



“Getting to Know God”

Section 2: What Can We Know About What God Is Like?



Unit 2.6: Grasping the Fullness of Grace & Truth

I) Browsing in Between the Bookends

- As we continue our discovery of God’s shared attributes that uniquely reflect His moral perfections, we will now begin to see how last unit’s bookends of *love* and *holiness* help put everything in a proper perspective. Therefore, as we begin browsing between those bookends to see God’s love and holiness in action, let us consider how these bookends are reflected through the attributes of *grace* and *truth*.

II) A God of Amazing Grace

- Grace* is a word commonly used in Christian circles, but much like God’s love, His grace is also greatly misunderstood. Although grace has many applications in the Christian life, the essential definition of grace is “*God’s offer of unmerited favor or blessing.*” God’s favor takes on many forms, but it is always *unmerited* because we can ever do anything to earn God’s rich blessings. Theologians often refer to God’s grace in two standard forms, and these forms of grace are also applied in specific ways in the Christian life. Here is a closer look at the two forms of grace, as well as two applications for believers:

Two forms of grace from God:

- Common grace:** Unmerited gifts and blessings that God bestows on all human beings.
-**Matthew 5:45** – “*For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*”
- Covenant grace:** The unmerited gift of a personal and eternal covenant relationship with God through repentance and faith.
-**Titus 2:11-12** – “*¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age*”

Two applications of God’s covenant grace:

- Salvation:** The offer of redemption from sin and the gift of eternal life through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This application of God’s grace focuses on His *forgiveness*.
 - Sanctification:** The offer of spiritual transformation through the continued work of the Holy Spirit who cleanses us and enables us to grow. The application of God’s grace focuses on His *power*.
- So, a more comprehensive definition of God’s grace in light of these forms and applications above would be the following: “*Grace is what God does in us, through us, and for us, to provide what is required of us, because we can never meet His requirements on our own.*”

III) Grace & the Golden Calf

- Although there are countless biblical examples of how God’s grace transforms the lives of His people, there is a prime example in the Old Testament that best articulates just how central grace is to God’s perfect character. In Exodus 34 when God remade the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments a second time and gave them to Moses to renew His covenant with Israel, as Moses was preparing to head down the mountain God proclaimed how grace would be attached to future declarations of His moral perfection. As **Exodus 34:6** reveals, “*⁶The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”*” This idea of God as being merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love is known as “*The formula of grace,*” and it is repeated throughout Scripture in **Psalm 86:15**, **Psalm 103:8**, **Psalm 145:8**, **Nehemiah 9:7**, **Joel 2:13**, and **Jonah 4:2**.

IV) Growing in His Grace

- When we consider how we must respond to God so we can fully receive His grace, we must make a clear distinction between **earning** and **effort**. Earning is a form of seeking merit before God and we will never be worthy of earning God's grace because it is a gift. However, we can make a genuine effort through spiritual disciplines to put ourselves in a position of surrender to receive God's grace. Here are four biblical realities of grace all believers must surrender to in faith to experience true transformation:
 - a) We are *saved* by grace: Ephesians 2:8-9
 - b) We are *trained* by grace: Titus 2:11-12
 - c) We are *strengthened* by grace: 2 Corinthians 12:9
 - d) We are *defined* by grace: 1 Corinthians 15:10

V) The Truth of the Matter

- Now that we have discussed the concept of God's grace in our lives, we need to discover how God's truthfulness works in perfect unity with grace. To define the concept of truth in relation to God, we can affirm that ***“Truth is the nature, works, and actions of God that define, express, and demonstrate what is right about reality.”*** Here is a closer look at biblical support of all three dimensions of divine truth:
 - a) Truth *Defined* through God's Nature: Jeremiah 10:10; John 14:6; John 17:3
 - b) Truth *Expressed* through God's Words: Titus 1:2; John 17:17; Proverbs 30:5; Psalms 119:160
 - c) Truth *Demonstrated* through God's Actions: Psalm 25:5; Psalm 43:3; Psalm 86:11; John 16:13

VI) Transformed by His Truth

- We are also called to actively respond to God's truth in obedience to be transformed into the image of God's Son. Here is how Scripture reveals we must respond in faith to pursue continued transformation:
 - a) *Hear and believe* the truth: Ephesians 1:13-14
 - b) *Abide* in the truth: John 8:31-32
 - c) Be *sanctified* in the truth: John 17:17
 - d) *Confess* the truth: 1 John 1:8-9
 - e) *Walk* in the truth: 3 John 1:4
 - f) *Speak* the truth: Ephesians 4:25
 - g) *Love* in truth: 1 John 3:18

VII) Seeking to Strike a Balance

- As Christians we have a sinful tendency (either by nature or nurture) to lean too heavily in one direction towards grace or truth. We must seek the Holy Spirit's help to strike a sweet balance of both, because here are two extremes we are in danger of being guilty of if we don't find a Spirit-led balance:
 - a) **All grace, no truth:** We become very welcoming, accepting, and affirming, but we never stand for anything, so we fall for everything. We will avoid issues of conflict, and simply tell people what they want to hear. Our mantra will become, *“I'm ok, you're ok, we are all ok.”*
 - b) **All truth, no grace:** We become obsessed with principles and convictions and we will stomp all over everyone to set the record straight. We will also face constant relational problems and will find it impossible to forgive. Our mantra will become, *“I just tell it like it is.”*
- Randy Alcorn in his book, *The Grace and Truth Paradox*, reminds us how our success in balancing grace and truth will powerfully proclaim the gospel. Alcorn states, ***“When a musical instruments string's go loose, it sounds awful. But you can also overtighten the strings, breaking them or creating discord. There's a perfect tension to grace and truth, which makes the gospel's music.”*** (p. 20)

VIII) Fullness is Found in Christ

- Finally, we must remember that grace and truth don't just represent *principles*, but a *person*. John 1:14 says, ***“¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** In other words, the fullest expression of grace and truth is found in Jesus Christ. He is grace and truth in action, and as His followers we need to seek the Spirit's help to imitate His sweet balance of grace and truth in our thoughts, words, and actions.