

God's Grace – What it is and What it is Not

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Grace in the Bible refers to God's favor men do not deserve and cannot merit. Few subjects are more widely misunderstood – or perverted. It is imperative that men understand this Bible doctrine, for our salvation depends upon it. Perhaps some contrasts relating to Grace will be helpful:

- **Grace does not preclude conditions.** Christians are “justified freely by his grace” (Rom. 3:24). God did not owe us His favor; we could not compel it. That grace is free, however, does not mean it is cheap (i.e., without conditions or our efforts for receiving it or remaining in it). If grace were unconditional, **all would be saved**, for God so desires (1 Tim. 2:6); but not all will be (Mat. 7:13; 25:31–46). Grace is no less free because it is conditional. **Grace does not eliminate law.** Grace and law are **not** mutually exclusive, as many affirm and assume. If grace excludes law, it also excludes sin, for “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15; 5:13; 7:8). Where there is no sin, there is no need for grace, the purpose of which is to cover our sins. When Paul wrote, “for ye are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14), he referred to the law of Moses, whose authority died with Jesus on the cross (Col. 2:14). Moses' law could not save (Heb. 10:4). Grace by Jesus' blood is the key to salvation. We are nonetheless accountable to **His Law** (see Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; Jam. 1:25; 2:12).
- **Grace does not exclude our works.** As with law, so with our works: one does not exclude the other. What then did Paul mean, “For by grace have ye been saved through faith; ...not of works, that no man should glory” (Eph. 2:8–9)? Did he exclude **every** sort of “works”? Hardly, unless he countered his teaching that an oral confession of one's faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9–10), repentance (Acts 17:30), and baptism (Rom. 6:3–4; Gal. 3:27) – all involving our “works” – are necessary to salvation. Rather, the excluded “works” are ones in which men might seek to boast that they had “earned” God's grace (cf. Tit. 3:5). While none can work hard or well enough to de-serve salvation, the availing principle in Christ is “faith **working** through love” (Gal. 4:3, *emph. added*).

- **Grace does not equal license.** God's grace brings liberty and freedom (Gal. 2:4; 5:1). Some thereby interpret "grace" to be a "permission slip" to behave as they please. They "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4), using their freedom for an "occasion of the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). Those who thus fall from grace will be lost eternally (v. 4; 19-21).

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