

## "The Grace of God"

Someone said that grace is "God's Redemption At Christ's Expense." Hello, I'm Phil Sanders; and welcome to our Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." I'm excited today to tell you what the grace of God can do in your life. And I believe you'll get excited too.

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. Welcome to "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way!" We know the Lord's Way is the right way, and we search the Scriptures, because we know the Bible is always true. We're so delighted that you're with us today! We want to be a part of your life each week. And we hope you'll listen closely and tell a friend about this program. Be sure and get your Bible, I've got mine.

When you say salvation is a gift, some people think it's too good to be true. They figure they must earn their way to heaven by doing some great thing. They can't imagine God giving us His blessing, the forgiveness of our sins, and a home in heaven. Today we're asking the question, "What does it mean to be saved by the grace of God?"

Someone has taken the word grace "G-R-A-C-E" and made the acrostic "God's Redemption At Christ's Expense." Well this is a fairly accurate description of grace. The word grace (in Greek *charis*) means "favor." And one who has the love, and blessing and favor of another may be said to be in the "good graces" of his benefactor. The distinguishing factors of God's grace are twofold: first, God's grace is a gift and is not earned; and second, God's grace is undeserved. Usually we think of having to earn a place of favor with others, but God gives us his favor as a gift.

God accepts, loves and blesses the person who stands in His grace. And in spite of one's past, when a person is washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, he stands in a right relationship and in the favor of God. Now even though we deserve to be punished for our sins, God graciously forgives us and no longer holds our transgressions against us. In Christ we became new creatures, transformed into children of God, and transferred into the kingdom of God. In Christ God hears our prayers and gives us every spiritual blessing.

Well we offer the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy, or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or you can send an e-mail to us at [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number, that number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also stream this program on our website [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, then we'll read from Titus verses 3 to 7, and we'll explore the grace of God.

Our scripture reading today comes from Paul's letter to Titus, chapter 3, verses 3 to 7. "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Oh Father we are so grateful that in spite of our sinfulness, You were willing to send Jesus to die in our stead, and to pay the price for our forgiveness of sins. Father help us to do Your will on earth as it in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

You can't earn God's grace; my friend, it's a gift. In Romans 4 and verse 4, the apostle Paul says "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as

righteousness.” Grace is not a wage for our labors, a prize for our winning a competition, or an award for our meritorious efforts. Grace is a gift. When a man can earn no wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award, yet receives a wondrous gift, oh he has been given unmerited favor or undeserved kindness. And that’s what God in his love has done for us through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2 verses 1 thru 10 helps us to understand how God has loved us and saved us. The apostle Paul said, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (and he says) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” Sin causes a person to be spiritually dead. It’s not merely an inappropriate act; sin kills one spiritually.

“But, verse 4, God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” You know I’ve found that the most wonderful sections of the Bible begin with the word “but.” We were spiritually dead, but that’s not the end of the story. God, rich in mercy and love, saved us by His grace.

Then he says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2 verses 8 to 10). We’re saved by grace through faith. It takes both. We’re not saved by grace alone or by faith alone, but by grace through faith. Grace reflects all that God does in our lives to bring us home to Him. Faith reflects our response of trust and love and obedience to the grace that He’s given us.

Now God’s grace works through faith. God desires that we appreciate his great gift by responding to him in faith. You remember Paul said in Titus 3:3 to 5, “We ourselves were once foolish, (we were) disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” God chose to wash us and renew us as an act of loving kindness. Well how does He wash us?

Well this washing that regenerates and renews is when we are born again in baptism. By faith, when we repent and are baptized, God washes us clean from sin and causes us to be born again into His family. The faith that matters to God is a faith that is willing to trust God enough to accept His teaching and His blessing by obediently responding. Now in Galatians 3 verses 26 to 27, the Bible says, “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

This means the faith that saves, the faith that Paul had in mind, which responds to grace is an obedient faith. We are sons of God by faith, but this is a faith that will repent and be baptized. For it is in baptism that God causes us to be born again and we “put on Christ.” In baptism God grants to us all the blessings and favor that goes with being a Christian. What a great God we have! Baptism is not, as Paul said, some work that we do to earn salvation. It’s how we lovingly obey Him in faith, because He asks us to be baptized.

Now obedience is not the same thing as earning. Now let's say I had a treasure worth \$100,000 hidden in my backyard. And I told you that I would give it to you, provided you go and dig it up. Do you really believe that that few minutes of digging earned that \$100,000 for you? You see, you met a condition for a gift by obeying my words. You didn't earn the gift, you merely received it by doing what I asked you to do. And that's how it is in salvation. We don't earn salvation by repenting or being baptized; we merely comply with God's conditions for receiving the gift.

In Numbers 21, the children of Israel while wandering in the wilderness came to the land of Edom, where they grumbled and spoke against God, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness (they said)? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food (that is the manna)." Well the Lord became angry and "he sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. Well the people repented and confessed their sin. They asked Moses to intercede for them with God (of course), and Moses asked God to remove the serpents."

