

Outside The Box Series

Lesson 5 of 8

Outside The Box Grace

To understand God's grace is to understand Outside The Box Grace.

1. Grace used as a noun (in Christian belief) the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings.
 - The condition or fact of being favored by someone
2. Used as a verb, do honor or credit to (someone or something) by one's presence.

Grace is a terribly misunderstood word. Some of the most detailed theology textbooks do not offer any concise definition of the term. Someone has proposed an acronym: GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. That's not a bad way to characterize grace, but it is not a sufficient theological definition.

One of the best-known definitions of grace is only three words: God's unmerited favor. A. W. Tozer expanded on that: "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving."

Grace is not merely unmerited favor; it is favor bestowed on sinners who deserve wrath. Showing kindness to a stranger is "unmerited favor"; but doing good to one's enemies is more the spirit of grace.

To help us understand Grace today, I want to share with you a few scriptures that I have never quite understood.

Luke 6:27-36

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Grace is not a dormant or abstract quality, but a dynamic, active, working principle:

- "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation...and instructing us" (Titus 2:11-12).
- It is not some kind of ethereal blessing that lies idle until we deserve it. Grace is God's sovereign will for all sinners (Ephesians 1:5-6).

Grace is not a one-time event in the Christian experience. We stand in grace.

Romans 5:2

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The entire Christian life is driven and empowered by grace:

Hebrews 13:9

It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods.

Peter said we should "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

So, we could properly define grace as the free and benevolent influence of a holy God operating sovereignly in the lives of undeserving sinners.

Luke 15: 11-24

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

His other son got mad... Why a Ring, Fatted calf, party???

- That's what Grace does!
- It not only forgives, it rejoices and it celebrates!

I hear Jesus saying, "Give him your cloak also.

I'm reminded of Noah,
Noah found grace in the eyes of God...
But not only Noah, but also his 3 sons and their wives get in the ark too.

The thief on the cross. Forgiveness plus grace. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

You see, Grace goes beyond forgiveness...

Some of us understand that God forgives, but I wonder sometimes if we really understand His grace.

- If you do understand it, “God bless you”, because I have never truly understood what Grace was.
- I thought Grace and Forgiveness were the same things.
- I thought when you forgave someone, you had grace on them.
- I thought Forgiveness and Grace were synonymous.
- To me they sound like the same thing.
- “I had grace, so I forgave them.”

So this is God’s grace... to us,

But what I want to talk about is a church that is capable of the same kind of Grace.

- A grace that prefers the other person.
- A grace that goes beyond forgiveness.
- A grace that supports and comes along side people who do not deserve it.

Is it possible that this church could be a church that is full of Grace?

The real question is ...

- Are we capable of showing grace to other people
- How will our church ever be a grace church if we are not a Grace people?

Some of us haven’t gotten forgiveness down pat yet, how will we ever get to grace?

Because grace says more than just: “I forgive you”.

- Grace says I forgive you and I want to bless you... Here’s my cloak!
- You stole 50 dollars from me, but I forgive you and by the way, here are another 20.

It’s the father putting a ring on the finger of the son who wasted his inheritance.

- You wasted everything I ever worked for, but here’s a ring and a fatted calf and a celebration because the son that was lost has come home!
- Grace goes far beyond Forgiveness.

If we can ever become a church that extends Grace, we will be a revival church.