

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Where can I go to learn about grace?

Where can I go to learn about grace? - posted by theopenlife, on: 2008/8/7 2:43

I have been asked what resources I recommend to people trying to understand the Doctrines of Grace, otherwise known by the pejorative term, Calvinism. Sovereign grace is the belief that God has freedom to apply saving grace and all of it's benefits to the heart of any person He chooses, without regard for what they would or would not do on His behalf. In other words, the reason why someone becomes suddenly willing to repent and believe the gospel is because God has first moved on them to irreversibly desire His means of salvation. Moreover, His choice of a person has nothing to do with foreseen willingness on their part to believe. It is purely His love motivated by grace in Christ. These doctrines are basically summed up as the following:

1. Sovereign Grace was necessary
2. Sovereign Grace was promised
3. Sovereign Grace was purchased
4. Sovereign Grace was applied
5. Sovereign Grace is preserved

They are more traditionally known by the acronym, TULIP.

T - Total Depravity of Man
 U - Unconditional Election of Sinners to Salvation
 L - Limited Intention of the Atonement / Definite Atonement
 I - Irresistible Grace / Effectual Calling
 P - Perseverance & Preservation of the Saints

So, if this seems like gibberish to you, then now is the time to consider the following resources.

First, do I recommend John Piper's series on the subject? Not exactly. It's not the most informative explanation of the Doctrines of Grace I've heard, but it is edifying. I wish he had laid the facts out clearly and with many scriptures. Instead of using Piper's whole series as the starting point, I recommend listening to just the first and last tracks. This will give the impression that "Calvinism" is not cold, dead, or purely intellectual, nor does it necessarily produce pride. Belief in God's sovereign grace is a fire of truth and a cause for humility.

(http://www.desiringgod.org/download.php?file/media/audio/seminars/2008_TULIP/20080307_1.mp3) Tulip Part 1, Introduction - .mp3

(http://www.desiringgod.org/download.php?file/media/audio/seminars/2008_TULIP/20080315_9.mp3) Tulip Part 9, Ten Effects of Believing the Five Points of Calvinism - .mp3

(<http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Seminars/>) the whole series. Scroll down to the TULIP section.

For someone who wants a more clear explanation, I recommend the series done by Cornelius Pronk. Each episode is fifteen minutes:

(<http://theopenlife.blogspot.com/2008/02/pronks-doctrines-of-grace-mini-series.html>) Cornelius Pronk - Doctrines of Grace mini-series

Next, I recommend reading this chapter from A. W. Pink's "The Sovereignty of God":

(http://www.reformed.org/books/pink/pink_sov_04.html) Pink - The Sovereignty of God in Man's Salvation

And last, I would carefully read Nathan Pitchford's "List", which is almost nothing but scriptures demonstrating that these doctrines are biblical and can settle disputes about 'problem verses':

(<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/gracelist.html>) Nathan Pitchford's Categorized Scripture List

So, those are my thoughts on where to begin. Oh, and one more thing. Read all of Romans 1-3, 8-11, and Ephesians 1-

2 this week.

God's grace comfort you, and be the movement and end of all your endeavors for holiness.

Re: Where can I go to learn about grace? - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/8/7 14:52

Ro 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Ro 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Ro 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Ga 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Ga 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Ga 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Ga 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Ga 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Ga 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Let us not forget the means of grace. Let us not forget the appropriation of grace.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Blessings!

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2008/8/7 17:01

Amen, Roger. God, who ordains specific persons to salvation, has also ordained the means through which they receive it: repentance, faith, holiness, perseverance. He does not always ordain that they understand it.

