

When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day's pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives such a gift anyway—that is a good picture of God's unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God. (G.W. Knight)

As we paid nothing for God's eternal love and nothing for the Son of His love, and nothing for His Spirit and our grace and faith, and nothing for our eternal rest...What an astonishing thought it will be to think of the immeasurable difference between our deservings and our receivings. O, how free was all this love, and how free is this enjoyed glory...So then let "Deserved" be written on the floor of hell but on the door of heaven and life, "The Free Gift". (Richard Baxter)

1. We humbly bow in response to God's grace

- a. To lay face down is an act of humility
 - i. submission, surrender, and weakness
 - ii. Totally vulnerable
 - iii. Risky
 - iv. Placing oneself lower than the other one, effectively exalting the person to whom one bows
 1. Boss' desks are usually higher than visitors' chairs
 2. Higher is greater, Lower is lesser: corporate ladder analogy
- b. ANE sign of reverence
 - i. Ruth is showing Boaz reverence and submission
 - ii. Ruth is exalting Boaz in praise and gratitude
- c. Humility is the response to grace
 - i. Notice that is Boaz's kindness that leads Ruth to lower herself in humility
 - ii. The godly response to God's grace toward us is humility, too
 1. Exodus 34:6-8 – Moses responds to God's gracious self-revelation by prostrating himself in humble submission
 2. Deut 8:16-18 – notice why God gave the Israelites manna in the desert, his grace was intended to humble them
 3. 1 Pet 5:5-7 – we are to live humbly before God and each other *because* God cares for us!
- d. Pride is essentially standing against something in comparison or in competitiveness
 - i. The Flesh, opposed to the Holy Spirit in Scripture, is that part of us that works for its own interests and bases its success upon its *perceived* performance (determined in different ways for different people).
 1. For example:
 - a. Flesh says, "I am worthy of these good things *because* I am beautiful and attractive"
 - i. So I'm going seize my beauty and attractiveness
 - ii. I'm going to belittle your comparative lack of beauty
 - b. Flesh says, "I am worthy of these good things *because* I am wise, wealthy, or strong"
 - i. So I'm going to seize my wisdom, wealth, and strength
 - ii. I'm going to belittle your lack of wisdom, wealth, or strength
 - ii. The Flesh lives and breathes on pride, presumptuously expecting to be served, to be honored, to be given good things, *because it thinks that I deserve them*
 1. We are presumptuous and assume that we are good, not merely good but that we are better, that we are more important than another. That we are worthy and we're going to let the person who has sinned against us, or provoked us, know that we are worthy!
 - a. Tests:

- i. Irritability – “I am worthy of comfort because...”
 - ii. Complaining – “I am worthy but nobody notices how worthy I am”
 - iii. Gossip – “They aren’t worthy of good things because...”
 - iv. Critical Spirit – “I am more worthy, but they get the good things”
 - v. Unforgiveness – “I am worthy and they must pay for taking my good things away.”
2. We’re still trying to present evidence to everyone (including ourselves) to defend that ultimate verdict that we are worthy because we have performed what is right.

2. We know that we are unworthy of God’s kindness

- a. “on what account...”
 - i. Ruth is confused as to her worthiness of such grace
 - ii. When we receive an expensive gift, beyond what is expected for an occasion, we usually respond, “I can’t accept this...this is too much...I can’t believe it.”
 - 1. This does not mean, however, that we don’t accept it, since it brings joy to the giver, too!
 - 2. So, if anyone wants to give Pastor Richard a 1967 Corvette 427 because it would bring you joy, then you are free to go ahead and do that.
- b. The godly response to God’s grace is unworthiness
 - i. Gen 32:10 – Jacob proclaim his unworthiness to Gods’ covenant blessing
 - ii. 1 Tim 1:15 –Paul’s proclamation that he is the chief of sinners
- c. Grace, by its nature, is receiving good when we do not deserve it
 - i. **G**od’s
 - ii. **R**ewards
 - iii. **A**t
 - iv. **C**hrist’s
 - v. **E**xpense

