

God's Character: Grace

To really get to know God, one must take the time to understand what He means with His words and what He is communicating to us. It would be very frustrating for us if someone took our own words to say something we did not intend and misrepresent us! Grace is one such word that is misunderstood. What is it? It is very important to understand these terms, because it will help you know what you are doing and provide clarity in how you are to live.

A good approach to this question is to study the various New Testament passages that contain the Greek noun for grace: "charis."

1. Grace is often understood as "the favorable inclination of a stronger person towards the weaker" or "unmerited favor." Is this a complete definition? Carefully observe these verses and share your thoughts about this definition.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found (**charis**) favor with God. (Luke 1:30, NASB)

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace (**charis**) through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; (Rom 3:21-25, NASB)

For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace (**charis**), so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, "A father of many nations have I made you") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. (Rom 4:16-17, NASB)

The Law came in so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace (**charis**) abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace (**charis**) would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 5:20-21, NASB)

2. How does the Bible portray human beings giving "charis?" What do you observe in these passages?

But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor (**charis**), Felix left Paul imprisoned. (Acts 24:7, NASB)

But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor (**charis**), answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?" (Acts 25:9, NASB)

If you love those who love you, what credit (**charis**) is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit (**charis**) is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit (**charis**) is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. (Luke 6:32-34, NASB)

3. Can a Christian give grace? Discuss and defend your answer!

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Teacher Notes

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Ask the student: what do you observe about God's grace? What is God's "unmerited favor" associated with?

God's grace appears to be mentioned only in the context of providing the means for salvation including human beings involved with the birth of Jesus Christ and those recipients who came to faith in Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice. God's divine grace provided His only Son for the means of salvation of His people.

Did you notice that God's grace is in fulfillment of His promises to Abraham??

Ask the student: how does this affect the definition of grace? Is there a cost involved?

Theologically, grace in the Bible is a character of God. It is more than simply an unmerited favor. God's divine grace involved the provision and sacrifice of His only Son Jesus Christ. The extension of grace to human beings came at a huge cost to God.

Divine grace is the unmerited favor of providing the means of salvation that came at unfathomable cost of the Giver and in fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham. Note carefully that God's grace is the provision of the means of salvation not salvation itself.

Ask the student: what motivates God's grace? Hint: John 3:16.

2. How does the Bible portray human beings giving “charis?” What do you observe in these passages?

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Ask the student: what motivates Porcius Festus’ “charis?” Who is the real beneficiary of this? Was there any cost to Festus?

Festus’ used his “unmerited favor” with the intent of obligating Jews to accept Roman authority. The ultimate benefit of this “grace” was Festus himself. This type of human interaction, using favors to obligate another for personal gain, is common today.

Ask the student: what is Jesus saying about human beings and “charis” in Luke 6:32-34? Explore and discuss what Jesus is criticizing.

Jesus criticizes this “grace” as purely transactional: “unmerited favors” for those who love you, “unmerited favors” for those who do you favors, and “unmerited favors” for those who pay you back.

The “unmerited favors” are really for those who have merit!!

3. Can a Christian give grace? Discuss and defend your answer!