

GOD'S GRACE

God's grace is God's nature. Grace is the fabric of which God is. Jesus' apostle John wrote that "God is love." In that statement, John identified God's nature, that character-quality that best characterizes God. Grace, everywhere you find it, is kindness. Grace is good-will, that is, a good desire toward whomever Grace is directed. The Grace found in the world is produced by God's nature. Mankind, made in the image of God, should be expected to have some kindness.

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome. Thank you for listening to this program.

We live in a world where unsmiling sternness is valued. Bickering and quarreling about one's rights has become the trademark of committed persons. That kind of unkindness is glorified! The Bible says, "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." ([Ephesians 4:26-27 ESV](#)) Jesus said this, "You know that our ancestors were told, "Do not murder" and "A murderer must be brought to trial." But I promise you that if you are angry with someone, you will have to stand trial. If you call someone a fool, you will be taken to court. And if you say that someone is worthless, you will be in danger of the fires of hell. So if you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God." ([Matthew 5:21-24 CEV](#))

According to Jesus, before we worship God, we need to attempt a peaceful relationship with those around us. Jesus' inspired apostle Paul put it this way, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." ([Romans 12:14-21 ESV](#)) Embarrassment is the only harm you should cause someone who is in the wrong! This is "Grace" in action!

When Grace saturates a human being then everything that issues from that person's hands or mouth springs from that kindness. However, it is true that even great anger can spring from great Grace, great goodwill! That's right! If a person loves deeply, then that person cares deeply. If that person deeply loves you, then he or she cares about you, what you do and say, and what happens to you.

One day while overlooking the city of Jerusalem, Jesus said this about the people of Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37 ESV) Jesus cared deeply about the people of Jerusalem. But not just Jerusalem, Jesus cared deeply for all mankind! That's right! Jesus had the grace of God in Him.

On another occasion, "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, [Jesus] drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." (John 2:13-17 ESV) Great grace, great love, great care produces great zeal for the ones you love.

The reason that a father or mother will instruct their children in the way they should behave is because of their great love for the children. The reason the parents will discipline their children, even with negative punishment, is because of their great love. Great grace sometimes fashions a whip of cords! My own mother fashioned a switch from a nearby bush!

Everything that God commands and everything that God forbids springs from His great love! That's right! The inspired author of the New Testament book of Hebrews put it this way. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated,

then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but [God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." ([Hebrews 12:5-10 ESV](#))

The God of all Grace, the God of all creation, could not bear to do nothing about sin! God had to act! His nature of Grace demanded it! God's action toward sin had to be twofold. On the one hand, God formed a whip! God had to penalize sin! His great grace, His great care for humans demanded that He act against sin.

On the other hand, God had to open His arms to the repentant! God had to provide a way to save His creation from the penalty. God has stated the penalty of disobedience many times through the centuries. The penalty is death! (Romans 6:23)

In the beginning, God gave permission to the first man and woman to eat of any tree in the beautiful Garden God had created, except one. God warned the first couple, "the day you eat of it, (that is, the day you disobey me) you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:17) The penalty for sin, the penalty for disobedience is death. The word "Death" means "separation." The penalty for sin is separation, separation from the life-giving tree of life, separation from God the life-giver.

The Bible informs us of two deaths. There is the first death brought on by Adam and Eve. And there is the second death. The first death is the separation of the human spirit from the human body. Solomon put it this way, "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." ([Ecclesiastes 12:7 ESV](#)) The body goes one way; the spirit goes the other way!

Every day we who are alive see this happening in the world. We see human spirits departing from their human bodies, leaving the bodies with us, dead. However, the Bible teaches that there is a worse condition; there is a second death, a second separation that will be made.

Many of the early Christians died the first death because of their faith in Christ. Toward the end of the first century, Jesus spoke to His old friend and apostle, John. John was to send encouragement for Jesus' suffering followers. Jesus said

to them, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death." (Revelation 2:10-11 ESV)

Jesus told His followers that they should be faithful through the first death, and they would not be hurt by the second death. In fact, those faithful Christians would not experience the second death, if they remained faithful throughout the first death. Jesus' apostle Paul wrote about the suffering that Christians may experience in this world. Paul wrote, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ESV)

Although the vast majority of humanity will suffer the first death because of Adam's transgression, God's Grace has prepared a way of salvation that enables the gracious God to save us from the second death, and still be a Just Judge. Forgiveness is God's "way of salvation."

But can "forgiveness" ever be justified? Is it proper for a Just Judge to set aside the law and say to a condemned person, "I forgive you"? Who can save a person from the penalty of sin simply by saying, "I forgive you"? God has received this power to save. He received that power from the obedience of His only begotten son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' apostle Paul said that he was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16) The story of the cross is the gospel of Christ. Jesus' obedient death at the cross gave His Father the "power" to forgive. When Jesus died for our sins it gave His Heavenly Father the "power" to save. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, (the good news of the cross) for it is the power of God unto salvation."

When a sinful person believes this good news that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for his sins on the cross, then that sinner can repent of his sins, confess his faith, and reenact the news by allowing someone to bury him in a watery grave and raise him up a forgiven man, woman, or boy or girl! In the first gospel sermon

ever preached Jesus' apostle Peter told a large crowd of believers, "Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (forgiveness) of your sins." (Acts 2:38)

The God of all Grace was gracious in sending His Son to die on behalf of all mankind. Are you a sinner who seeks the forgiveness God offers? Visit a church of Christ near you and receive God's great Grace of forgiveness.