3. We sit in awe of His generosity

- a. Ruth is startled, awestruck at Boaz’s grace upon grace
 - i. Mirrors: Hate ‘em? How can God love me?
 - ii. Grace is so opposed to the way that the human heart works that we are shocked when grace is truly grace
 - 1. Ruth is shocked because she is truly humble, however.
 - 2. A proud person would not be shocked, but would be presumptuous (see Ananias and Sapphira from Acts 5)
- b. The godly response to God’s grace is *awe-filled gratitude*
 - i. Roman 11:33-36 – Paul is filled with awe at the awesome plan of God’s grace
 - ii. Heb 12:28 – God is GOD! Awe-full response of gratitude for an unshakable Kingdom of God.
 - iii. Col 3:15-17 – Thanks is mentioned 3 times upon reflection of the Gospel application to life!

4. The Gospel of Grace humbles us

- a. The ancient world: *hubris* is the cause of all the problems of society...pride, too high a view of themselves
- b. The modern world: lack of self-esteem is the root of all of our problems

- i. The basis of education, social work, etc. is that people misbehave for the lack of self-esteem. Wife-beaters, murderers, crime is all because of a lack of self-esteem.
 - 1. Lauren Slater, New York Times Magazine, published from the article: “The Trouble with Self-Esteem”
 - a. There is no evidence that low self-esteem is a big problem in society: “Last year alone, there were three withering studies of self-esteem released in the United States, all of which had the same central message. People with high self-esteem pose a greater threat to those around them than people with low self-esteem and feeling bad about yourself is not the source of any our country’s biggest, most expensive social problems.”
 - 2. With the “low self-esteem” view you don’t have to make any moral judgments upon those who are problems in a society. All you have to do is support them, lift them up, give them someone to talk to.
 - 3. In the ancient view, you clamped down on those who were problems in the society, you called them “bad” and locked them up.
- c. The Gospel: the answer to all of our problems is not higher self-esteem, nor insignificance, but it is Christ esteem, which both emboldens and humbles us.
 - i. Our confidence is in Christ, who stands face to face with God *for us* (v4).
 - ii. One of the most used words in Scriptures to explain our position in Christ is the word, “chosen.” That’s a grace filled word: You were chosen by God’s grace alone. Spurgeon writes:

“I believe in the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love.”

Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

Conclusion:

Do we realize the import of the grace which we have been shown by the Holy God?! Do you see the amazing kindness that God has given to us in redeeming us?! You and I were enemies of God, foolish and arrogant, usurpers and mutinous scoundrels of His holy crown. To Him we were dead in our trespasses and sins, deserving only wrath and the just retribution of the Almighty God. Our sins were not pinkish, they were scarlet stains of filth on His holy creation. That is the truth revealed to us in Scripture. But thank God that it doesn’t end there! For though our sins were as scarlet, they have been washed as white as snow! Though we were enemies of God, He has brought us near to Himself as sons, cleansing our hearts of sin and remedying His holy justice by taking the blow Himself through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! Behold the grace of God, evoking humility and awe and deep spiritual groans of relief and shouts of joyful gratitude! How can it be that You, my God, would die for me?! Amazing love, indeed!

Do you want to cultivate humility in your life? Look at the grace of God in Christ Jesus! Do you want your pride to diminish? Look at the gospel of Jesus Christ, the glorious great news of the gloriously gracious God who sacrificed His own Son upon that cursed cross. Grace upon grace upon grace leads to the response of awe-struck humility toward the self-effacing God who poured Himself out for you and for me. There is nothing that you and I could do to deserve it. We are loved, not lovable, in the sense that it was anything in the beauty of our spirit, mind, or body that compelled the Almighty God to love me. We are loved because God loves us by His own unmoved choice to glorify Himself! His choice of you and of me is rooted in His glorious grace and mercifully loving character. It is all of His doing and of His grace. When Jesus hung on that cursed cross, it was you and I that put him there, but it was His gracious love that kept Him there...for your benefit. Does this grace humble you? Then bow in reverent worship and rejoice in the glorious grace of God: You are more deeply sinful than you can even imagine and yet you are more deeply loved than you can ever dare to hope. In Christ alone will I glory.