

News & Announcements

PRAYER REQUESTS

Daryion Banks is in Summerlin Hospital, Room 502. He had a spell of sickle cell anemia, but then he got a blood infection and has to stay longer in the hospital. At this time, he is not allowed any visitors. He also is healing from his motorcycle accident and will be attending physical therapy for a long period of time once he is home from the hospital. Keep him in your prayers that he will get better soon.

Helen Moore was in Sunrise Hospital as an outpatient where she had a scan procedure done on her heart valves. She is home resting and should be up and around soon. Keep Helen in your prayers.

Keep the following on your prayer list who are either shut-in, unable to worship with us, or have on going health concerns,

Daryion and Janette Banks, Liz Barajas' dad, Dorothy and Firman Barton, Mary and Bob Cress, Beverly Dempsey, Rachel Kidwell, Beth Nebeker, Bobbye Pounders, Ignacio Reyes, John Simo, and Fernando Vizcarra, Jr. in your prayers.

Mens Business Meeting is next Sunday, February 14th at 4:30 PM. All men should try to be in attendance to discuss very important issues.

TRAVELING MEMBERS

Brenda Mendoza is in Australia until sometime in March. Keep Brenda in your prayers for a safe return.

MILITARY MEMBERS

Michael Barnes and David Sims are stationed at Nellis Air Force Base.

WORD OF FAITH

Weekly bulletin of the Vegas Drive Church of Christ

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Sunday Bible Class: 9 AM • Sunday Worship: 10 AM & 6 PM • Wednesday Bible Class: 7 PM

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UNDERSTANDING GRACE

At the graveside service of a godly woman, I heard a man say that his departed grandmother had “grown up in the churches of Christ before we discovered grace.” The way he said it you would think “the churches of Christ” were a denomination. He could not have been talking about the churches of Christ we read about in the New Testament. The apostles taught the truth about grace from the beginning. They also refuted false ideas about grace that were in circulation in their day. **Perhaps this man in the graveyard was talking about the time before change-agents in the church discovered Baptist doctrines.**

I have heard a lot of strange things about grace. Here are some things old and new I have either heard or read (not in any particular order): “You must keep the old law to enjoy grace,” “grace is for the circumcised,” “grace must be earned,” “there is insufficient grace for me,” “grace means you do not have to obey the gospel,” “salvation is by grace only,” “grace is unconditional,” “grace is only for the elect,” “grace is irresistible,” “you cannot fall from grace,” “grace means you are not under ANY law,” “there is no grace in the Old Testament,” “let us sin that grace may abound,” “because of grace, it does not matter what we do in worship (instrumental music and women preachers),” “because of grace, it does not matter what we believe about salvation (salvation without baptism),” “because of grace, it does not matter what church we are a member of (denominations),” “because of grace, it does not matter who we marry (fornication),” “grace excuses lasciviousness,” “I can only reach so high and grace reaches the rest of the way,” “you never talk about grace.” You have likely heard some of these things yourself; and, you could probably add statements to the list. But, this is enough to demonstrate the confusion believed and taught about grace.

It is not true to say that we “never talk about grace.” However, if you hear Gospel preachers talk about obedience more than they talk about grace, then remember that is what Jesus did. When the apostles preached grace they did so in the context of obedience. Grace is God’s part, and what God does by grace is not changed by what we preach. Obedience is man’s part, and “*we persuade men*” (1 Cor. 5:11). Preaching the truth about grace can motivate men to obey the Gospel, but I do not think confusion about grace is because “the churches of Christ have been slow to discover grace.” I think it is more likely that some have not been listening, or they have dismissed what they heard because it did not suit them.

Thomas Warren used to teach that if we wanted to understand the whole truth about what the Bible

teaches about a topic, then we need to find everything the Bible says about that topic and put it together. That is a big task when it comes to a subject like grace. Nevertheless, that is what I tried to do in preparing for this series of articles. The King James Version remains the translation of my choice, and the numbers that follow are in reference to that grand old book, but for most other translations these numbers will not be far off.

