

“Grace-Givers: Grace’s Mortal Enemies”
July 19, 2009 * Romans 3:21-31

I. Why is God’s grace one of the most essential doctrines in all of Christianity? If you do not understand grace, you:

1. cannot _____ and _____ God properly.
2. cannot know _____ properly.
3. will misread and mistreat the _____ around you.

II. What Is Grace?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

1. What would happen to us if God treated us as we deserved and not with favor?

III. How Does God Show Us His Grace?

A. He gives us _____ grace.

1. What is this?

B. He gives us _____ grace.

1. What is this?

C. He gives us _____ grace.

1. What is this?

IV. Summarizing Romans 3:21ff.

A. The main idea of verse 21:

B. The main idea of verse 22:

C. The main idea of verse 23:

D. The main idea of verse 24:

E. The main idea of verse 25:

V. Knowing This Doctrine Wards Off Two Enemies:

Spiritual _____ & Spiritual _____

A. How does failing to understand grace lead to apathy?

B. How does failing to understand grace lead to fanaticism?

C. How does understanding grace properly ward off apathy?

D. How does understanding grace properly ward off fanaticism?

What are some of the ways that you have received grace from God in your life?

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July 19, 2009 * Romans 3:21-31

I. *Why is God’s grace one of the most essential doctrines in all of Christianity? If you do not understand grace, you:*

1. cannot **know** and **love** God properly.
2. cannot know **yourself** properly.
3. will misread and mistreat the **people** around you.

II. *What Is Grace?*

Undeserved Divine Favor

A. Undeserved

Grace isn’t just an act of kindness, it’s an undeserved kindness. It’s not just a blessing; it’s an undeserved blessing.

B. Divine

Psalm 86:15 says, “*But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.*” And grace is God’s default setting when it comes to you and me.

C. Favor

1. *What would happen to us if God treated us as we deserved and not with favor?*

In the book of Leviticus, Aaron’s two sons are killed by God for failing to present an offering to God in the way God prescribed. A few chapters later someone blasphemes the name of God, curses using God’s name – he is executed by stoning. In the book of Numbers, a man found gathering wood on the Sabbath Day is stoned to death at God’s command. This severity is not just found in the Old Testament. In Acts 5, a couple named Ananias and Sapphira tell Peter what to our eyes might seem to be a little white lie. They made a donation to the church and exaggerate a little about their generosity. They both drop dead. These stories are in our Bibles to remind us that if you want God to give you what you deserve, then this is what you’ll end up with. I’ve committed each one of these sins, how about you? I’ve sometimes served God in a

sloppy, half-hearted way. I’ve cursed using my Lord’s holy name. I’ve failed to treat his Sabbath as holy. I’ve told white lies about myself so that I look good in the eyes of others. Why haven’t I dropped dead? God hasn’t changed. He’s still holy. The wages of sin is still death. I’ll tell you why I haven’t dropped dead – Because my death penalty has already been paid by Jesus Christ, and God has chosen not to deal with me as my sins deserve – at least not today. He is giving me time to get my act together and come to Jesus – and he’s giving me this time not because I’m so good, but because he is a God of grace and favor.

III. *How Does God Show Us His Grace?*

A. *He gives us **common** grace.*

1. *What is this?*

Common grace is the way God expresses his kindness to everyone regardless of whether they believe in him or not. The Bible says that the earth is filled with the goodness of the Lord, and it’s not just believers who are allowed to enjoy that goodness.

B. *He gives us **ministry** grace.*

1. *What is this?*

In Romans 12:6 the apostle Paul writes, “We each have different gifts, according to the grace given to us.” 1 Peter 4:10 – “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” Both Paul and Peter recognized that the talents and abilities they had were gifts from God. God the Potter, shapes us the Clay in ways that are absolutely unique. And that’s why we call this ministry grace, because we are to take these gifts, talents and abilities that God has given us, then develop them, strengthen them and use them to serve him.

C. *He gives us **saving** grace.*

1. *What is this?*

“Saving grace” is the grace God gives us that enables us to come to Jesus Christ and be saved. Christianity teaches something absolutely radical and unprecedented compared to all other religions, faiths and philosophies. I cannot save myself. I cannot

secure God's favor, God's salvation, God's heaven by merit, by being good, by keeping God's laws.

