

GRACE – OUR ONLY HOPE

INTRO – *show slide*

Definitions of grace:

- *“A favour rendered by one who need not do so”*
- *“An immunity or exemption; a reprieve”*
- *“Divine love and protection bestowed freely on people”*
- *“The state of being protected or sanctified by the favour of God”*
- *“An excellence or power granted by God”*

In Italian, the word for **Free** is **Gratis** which is where we get the word **GRACE**

UNGRACE

We all like a good bargain?

Grace is technically *something for nothing*.

Q) *What is the opposite of grace?*

UN-GRACE, DIS-GRACE, INGRATE, UNGRACIOUS

Q) *Does our world operate on grace?*

- Children learn about rewards – *if you’re good, you’ll get a treat*
- Employees work hard – *Put in the hours and you’ll get promoted*
- The Israelites obeyed – *If you obey, I will bless, sin and I will curse*
- Christians become legalistic – *Don’t wear earrings or skirts above the knee*

**Everything we are taught, “*work hard & you’ll be ok*” doesn’t rely on grace
Everything inside of us says “*I must earn the right...*” Even Christians!**

Q) *Do you feel that Grace is too good to be true?*

Q) *Do you still try and earn God’s love?* – praying more, reading more...

Sin severed that innate understanding that *we are loved by God*

BY WORKS NOT BY GRACE

Q) *How many feel they can have a day off?*

We feel guilty. Even the Sabbath rest is an act of grace:

J John said on Twitter:

“REST WELL FRIENDS – its Sunday/Shabbat. Remember if your output exceeds your input then your upkeep will be your downfall.”

God’s grace is good for our health!

How on earth are you ever going to earn God’s favour?!? **WE NEED GRACE!!!**

Frederick Buechner once said:

“People are prepared for everything except for the fact that beyond the darkness of their blindness there is a great light. They are prepared to go on breaking their backs ploughing the same old field until the cows come home without seeing, until they stub their toes on it, that there is a treasure buried in that field...They are prepared for a God who strikes hard bargains but not for a God who gives as much for an hour’s work as for a day’s. They are prepared for a mustard-seed kingdom of God no bigger than the eye of a newt but not for the great canopy it becomes with birds in its branches singing Mozart. They are prepared for the potluck supper at their local church but not for the marriage supper of the Lamb...”

True?

Something in us cannot handle grace very well.

We would rather strive than believe.

IS GRACE UNFAIR?

Yes!

How many of us would choose to forgive if God hadn’t given us the example?

- The thief on the cross said, *“Remember me”* - Jesus did!
- Israel sinned constantly (e.g. Hosea) - God forgave them!
- David killed and cheated – God was merciful!
- The Prodigal Son grovels – The Father throws a party!
- Saul persecuted – Jesus forgave him!

READ Matthew 20:1-16:

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³“About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵So they went.

“He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing.

⁶About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷“Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'

⁹"The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹²'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

¹³"But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?' ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

¹⁶"So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (NIV)

**How many of you would pay a builder in full for an hour's work?
Grace is UNFAIR – Thank God!**

Philip Yancey in "What's so amazing about grace?" says:

*"The **problem of pain** meets its match in the **scandal of grace**"*

GRACE'S IMPORTANCE

GRACE is the important theme of the NT.

GRACE is the most powerful force along with LOVE.

- **1 Peter 5:10** – "God of all grace"
- **James 4:6** – "Grace to the humble"
- **Hebrew 12:15** – Don't "miss God's grace"
- **Romans 1:5** – "received God's grace"
- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - "by grace you have been saved, through faith"

LIFE CHANGING

What's the point talking about grace, if it doesn't change us?

Philip Yancey says:

"I have just read a 13 page treatise on grace in the New Catholic Encyclopaedia, which has cured me of any desire to dissect grace and display its insides. I do not want the thing to die...In sum, I would far rather convey grace than explain it"

GRACE calls us to ACT:

1. FAITH - By faith we must receive it – Romans 5:1-2:

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (NIV)

2. GIVE – We are rich, so let’s give it out - Matthew 10:8:

“Freely you have received, freely give” (NIV)

3. FORGIVE – C.S. Lewis said: “to be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you”.

Jesus is a lot clearer, when He says: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” **Matthew 6:13-15 (NIV)**

CONCLUDE

God wants the world to be transformed through Grace-filled Christians

The world needs it!

We need it!

God gives it for free!

Don’t pray for it, TRUST IN HIM THAT YOU HAVE IT!

Allow the Holy Spirit to change you as you learn the TRUTH

FILM CLIP: on grace and forgiveness

Let’s pray that:

- **We accept His grace**
- **Know His grace**
- **Let in Grace**
- **Give out His grace – The Gospel!**