

GUILT, GRACE, AND GRATITUDE

STUDY TWO

Giving Thanks for God's Grace

Galatians 1:6–10; 5:1, 13–15

Grace lies at the root of forgiveness. The stronger we are in grace, the stronger we are in forgiving.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN American households, the aroma of Thanksgiving is unmistakable. For hours, the delicious smell of slow-roasting turkey fills the whole house with anticipation. Spiced stuffing, sweet potato casserole, green beans, pumpkin pie, and Grandma's homemade yeast rolls tantalize the senses. When Mom finally calls the family for dinner, wide-eyed children and adults gather around the festive table, their mouths watering. Dad prays and the feast begins.

Plates are piled high, glasses clink, and conversation flows as everyone savors the meal until satisfied. Then, it's time for giving thanks. One-by-one, family members serve up words of gratitude to the Lord for a year's worth of blessings.

Here's an interesting thought. *What if, this Thanksgiving, King David dropped by?* What thanks do you think he would offer? Based on our previous study of Psalm 32, David would likely thank God for His forgiveness. In somber tones, he would recount his affair with Bathsheba, his scheme against her husband, and the scandal that rocked his family and nation. He would choke back tears as he spoke of his unworthiness, and yet God still forgave him.

What if the apostle Paul came to dinner too? Staining his pre-conversion record was the blood of Christians he had hunted down. Like David, Paul would be grateful for forgiveness, but no doubt, he would also point to the fount from which God's forgiveness flows—God's grace.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Ask the Lord to ground you more securely in His grace as you study passages from Paul's epistles in this *Searching the Scriptures* study.

Father, take my hand through Your Word, and lead me to Your clear and refreshing pools of grace, where I can dive into Your wonders. Enhance my worship with understanding and fill my heart with a deep gratitude for all You have done for me. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The most common definition of *grace* is “undeserved favor.” People show undeserved favor to others in all kinds of ways, from giving a stranded motorist a lift to the gas station to forgiving a debt that someone can't repay. But grace on a human scale is infinitesimal compared to divine grace.

In God's spiritual economy, no scarcity of grace exists, only abundance—more than enough to cover all the world's sins. “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,” Paul declared (Romans 5:20 NASB). When Peter asked Jesus whether he should forgive a person as many as seven times, Jesus replied, “seventy times seven!” (Matthew 18:22). Jesus was calculating in grace terms. There is no limit to forgiveness when we draw from God's limitless reservoir of grace.

All the blessings of the gospel stream from God's grace. Through Christ's death and resurrection, sinners receive by faith a righteousness from God that they don't deserve and can't achieve. Paul tirelessly proclaimed this message . . . and fiercely defended it.



Observation: The Gospel Minus Grace Equals No Gospel

In the battleground of the first-century church, the primary enemies of grace were Jewish legalists. They insisted that, to be truly saved, Gentile believers must practice Jewish rituals, such as circumcision, purity rites, and holy days.



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These legalists won over some Galatian converts, which prompted Paul to write an urgent letter of caution. What alarm bells did Paul ring in *Galatians 1:6–7*? Write down the main verbs Paul used to describe what the Galatians were wrongly doing.

According to *1:8–9*, what strong rebuke did Paul issue *twice*?

What tone do you pick up in Paul's words? How might his readers have felt? Why do you think he wrote this way?



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Giving Thanks for God's Grace

Galatians 1:6–10; 5:1, 13–15

Some might have been offended by Paul's sharp rebuke. What did he say in *Galatians 1:10* to defend himself?

*Christ's work is finished work. We're not required to finish what's already been finished.
The Galatian Christians believed that until a group of legalists moved in.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Interpretation: What Is the Gospel of Grace?

In the *interpretation* section, we seek to know how Paul's original readers would have understood the passage. Paul exhorted the Galatians to beware of a "different" gospel, one that "pretends to be the Good News but is not the Good News at all" (*Galatians 1:6–7*).

What Good News had Paul already preached to the Galatians, according to *2:16*? How is a person saved?



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According to *Galatians 3:13*, what did Jesus do for us on the cross?

The Good News is that God has come to our rescue because we couldn't rescue ourselves. He did that when He gave His Son to die for us, who paid the complete penalty for our sins.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

On the cross, Christ did all the work to save us because, in our sinning state, we were helpless to save ourselves. Through faith, we receive what we don't deserve—a righteousness from God we could never match with our own efforts (3:6–7). *That's grace!*

Legalists, however, “deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ” (1:7). According to 2:4, what did the Jewish legalists try to force on Christians?

Under their spell, what were Galatian believers trying to do, according to 4:10 and 5:3–4? What were the spiritual consequences?



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In summary, put in your own words the “different gospel” Jewish legalists were teaching. How is this message anti-grace?

Put in your own words the pro-grace gospel that Paul preached.

The grace of God provides not only rescue but the warm blanket of righteousness and the security of an eternal home. We receive salvation, not because we earned it but because God, in His grace, has declared it to be so. When will we get that clear? To turn from the gospel of grace, we turn from the God of grace. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: My Poverty and God's Riches

In the *correlation* phase, let's see how Paul illustrated grace using a wealth metaphor. In financial terms, God is rich in righteousness and we are poor. None of our good deeds amount to much because “we all fall short of God's glorious standard” (Romans 3:23). In terms of personal righteousness, we don't have two cents to rub together.



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According to *2 Corinthians 8:9*, however, what did Jesus Christ do for us? How did He model grace?

In Christ, we are rich in His righteousness. How grateful we are!

The wealthy God of righteousness comes to abjectly poor people like you and like me, and He declares us righteous. That's marvelous news! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Application: My Gratitude for God's Grace

Thanking God for His blessings is not just for Thanksgiving Day. In the space below, thank God today for sending His Son to die for your sins, crediting His righteousness to your account, and calling you as His own.

What other aspects of God's grace from our study can you thank God for?



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Even though Christ bore our sins on the cross, legalists say God isn't satisfied. Faith in Christ isn't enough, and we must somehow do more to earn His favor. Legalists enslave us to the law from which Christ set us free by His grace.

If you sometimes fear that God isn't satisfied with you, how can you better rest securely in God's grace?

If Paul sat at your Thanksgiving table this year, what encouragement would he give you? How might he reassure you?

The gospel implores you to trust in Jesus alone, *resting completely* in His marvelous grace. Then, with a heart full of thanksgiving for your salvation through grace alone, you are free to live for God.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for redeeming me and receiving me in Christ as Your child. You have given me what I don't deserve and could never earn—a place in Your kingdom and a home with You for eternity. Only by Your grace am I accepted. Your grace sets me free to live for You and fulfill the calling You have given me. May I always be grateful for Your grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