Re: Where can I go to learn about grace? - posted by clintstone (), on: 2008/9/5 20:21

if you want to search out someone who is considered to be of the best and foremost evangelists and theologians. Go to charles finneys' systematic theology , he was not afraid to call out the likes of johnathon edwards and calvins' theories of gracious ability and natural ability and how calvin and edwards had some things wrong with thier difinitions of doctrine. c harles goes over many scriptures and goes through everything in theology that he knew. He designed his systematic the ology book for his students at oberlin college of which he was the president of. the book is difficult to read but once you get used to how he keeps very subjective and stays right in the center of his examinations and how scripture deals with our nature and relations perfectly . this book is most excellent in steering the truely hungry soul in the right direction in th eology. it is called Finney's Systematic Theology. bethany house publishers

Re: Where can I go to learn about grace? - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/9/5 20:40

Surely these must be wonderful resources. You can read all the books about grace and don't get a drop of it. Once you get grace and try to get hold of it, it escapes you and evaporates back to heaven. Grace can only be received but not kept.

Here is a proven method to obtain grace:

Be humble.

Re: Where can I go to learn about grace? - posted by mamaluk, on: 2008/9/5 20:55

Quote:
-----... Once you get grace and try to get hold of it, it escapes you and evaporates back to heaven. Grace can only be received but not kept.

??? Can you shed further light on this??

By the way, A.Pink 's Sovereignty of God in Man's Salvation is a gem, to me anyhow.

In Christ,

Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2008/9/5 21:08

Thank you for sharing, brother.

These teachings of Scripture have been such a blessing to my weary soul. Praise the Lord for His power to overcome wickedness in the hearts of men and turns our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh that love Christ.

Re: Where can I go to learn about grace? - posted by TrueWitness, on: 2008/9/6 12:04

To answer your question, here is a website that has ample resources concerning God's sovereign grace and reformed theology in general:

<http://www.monergism.com/>

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/9/6 18:04

Hello Mamaluk,

Quote:
----- ... Once you get grace and try to get hold of it, it escapes you and evaporates back to heaven. Grace can only be received but not kept.

Quote:
-----??? Can you shed further light on this??

The way I see it is that God extends grace to man but it always rests with God. It cannot exist independent of Him. The moment I look at myself and say "Let me store up the grace that is given to me it and take it for granted, it is not longer grace but presumption.

This was Hamon's error. He presumed on the favor of king Xerxes because of his past credentials and was terribly mistaken.

Jude also spoke of those who presumed on God's grace in error and turned to antinomism.

The best thing to do when you receive grace is to extend it to others before it rots.

Here is a positive example:

Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. 33With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. 34There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Grace was poured out into the church and resulted in joyful giving - which resulted in even more grace!

I hope I have answered your question.

Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2008/9/6 23:01

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Thank you Narrowpath for the clarification.

I was a bit confused by your post in light of this thread. There can be no debate or argument from any of us to think that grace can be produced or attained by ourselves. It's all too clear through out Scripture that grace comes only from above .

I am however, confused by "grace only be received by not kept". If that's the case, we all tread on water, if not egg shells . Grace is not grace if it's dispensed in bits and pieces. The doctrine of grace is laid out throughout the new testament, especially the Pauline epistles, that all of our(the redeemed) all, from salvation till we meet with our Lord, is sustained and maintained by that grace, ordaining the Father's mercy, power of freedom from sin(s), the forgiveness via Christ's advocacy, even to the delivery of God's chastisement via the Holy Spirit..every bit of God's Providence that entails a true believer's life, in my mind, is lived within this permanent grace, based on the finished work of Christ, our Saviour.

How is it presumption to think that this grace is being stored up? If we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and if we are told that we live in Christ and that He lives in us by faith. We live in God's grace permanently. Grace is not being stored up, but we are kept/"stored" by this grace.

If this grace in Christ escapes us and evaporates (as you indicated in your first post)back to heaven, say when we sin, what else can carry our confession and prayers back to heaven for God to re-dispense grace to us? It has to be the grace in Christ, the same grace given through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, that enables our Father to hear our confessions, intercessions or prayers. In Romans, grace is explained very clearly throughout, as an assurance or enablement for the Christian's walk. the indwelling Spirit in a believer itself, is a proof of that grace, unless one thinks that the Holy Spirit in us also evaporates back to heaven every time we sin. Without this grace, there can be no perpetual forgiveness, 1 John 1:9, won't be effective without the permanent state of grace in the believer's life!?