IV. Summarizing Romans 3:21ff.

A. The main idea of verse 21:

“But now a way of getting right with God and obtaining eternal life, apart from being good, has been shown us, that's been talked about from the beginning in the Bible.”

B. The main idea of verse 22:

Translation: “This way of getting right with God and obtaining eternal life happens for me when I come to Jesus Christ in simple faith and believe in him.”

C. The main idea of verse 23:

Translation: “The problem with trying to get to heaven by being good is it doesn't matter who we are – in God's eyes we are all guilty of breaking his laws so not one of us is good enough.”

D. The main idea of verse 24:

Translation: “The only way to be forgiven of what I've done wrong is by God's grace, which he showed me most fully when Jesus came to earth to die for me on the cross.”

E. The main idea of verse 25:

Translation: “For God to be considered just, my law-breaking needed to be punished. God the Son took the punishment I deserved upon himself. Because of God's patience, not only can I be forgiven, but I can experience a fresh start with God.”

V. Knowing This Doctrine Wards Off Two Enemies:

Spiritual Apathy & Spiritual Fanaticism

A. How does failing to understand grace lead to apathy?

I have a number of friends who are not Christians but they're good, decent people, and I love them dearly, but they think that God will surely accept them when they die, if there is a God, because they are good, decent people, and that's where leave their

spiritual lives. And what's sad, is they spend no time seeking God at all – they don't go to church, read his Word, pray a stitch, they are utterly irreligious, they have no relationship with God at all, they go through a day with virtually no God-thoughts, yet they think they're going to heaven because they're good and decent. They believe salvation is up to their goodness, they conclude that they're good enough so they live life however they see fit, and the end result is complete spiritual apathy, where God is a million miles away from them. There are Christians, believe it or not, who do something similar as this. There are Christians who hear the message that we are saved by grace alone, and conclude – wrongly – that they can now carry on their lives any which way because “they're in”. They believe that grace gives them a *license* to live however they want. And the end result for them also is complete spiritual apathy. Living a life where God is basically an irrelevancy. People who get grace wrong can end up in a place of spiritual apathy.

B. How does failing to understand grace lead to fanaticism?

There is another group of people who also believe that salvation is up to their own effort and goodness, but unlike my good and decent friends, they're not sure if they are good enough. They don't know if God accepts them, and that thought so unnerves them that they give themselves over to complete spiritual fanaticism, where their every thought becomes one of keeping God's laws, towing God's line, sacrificing life and limb to hopefully get God to crack a smile when he looks down on them. There are also Christians in this group, who don't understand grace, who become legalistic in their spiritual lives. They live by lots and lots of rules. They tend to be very judgmental of others, whose spiritual lives aren't as zealous as their own. In worst cases, people like this can even be convinced to do terrible things, like strapping on a bomb to themselves and killing infidels as final proof to God that they are worthy.

C. How does understanding grace properly ward off apathy?

If someone suddenly out of the blue deposited \$10,000 in your bank account, wouldn't you be motivated to find out who it was that showed you such unbelievable kindness? Wouldn't you do everything in your power to track them down, meet them, get to know them, find out everything you could, find out what gives, and what he expects of you, and where you are to go from here. Spiritual apathy is a slap in the face of Almighty God who has given you and me far more than this in Jesus Christ. And any notion that being saved by grace somehow now gives you a license to sin – why don't you just spit in Jesus' face and trample on his spilled blood while you're at it! "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." Isn't that how the old hymn put it?

D. How does understanding grace properly ward off fanaticism?

Legalists and fanatics are driven to such extremes because they don't know God's acceptance and they don't believe God loves them. But once God's grace grips my heart, I know that I am accepted. Not because I'm so good – I'm not – but because he's so good. And because he accepts me – the chief of sinners – I am motivated to give God my very best but I do so out of a heart full of love, not out of a restless heart that never knows if it's measuring up. Not only this, but because God meets me and accepts me just as I am, I can now treat other people differently. I don't have to stomp around judging all the sins of others, wagging my finger at all the bad people out there, building myself up by tearing others down, and certainly not killing them. If God could save me – the lowest of the low – then he can save them to, and my part is to love them, and point them to Jesus. One beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. Friends, understanding grace, changes everything.

What are some of the ways that you have received grace from God in your life?