**Lesson 11: The Grace and Mercy of God**

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

There is no true Christian on earth that does not appreciate the word “grace.” The idea behind the grace of God is His unmerited favor towards sinful men. But “unmerited” does not necessarily go far enough in terms of a definition. All men are radically sinful and rebellious towards our holy God. Apart from grace, our lives are a continuous offense to Him – an unending demonstration of self-worship, which is idolatry, and spiritual mutiny. The problem is not simply that we have conducted ourselves in a way that is offensive to Him. Our very hearts are set against Him. This is why we rightly deserve the punishment of hell, which is the outpouring of His eternal wrath and condemnation. When God shows us grace, it is not merely undeserved, it is ill-deserved. The fact that a perfect, holy, and righteous God would choose to show favor towards anyone who would strive against Him in sinful rebellion is truly amazing!

Just as sin defines men and is who we are. Grace defines God. In Exodus 34:6-7, the Lord proclaims who He is, a God full of grace and mercy. In the Scriptures presenting the grace of God, His favor is extended to those who did not deserve it. God is sovereign in grace, i.e., He chooses and determines to be gracious, in spite of man’s sinfulness. He certainly is not obligated to extend grace because of some human merit.

These truths are in relation to God’s saving grace towards His elect. In Scripture, there is also the notion of “common grace” that the Lord shows every man, elect or not (Ps. 145:9). It may be better to refer to this as God’s universal goodness since the word “grace” is not used in Scripture towards the non-elect or creation in general. Still, God does seem to bestow grace upon humanity universally. Consider these aspects of common grace:[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. God restrains sin (2 Thess. 2:7).

2. God restrains His wrath (Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:25).

3. God gives temporal blessings to all (Matt. 5:45).

4. Unregenerate people do good (Luke 6:33).

5. Unregenerate people know truth (Rom. 1:21; Matt. 23:2-3).

6. Unregenerate people experience some blessings of the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 10:5-8; Heb. 6:4-6).

God’s grace is often associated with His mercy in Scripture (Ps. 116:5; Exod. 33:19; Isa. 30:18; Heb. 4:16). Mercy has the nuance of helping people who are in distress.[[2]](#footnote-2) In God’s Word, this is demonstrated often in times of physical need (cf. 2 Sam. 24:14; Matt. 9:27; 2 Cor. 1:3-4). But since all men are in plight because of the guilt of their sin, God shows mercy when our sins are atoned for (cf. Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:10). This is why, in the Old Testament, the lid of Ark of the Covenant was called the “mercy seat.” It was the place of atonement (Lev. 16). In this sense, God’s mercy involves not giving sinful people what they deserve (i.e. wrath), while His grace is giving them what they do not deserve (i.e. salvation).

*Questions for Discussion*

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. What does this passage teach about the grace of God?

2. Consider these passages: Acts 13:43; Acts 14:3; Acts 20:24; Acts 20:32. How does the book of Acts repeatedly refer to the gospel?

3. What do the following passages teach about the grace of God?

a. 2 Corinthians 9:8.

b. James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5.

c. Romans 6:1-2.

d. 1 Corinthians 15:10.

4. Every Christian knows of some unbelievers in their lives? Take a minute to consider all the various ways God bestows common grace to them. Try to list as many as you can in one minute.

5. In light of God’s mercy shown to us, what are we called to do as believers in Christ (cf. Matt. 5:7; 18:33)?

**Amazing Grace**

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound–

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost but now am found,

Was blind but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed.

The Lord has promised good to me,

His word my hope secures;

He will my shield and portion be

As long as life endures.

Thru many dangers, toils and snares,

I have already come;

‘Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,

And grace will lead me home.

When we’ve been there ten thousand years,

Bright shining as the sun,

We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise

Than when we’d first begun.

*Thoughts for Application*

1. Sing the hymn “Amazing Grace.” What stanzas or lines particularly stand out to you? Why?

2. How has God shown grace to you today? Give at least ten examples.

3. Write a quick prayer of thankfulness to the Lord for His grace and mercy.

4. In light of the mercy you have received, what are some ways you can show mercy to others this week? Consider the opportunities afforded you through the church’s local outreach ministries.

5. How might you teach your children about God’s grace and mercy?

1. Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 247-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)