In the King James Version of the New Testament, the word “grace” is found 130 times (129 of these times the word “grace” is a translation of the Greek word *charis*). The one time the English word “grace” is used where the word *charis* does not appear in the Greek text is in James 1:11, where in reference to the flower it is said, “*the grace of the fashion of it.*” Here the word “grace” is used for the word *euprepeia*. It is referring to its beauty.

In the Greek text the word *charis* is found 150 times. This means that twenty-one times the word *charis* is not translated “grace.” Here is a breakdown of how *charis* is translated in the New Testament: grace (129); thank, thanks, or thankworthy (8); favor (6); pleasure (2); gracious (1); benefit (1); liberality (1); joy (1); acceptable (1).

The common Sunday School definition of the word “grace” is “unmerited favor” —but it’s never translated that way. The basic meaning of the word *charis* is simply “favor.” The idea of “favor” is in the word *charis* itself. When the “unmerited” idea is coupled with it, it comes from the context. If we would focus our attention on the inherent “favor” idea in the word “grace,” rather than the often-implied “unmerited” nature of it, we would get a better appreciation of the word itself. “Grace” is not so much about our own unworthiness as it is about the nature of God, His love, His good will toward men, and the pleasure He has in favoring us.

“*If I have found grace in thy sight*” is a common expression in the Old Testament. Substitute the word “favor” for “grace” in your mind when you read these passages. In Genesis 19:18-19 Lot said, “*Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight...*” when he plead with the angels to let him escape to Zoar rather than fleeing to the mountains. In Genesis 32:5 Jacob said, “*I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight*” when he was sending word to his brother Esau. He was wanting his brother to look favorably upon him. In Genesis 39:4 it is said of Potiphar that “*Joseph found grace in his sight,*” when he looked upon him favorably. In Exodus 33:13 Moses prayed saying, “*If I have found grace in thy sight,*” when asking God to go with him. In Ruth 2:10, Ruth ask Boaz, “*Why have I found grace in thine eyes?*” And Boaz answered by telling her of the good report he had heard of her.

The first time the Greek word usually translated “grace” is used in the New Testament is Luke 1:30 where the angel said to Mary, “*thou hast found favour with God.*” It is the word “favour.” It is used again in Luke 2:52 where the text says, “*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*” There were reasons that people liked Jesus, and God was pleased with him. In Acts 2:46-47 it says of those in the early church that they had “*favour with all the people*” —they were making a good impression. In Acts 7:9-10 it is said of Joseph that God was with him and “*gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*” He was an impressive young man, and so also it says of David in Acts 7:46 that David, “*found favour before God.*” In these passages the word repeatedly translated “favour” is the word usually translated “grace” (*charis*).

Thinking of the word “favour” when we read the word “grace” helps us better understand and

appreciate Paul’s salutation at the beginning of all his epistles when he says “*Grace be unto you,*” and his benedictions at the end of every one of them when he says, “*The grace of the Lord be with you.*” He wanted the Lord to continue to look favorably upon them, to be pleased with them, and to continue to bless them.

This kind of good will is often demonstrated by a gift. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 Paul wrote, “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.*” The word translated “liberality” is the word usually translated “grace” (*charis*). In 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 he wrote, “*Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*” Here the word usually translated “grace” is translated “gift” in verse 4.

In all these examples, the word “grace” is more of a compliment to the character of the giver, than a commentary on the worthiness of the receiver. This should help us better understand and appreciate passages like Ephesians 2:4-8: “*By grace are ye saved through faith...it is the gift of God.*” It is out of God’s good will toward man that he extends salvation to man.

By: Bill Boyd

God’s Plan of Salvation

HEAR the gospel Rom. 10:17
BELIEVE the gospel John 3:16
REPENT of your sins Luke 13:3
CONFESS Christ Matt. 10:32
Be BAPTIZED Acts 2:38
Live FAITHFULLY Rev. 2:10

If you are visiting today, we appreciate your presence and hope to get to know you better. Please fill out a visitor’s card so we can have a record of your attendance, and if there is any way we can serve your spiritual needs, please bring this to our attention.

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