact #2 - Grace has nothing to do with debt. **Rom. 4:4-5**

The grace of God is not a debt system. Grace is always presented as a complete gift system (**Rom. 6:23**).

Pauline Grace Fact #3 - Grace has nothing to do with what is merited or deserved.

Rom. 3:19-24

Dr. Chafer observed: “An act ceases to be gracious, therefore, when it is a recognition of merit, or a payment of a just debt... Grace is neither treating a person as he deserves, nor treating a person better than he deserves. It is treating a person without the slightest reference to his deserts” (*Grace, The Glorious Theme*, pp. 10-11).

Pauline Grace Fact #4 - Grace, as a dispensation, began at the death of Christ.

Col. 2:13-14; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 1:7 10; 3:2, 9

From God’s perspective, the dispensation of grace began at the death of Jesus Christ, but it took a while for some of the Apostles to figure it out. Peter is a good example of this (Acts 10:5-16).

Pauline Grace Fact #5 - Grace, as a dispensation, will end at the Rapture of the Church.

I Thess. 4:13-18; Acts 15:6-15

The grace age will end at the Rapture of the Church.

We may conclude from studying Paul that grace is the unearned and undeserved non works connected kindness and favor of God toward sinners, in giving the gift of salvation and in the sustaining of the gift of salvation for those totally unworthy and undeserving.

As we have been examining grace words, we have concluded that the words have to do with what God does. Divine grace is all about what God does. All of the achievements of Divine grace have seven things in common:

1) They are not experienced.

Although these things are very real, no human can lay some boastful claim to the fact that they have experienced them in some emotional and tangible manner. Many are very confused on this point and, as a result, wonder if they are really and truly saved. Justification is a good example since no believer has any sense of the court scene taking place of salvation.

2) They are not progressive.

None of the achievements of Divine grace mature with time or progress as the individual spiritually advances and develops. For example, one becomes a full son of God the moment one believes and is just as much a son when he is born as when he is full grown.

3) They are not earned.

None of the Divine Grace achievements may be earned. They do not rest upon the merit of any human being; they rest upon the finished work and merit of Jesus Christ. If it may be earned, it cannot be grace.

4) They are eternal.

All achievements of grace given to a person at salvation are eternal, not temporal. They cannot be lost. For example, imputed righteousness does not vary by what is or is not happening temporarily. In fact, the grace gift is called “eternal life” which means it cannot be temporal.

5) They are revealed.

All achievements are found in the Word of God. They are not invented by men or the result of human imagination or speculation. These are achievements God has declared and revealed in His word. We conclude man could not even dream up these achievements of grace.

6) They are God-wrought.

All achievements are God’s work for man and God’s word alone. No man is capable of doing for man what God does at the moment of salvation. No man can save himself. No man can write his name in the book of life. No man can deliver himself from Satan’s domain. God must do it and does do it all.

7) They are not man-wrought.

None of 33 achievements may be attained by any human ever. In fact, Paul’s statement in Colossians 2:10 that “in Him you have been made complete” clearly establish this point that it is not of man.

All one may do with any of these things is stand in awe of the amazing grace of God.

Achievement #1 - At the moment of salvation, a believer is part of the eternal, elective plan of God.

No human mind can fully grasp this point, but such Biblical words as foreknown, predestinated, predestine, elected, chosen and called are clearly connected to one who comes to faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-14; I Pet. 1:2). All of these words make it clear that when one believes in Jesus Christ, he has been the recipient of a sovereign grace in which Almighty God sovereignly elected him and brought him into His family. This elective choice of God was made before the foundation of the world and all any believer may do in view of this grace is to humbly thank God and stand in awe of it.

Achievement #2 - At the moment of salvation, a believer is redeemed.

We have already discussed the word “redemption,” but at the moment one believes in Jesus Christ, Christ has so paid the entire price for the sins of that individual that they are immediately set free from all condemnatory sin (Rom. 3:24; I Pet. 1:18-19). No amount of faithfulness or works can add one thing to this. This truth is all part of the package of God’s grace.