

Grace Notes: The Gift of Grace

Eph. 2:8 “For by **grace** are ye saved through faith;... **it is the gift of God:**”

Eph. 3:7 “...according to the **gift of the grace of God given** unto me....”

(A number of years ago, I heard this illustration from Evangelist John Van Gelderen that perfectly sums up the average believers' knowledge and experience of God's grace.) The story is told of a certain soldier in the Civil War who had been severely injured; too injured to support himself again. As a result of his war injuries, the former soldier lived in extreme poverty dressing in rags. One day, this soldier received a letter from President Abraham Lincoln. Problem was, he was illiterate, so he could not read the contents of the letter. This did not stop the soldier, though, from boasting to anyone who would listen of his receiving a letter from President Abraham Lincoln himself!

“The gospel of grace” (Acts 20:24) is one of the most defining blessings and differences of the New Testament from the Old Testament. What a surprise, then, that most Christians and preachers today are unaware of what “the gospel of grace” is! Like the poor, illiterate Civil War soldier, most believers focus on the **reception and recipients** of God's grace. By this I mean that we loudly proclaim how great it is to **receive** this letter/gift of grace from the president/God Himself. And we often emphasize how unworthy we, the **recipients**, are to receive God's grace; that grace is not earned, merited, or deserved. And all of this is true and important to know. However, **many believers and preachers are ignorant and illiterate concerning what grace actually is!** I was. And realizing how central the gospel of grace is to the New Testament era we live in, this illiteracy concerning God's grace is a huge, costly error that no believer should overlook! What have we missed? We have overlooked the **gift** itself.

Friend, what is grace? Yes, grace saves us (Eph. 2:8). Yes, grace is not worked for or earned or deserved (Eph. 2:9; Eph. 3:8). Yes, grace is a gift (Eph. 2:8). But when you open “the gift of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:8), what do you find? What is grace? Please don't miss this and please don't ever forget this crucial truth: **Grace is God's enablement.** That's the gift. How God's enablement is displayed may differ according to the need and situation. Another way to look at the gift of grace is by seeing grace as **the Christian's Leatherman.** When you open the gift of grace, you may at first wonder, “What is it?” like Israel did with God's gracious “manna” showered from heaven. That was my response the first time I saw a completely closed Leatherman. But as the gift is used and applied in your Christian life, the light dawns to the eternal applications to grace. Is a Leatherman scissors? Yes. Is it a knife? Yes. Is it a can opener? Yes. What is grace? Well, to the preacher, grace calls him to preach (Eph. 3:8), enables him to preach, guides him with the sheep, supplies his every need, and so much more. To the college student, grace guides the footsteps, empowers the spirit to witness, provides the finances, grants wisdom in studies and direction of life, and again, so much

more. To the mother, grace enables patience, wisdom, love, and so much more to the constant needs of her life and her children. To the man at work in a wicked world, grace emboldens a witness for Christ, empowers holiness and hard work, grants insight into the daily tasks, etc.... This, dear friends, is just a sampling of what grace is. God's grace is **God's enablement** for every believer in every area of your life at all times (II Cor. 9:8). Every good and right thing that you are as a believer is because of grace (I Cor. 15:10). To conclude, let's go back to the Civil War soldier.

One day, a man overheard the poor, illiterate Civil War soldier boasting of his letter from President Abraham Lincoln. The man asked to see the letter. As the man read the letter, he was shocked to find that the letter was actually a sizable pension from the government for the man's war injuries signed by Abraham Lincoln! The man had needlessly lived in poverty! And sadly many believers are needlessly living in poverty boasting about God's grace with "the gift of grace" mainly unwrapped and unopened in their daily lives. Oh, get the message out! Preach, teach, and testify of "the gospel of grace". Make it very simple and clear that **grace is God's enablement and the Christian's Leatherman!**