Romans 5:20

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

One should change this perhaps to, where sin abounds, pray for grace to come back?

A Christian rises in the morning and lays in bed at night, walks and breathes in God's grace. I for one can not live one moment in this life without the grace. Or knowing that I have to maintain this God-given grace, to even think of that is frightful. I'd have to be the single most miserable "Christian" to have to play catch with some evaporating grace every time I sin or fail.

In your example of Haman, he was dealt with man's "grace". Naturally, man does behave as "indian-giver" a lot of times,

pardon this expression. Man's grace does evaporate quickly, every time.

Antinomianism? How can someone who has truly tasted the grace of Christ be an antinomian. Would the Holy Spirit allow those who He indwells live on abusing God's grace in their entire lifetime? Impossible!! I do, however, realize that many of the hyper-calvinists for years have brought about such an impression. Those will be no different than any other false believers or hypocrites. But that still doesn't mean that grace upon those professing believers comes and goes out of them. I'd see them as those who have never truly come to faith at all, though thinking to themselves that they are of Christ's.

Surely, our Lord's grace must not be willfully abused, when we sin and continue to abuse that grace, we quench the Holy Spirit, we grieve God. But grace does not evaporate back to heaven, this grace by the Holy Spirit may wait upon or bring about our repentance some time, this same grace may chastise us, and it may even withdraw blessings for a long period of time, etc.etc....but leaving us? I have trouble agreeing to that.

Without God's grace in Christ, how can we repent when we sin, assuming we lose it every time we sin? What carries our repentance to His throne?

By grace are we saved through faith. And I believe, it's by the same grace do we live and breathe through faith in Christ Jesus, day by day by day..in the presence of this permanent grace shed by our Lord's Blood.

It's alright if you can't agree, remember that I know little, but this I know well, I, can not live one moment without knowing Romans 5:2

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we *stand*, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Yes, I do believe, if we live in Christ and He lives in us, we live in His permanent grace. For Christ is that grace.

(edited a lot of typos)

Just some thoughts, sorry so long

In Christ,

Margaret

Re: - posted by Christinyou (), on: 2008/9/7 4:53

Is this what you were saying?

Quote:

""""grace can only be received but not kept""

Meaning, God is the only one who dispenses The Grace of God. We can do nothing to keep Grace, as others try to keep salvation, by works.

You cannot obtain Grace or Salvation by works, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2:4-10 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

In Christ: Phillip

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/9/7 11:06

I do not mean to hijack this post to digress into this topic, but I think we hit an important point.

The grace I am talking about is the continuous grace which can increase to the degree we are willing to abandon ourselves to God, to serve and walk in humility or decrease to the level we neglect the same. There are people who are able to explain in perfect terms salvation by grace but they "keep" or encapsulate it since some time in the past when they made a decision for Christ.

There is the factual and foundational grace as pointed out in the middle chapters of Romans and the verses you mentioned but grace must be also practical, living and active. This grace is described in Romans 12. Here Christ's grace manifests itself in gifts and ministries that build the body of Christ and brings blessing and freedom to others around you from their sin and error otherwise it is ineffective.

Yes, the foundational grace that we once have grasped will evaporate if it does not work itself out in a new and living way.

Grace is given to us for purposes far beyond our own salvation.

God's grace is God's investment in you and it must be fruitful and multiply in you and others. Grace cannot be kept but can be cultivated. Remember the manager who buried his one talent and return the same back to God? His talent was taken away.

The unmerciful servant in Mat 18 had received genuine grace from God but did not extend it to others. He ended up to be tortured.

narrowpath

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/9/7 17:30

Quote:
-----The grace I am talking about is the continuous grace which can increase to the degree we are willing to abandon ourselves to God,

Do you know that this is also the Roman Catholic view of grace as well?

