



The Caller

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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Grace, Grace, Wonderful Grace

Grace is one of the distinctive features of the religion of the LORD (YHWH). In the OT this religion eventually became Judaism. In the NT we know of this religion as Christianity. No other system of religious thought, past or present, contains an emphasis on divine grace comparable to that of the religion of the Bible based in YHWH.

As a general definition, the doctrine of grace pertains to God's activity rather than to his nature. Although God is gracious, this trait of his nature is revealed only in relation to creation and redemption. In other words, grace is to be understood in terms of a dynamic action or expression of the Deity rather than as a static attribute of God's nature. Grace is the dimension of divine activity that enables God to confront human indifference and rebellion with an inexhaustible capacity to forgive and to bless. God is gracious in action.

The doctrine of divine grace underlies the thought of both OT and NT. While the OT definitely conveys God's grace (The Fall and Noah Gen. 6:8 are just two examples of many) the OT also anticipates and prepares for the full expression of grace that becomes manifest in the NT.

Three Hebrew words are used to express this concept. *C?en* often designates the favor the strong bestow on the weak. The related verb *c?anan* "be gracious" designates the action of unmerited favor toward another in the context of need. It presupposes love (cf. Deut. 7:7–8) but cannot be presumed (Exod. 33:19). *C?ese?* further enlarges the Old Testament understanding of grace. God not only grants periodic favor but continues in a gracious relationship with his people. Between people, *c?ese?* denotes a committed loyalty created by acts of kindness or by covenant. God's *c?ese?*, however, flows from his love, not from obligation.

The New Testament word for grace, Gk. *ch?aris*, is related to the verb *chairo* "rejoice." This broad meaning is reflected in the use of "favor" in Luke and Acts (e.g., Luke 1:30; 2:40; Acts 7:10). The Gospels rarely use the word "grace," although its concept is found throughout the life and teaching of Jesus. God demonstrates grace by sending Jesus to the cross for human sin and then by the resurrection. According to Paul, God's grace is inseparable from his love expressed in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3).

My sermon last Sunday was entitled "The Wonderful Grace of Jesus." In the time I spoke, I felt it impossible to cover this grand topic. I decided to write some additional thoughts today. Again, even as I complete this article, there is so much more that could be and has been penned.

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