



# LANDER, WYOMING church of Christ

## Tract #2: GRACE

The word “grace” refers to what God gives and cannot be earned. Grace is God’s loving desire and action to save us regardless of our inability to earn eternal life by our good works. In order to understand this grace, we must first understand our impossibilities in life in reference to our desire to live eternally with God.

**1. *The impossibility of trading life for life:*** What God has to offer costs more than what we can afford to pay.<sup>1</sup> Eternal life in heaven is without end. There is no possible way for us to earn heaven in a fair deal by exchanging a lifetime in good works as a Christian for the reward of eternal life. We could not live long enough doing good works on earth in order to earn what God offers in eternal dwelling in heaven.

**2. *The impossibility of trading our life for eternal life:*** In reference to our ability to keep God’s law, God says that “*there is none righteous, no, not one.*”<sup>2</sup> The problem is that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”<sup>3</sup> We fall short because we cannot keep law perfectly in order to stand just (justified) before God. God says, “*By the deeds of law no flesh will be justified in His sight.*”<sup>4</sup> One cannot be “*justified by the works of law.*”<sup>5</sup> We cannot be justified before God by law simply because no man can keep God’s law perfectly in order to save himself.

When one sins, the law says that he is a lawbreaker.<sup>6</sup> According to law, therefore, lawbreakers must be punished.<sup>7</sup> The lawbreaker (sinner) must receive the wrath of the Judge.<sup>8</sup> One might seek to keep the whole law, and yet commit one sin. That one sin makes him a lawbreaker, and thus, guilty before God’s law.<sup>9</sup> We must, therefore, cry out for grace from the Judge. Recognizing his inability to live perfectly before God, Paul cried out, “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*”<sup>10</sup> As breakers of God’s law, all of us seek deliverance from judgment.

Most people recognize that they break God’s law. Most know that they are sinners. But because we think we can stand alone before God, we seek out or invent our own system of forgiveness of sins against God. We thus answer Paul’s question in a wrong way. We answer with works to receive forgiveness that is based on our own efforts. Our invented system of “salvation by good works” is the false belief that our good works will make up for or atone for our sins. We deceive ourselves into thinking that if we do enough good works, God will forgive our sins. Doing good works may make one feel good toward God, but not one good work will obligate God to forgive one sin. The Bible says that we are not saved by good works “*lest anyone should boast.*”<sup>11</sup> If we were saved by good works, we would boast against one another. We would glorify ourselves before God as the religious leader in the Bible who boasted in prayer that he gave tithes and fasted twice a week.<sup>12</sup> Salvation cannot be earned by good works lest we put God in debt to pay us with heaven. If one could earn his salvation by good works, then the reward would not be counted “*as grace but as debt.*”<sup>13</sup>

### Revelation of God’s Grace

Only God can give a solution for our sin problem that has destroyed our relationship with Him. He only can deliver us from our condemnation in sin. Paul praised God for his deliverance from sin by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. “*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*”<sup>14</sup>

The Bible says, “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men*”<sup>15</sup> To this, we say hallelujah! Jesus has become a mediator before God on behalf of those who establish a covenant with God.<sup>16</sup> He is the divine link between God and humanity. He has brought to us God’s free gift of grace. The Bible says that “*the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.*”<sup>17</sup>

For God so loved us that He gave His Son.<sup>18</sup> Though we were lawbreakers, God loved us. Even in our futile efforts to save ourselves, God reached from heaven and loved us through Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Grace is God’s gift to sinful man. It is a gift, and thus, it is not earned by our righteousness. Since it is a gift, we cannot demand it on the basis of good works.<sup>20</sup>

## Responding to God's Grace

God has worked His part in His plan to bring us eternally into His existence in heaven. We must now learn of His work through Jesus and respond to His grace.<sup>21</sup> Our knowledge of the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus must generate faith. Faith must move us into action. We must be moved to obey what God wants us to do.<sup>22</sup> The Bible says that *"the just will live by faith."*<sup>23</sup> The justified will live by trusting in God for their salvation,<sup>24</sup> not in their ability to perform law perfectly or attempt to trade their good works to God for His grace.

God's grace does not give us freedom to sin as some have misunderstood.<sup>25</sup> It gives us freedom to obey.<sup>26</sup> The one who has heard and learned of the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus is motivated to obey the Father.<sup>27</sup> We establish God's law in our lives by responding to His grace.<sup>28</sup>

The same response of thanksgiving that results from recognizing God's saving grace also applies to good works. We are *"created in Christ Jesus for good works."*<sup>29</sup> We work because we are saved by God's grace, not in order to be saved. Good works to others, therefore, are expressions of appreciation and thanksgiving to God for our salvation.<sup>30</sup>

## Grace and Freedom

There will always be those who seek to bind on the consciences of men those things God never intended to bind. Some Jewish teachers in the first century sought to bind circumcision and other Old Testament ceremonies on the consciences of the early Christians.<sup>31</sup> These teachers came in "to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage."<sup>32</sup> But God's grace sets us free from the bondage of human religious traditions.<sup>33</sup> One is fallen from grace if he seeks to justify himself through the performance of religious traditions and ceremonies.<sup>34</sup>

In order to come into the realm of God's grace, you must respond to grace by obedience to the gospel which is the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, baptism for remission of sins is not a work. It is a response to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross. Those who respond to grace by baptism, show their appreciation to God for the grace that was revealed through Jesus.

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References: 1. See Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2. Romans 3:10, 3. Romans 3:23, 4. Romans 3:20, 5. Galatians 2:16, 6. 1 John 3:4, 7. Romans 6:23, 8. Romans 4:15, 9. James 2:10, 10. Romans 7:24, 11. Ephesians 2:9, 12. Luke 18:11,12, 13. Romans 4:4, 14. Romans 7:25, 15. Titus 2:11, 16. 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 12:24, 17. Romans 5:15, 18. John 3:16, 19. Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4,5, 20. Ephesians 2:8,9, 21. John 6:45, 22. Romans 1:5; Galatians 5:6; James 2:14-26, 23. Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38, 24. Romans 5:1,2, 25. See Romans 6:1; Jude 4, 26. 1 Peter 2:16, 27. Galatians 2:20, 28. Romans 3:31; 1 John 4:19, 29. Ephesians 2:10, 30. 1 Corinthians 15:10, 31. Acts 15:1,2,10, 32. Galatians 2:4, 33. Galatians 5:1, 34. Galatians 5:4, 35. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:3-6

- Roger E. Dickson