Well, then the LORD said to Moses, "You make a fiery *serpent (that is, out of bronze)*, and you set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." And so Moses made a bronze serpent and he set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived (Numbers 21 verses 8 and 9). Now all they had to do was to look by faith on the serpent. They didn't earn their healing, but they did have to comply with God's instructions. You see, obeying is not the same as earning. Obedience is an act of faith and trust that God will keep his promises.

In John 9, you remember Jesus encountered a man who was born blind. And Jesus wanted to heal this man and show the power of God, so He spat on the ground, and he got a little of the dirt and He made clay of the spittle, and He applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which translated means Sent). So he went away and he washed, and he came *back* seeing (John chapter 9 verses 6 to 7). Now who would argue that washing in a pool is the same as earning our eyesight? The man earned nothing, but he believed strongly enough to do what Jesus told him to do. Faith is not merely accepting. It is trusting enough to do what the Lord asks us to do!

Let me make it very clear that the Bible does not teach that baptism is how we earn salvation. But the Bible does teach that baptism is necessary to salvation—just as looking on the brass serpent was necessary; just as washing in the pool of Siloam was necessary.

God tests us to see if we really love Him and believe in Him. And these tests are God's conditions, not ours. He gave them to us, we didn't make them up ourselves. When we meet God's conditions, we say to Him, "We trust You enough to do what you ask of us. We know that You will keep Your promises." God's grace is so wonderful, and we must never cheapen it or presume upon it. People presume on God's grace by changing the conditions or by setting those conditions aside. They presume God's blessing whether they respond rightly to Him or not.

Some people think the grace of God means I can respond to Him anyway I want too. They think grace has no conditions at all. Do you think the blind man would have argued with Jesus about doing it, and wanted to do it his own way, if he really wanted to see? Do you think that the Israelites would have argued about looking on the serpent? Why then does anyone argue about repentance or baptism today? Wouldn't it be better just to trust God and obey Him?

The New Testament contains the new covenant of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This new covenant contains what God promises His people and what God expects of His people. In this covenant God is the benefactor who gives more to us than can ever be repaid or earned. If we count our

blessings, they include salvation, continued forgiveness of sin, eternal life, the right to pray, son-ship. I tell you if we lived for thousands of years, we could never repay God for what He has done for us. God doesn't expect repayment. God expects love, loyalty and obedient faith from His children.

You remember Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14 verse 15). In verse 23 Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." Now faithful obedience is not some form of legalism or works righteousness or anything else, obedient faith is love. Paul said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5 and verse 6). When we love the Lord and we want to please Him, we're willing to do everything He asks and do it the way that He wants it done. And we won't argue with Him about it.

So, when the Lord asks us to believe, we're willing to trust Him and His word completely. When the Lord asks us to repent of our sins, love turns us away from sin that offends God. We couldn't imagine continuing to offend the God who's been so good to us and blessed us. When Jesus asks us to confess Him before others, we'll gladly say to the whole world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is Lord and He is the Messiah, the Christ!

When Jesus says to us in Mark 16 verse 16, that "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved," we believe Him. And we're baptized because we trust, because we love, and we do it to please God. The Bible says, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6 and verse 4). If the baptism of the New Testament is immersion, and it is, then I will be immersed without question so that I might be able to please God.

In the book of Acts chapter 2 and verse 38, you remember the Bible commands us to "repent and be baptized." That commandment is in the passive voice not the active. The active voice is used when the subject performs an action, but the passive voice is used when the subject is being acted upon by someone else. Now in baptism God performs the action of saving us; and we are passive, receiving God's grace and forgiveness. Let God's grace work on you in baptism. Let God cleanse your soul, let God bury you and then raise you up with Christ, let God give you newness of life, let God add you to His church. God does all this when we're baptized into Christ and His death.

Sometimes people say, "Well you don't have to be baptized to be saved!" But they're missing the point. God works His grace on us through baptism into Christ. And if you love Christ Jesus, and I know you do, let Him save you through the washing that regenerates. And that washing God gives you is in baptism. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for Your grace and Your love and Your favor. Help us to return that favor in love by loving You, by trusting in You enough to keep Your will. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

God gives laws for our good. God doesn't give laws to punish or to enslave us. He doesn't dream up foolish laws just to prove that He is in charge. No! God gives us His laws to protect us from troubles in life. Even the law of God is gracious to us. As a loving parent God's concern is for our welfare. Psalm 103 verse 13 says, "Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him." Everything God does, He does to favor and bless us. When we understand that, we'll see God with clearer eyes.

Titus 2 verses 11 to 14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a

people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." God wants to bless you richly by guiding you with His Word, the Bible! Let Him do it.

Where are you in your life, your spiritual life? Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Are you at peace in your soul? God hasn't left you; it may be that you've left God. Well you can draw close to Him again by trusting in Him, by obeying His Word. So believe in the Lord Jesus, and repent of your sins, step out and confess Him before others, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). It may be that as a Christian brother or sister that you've wandered away from God and you've wandered away from the church and you need to come back home. My friend, do it today! Let God's grace back into your life.

Well we hope that you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy, or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org).

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Please attend worship at one of these churches of Christ in the area that's served by this station. Oh they love guests, and you'll be glad you worshipped with them. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.