God's grace is many things, but is primarily the gift of regeneration to believe in the actual events that produce our salvation-

Christ's death for sinners
Christ's burial
Christ's resurrection for our justification

This all stems from God's grace, and does not change one iota if we surrender to it or not. It cannot change as these are historical facts.

I think this is what you were getting at in the second paragraph of your reply?

Quote:
-----Yes, the foundational grace that we once have grasped will evaporate if it does not work itself out in a new and living way.

No, again this is a Roman Catholic, semi-Pelagian view and is in contrast to many Scriptures. The following being one of them-

Philippians 1:6 And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion** at the day of

Jesus Christ.

Grace comes to us, as does the Gospel. Grace works in us almost in a hidden way, renewing our desires etc. so that what we once desired, we now despise. This is an ongoing process and not a one time event.

Grace begins the new life and grace completes it.

And what is God's grace but Christ Himself given for us and now living in the hearts of those whom He has regenerated by the Spirit and Word.

Quote:
-----God's grace is God's investment in you and it must be fruitful and multiply in you and others. Grace cannot be kept but can be cultivated. Remember the manager who buried his one talent and return the same back to God? His talent was taken away. The unmerciful servant in Mat 18 had received genuine grace from God but did not extend it to others. He ended up to be tortured.

God's grace will make itself fruitful. A person who is truly justified will indeed go through sanctification, and ultimately be perfected in glorification.

I agree with you that "it must be", but "it must be" because of God's power, and not our efforts. If our efforts are what determine the grace of God and how it is or is not working, then why the Cross? For it would be easier to give us a spark, or helping hand so that we could keep the Law.

Though you are not outright saying this, you in a sense are making the Cross of little or no value. For if Christ's death and faith in that death are not enough to save a person, to propitiate God's wrath, and ultimately be the grounds for glory, then we MUST add something to it to make it work.

And those parables you allude to must be taken in the light of what was to come a few chapters later, namely the crucifixion of Christ.

Were not the stewards and keepers the Jewish religious people who had the revelation of God, but buried it for their own Laws?

Don't forget that the Gospels must be read in light of the rest of the New Testament, and almost read backwards (from the Cross back) or else, you begin to make a moral lesson out of Christianity.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/9/7 18:36

Hi Roaringlamb

I do not diminish the cross, you are twisting my words around. I am arrested by the wonderful events that took place on the cross and it makes requirements to me and grace enables me to fulfil them. I am saved for a purpose not as an end in itself. Grace is not an automatism. I work out my salvation with fear and trembling. What is wrong with works of faith? Why are we so afraid of works? Obedience to the Holy Spirit will cause me to do the works Christ has foreordained.

How come that there are so vast differences in Christians that some are full of grace and abounding life others are stale, boring and have no fire of the Spirit? We may have had the same experience of salvation.

For centuries Christians have overemphasized on personal salvation by grace. This love and grace has to be spread by us so that salvation can come to more people until the fullness of the Gentiles are in. We can hasten the Lord's return. Paul always addressed an assembly of saints and Jude 3 expresses the salvation we share. The Lord will for sure accomplish his work here on earth and I want to be part of it. For this reason we go into the streets and preach the gospel. I make myself a fool for Christ. Salvation grace grants me a place to run the race. Still I must run - though in his power.

By the way, would you mind to pray for me? I am off to Cairo tomorrow on business and I hope I will find some opportunities to witness.

narrowpath

Re: - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2008/9/7 21:09

Quote:
-----By the way, would you mind to pray for me? I am off to Cairo tomorrow on business and I hope I will find some opportunities to witness.

The most important part of your whole entry, and of course I will pray for you and your hearers.

Re: - posted by narrowpath, on: 2008/9/8 1:33

thanks roaringlamb

narrowpath