

## Week 4 Embracing Grace – Revealing Grace (Handout)

In the first three weeks of our study on grace I have focused on the word groups that from which the meaning of grace flows. Grace is the action of a person moved by love and compassion to help someone in need. We use the phrase “by grace” to communicate that the action was performed not out of obligation but rather out of love and compassion. Anything done “by grace” is by definition something that was not required, owed, or demandable. For grace to take root in our hearts we need to constantly remind ourselves that God has repeatedly acted out of love for us and generously showers us with “grace upon grace” (John 1:14-17). We can never speak of “earning” God’s grace, because true love is not meritable, it cannot be earned, nor is true love an obligation. True love can only be expressed in the freedom of the will. In freedom, God demonstrates his love for us by sending Christ.

Any blessing that God provides to us is “by grace.” We receive these blessings, not because God owes us, or because we have earned them. We receive them because God loves us. This week we turn our attention to *one* of the blessings we receive from God “by grace,” namely salvation. The central problem of humanity is the separation from God caused by our sin. The central hope of Christianity is the message of God’s grace.

### Romans 3:21-31

NIV	NASB	NKJV
21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.	21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,	<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <b>24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.</b>	22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <b>24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;</b>	<sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <b><sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,</b>
<b>25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.</b> He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.	<b>25 whom God displayed publicly as propitiation in His blood through faith.</b> This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.	<sup>25</sup> <b>whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith,</b> to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

### Justified, Redeemed, and Atoned by Grace

In this compact delivery, Paul describes what God has done (his action) through Christ by grace. What ever happened on the cross, it happened because of God’s grace, his steadfast love, mercy, compassion, and favor. What exactly happened on the cross? Let’s look at it carefully to understand what God’s grace has done for us.

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**(v21) But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (NASB)**

- NIV should read “Righteousness of God” as in NASB, NKJV....what is on display in this verse is something that demonstrates God’s righteousness, his uprightness, his integrity.
- Whatever is “made known” or “manifested” is demonstrated independently from THE Law (not law as NIV renders it), but which the Law and prophets both testify concerning.

**(v22) even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;**

- Difficult to translate...but probably should read something like: “...the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Christ toward all who believe, for there is no distinction”
- The “faithfulness of Christ” is a reference to his obedient life and submission to death.
- The actions of God that are on display benefit or are “for” “all those who believe.”

**(v23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

- The reason there is “no distinction” is that everyone, both Jew and Gentile, have sinned. (Rom 1-3:20)
- “the glory of God” is a reference to the glory of Adam bearing the “image of God” (Rom 1:21-23)

**(v24) and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**

- Whatever is happening in these verses, it happens as a “free gift of grace”
- We see two references to describe what Christ accomplished via the cross in this verse: justification and redemption.

**(v25) God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.**

- God did the presenting
- The third way to describe the event is a “sacrifice of atonement” that involved blood

**(v26-27) This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.**

- We return to the idea that the Christ event demonstrated something about God...it demonstrated his righteousness
- Righteous = was “just” ---punishing sin and the “justifier”---dealing with the problem of sin
- Again it is reinforced that these “benefits” are available to “those who have faith in Jesus” or even possibly “those who demonstrate the faith of Jesus”

### **Justified**

Justification is the verb form of righteousness. To be “justified” is to be “made righteous.” Made righteous = acquitted, cleared in God’s court-thus not “legal fiction” but true forgiveness. This does not mean that we are made virtuous or perfect...we will encounter “sanctification” later. Two confusions need to be discussed; the idea of “legal-fiction” and the idea of “imputed righteousness.”

### **Redeemed**

Redemption is a slavery image. Israel was redeemed from Egypt. Even though we were “bought with a price,” it doesn’t mean that God paid a ransom to someone for us. It cost him the life of his son, a life paid to sin.

### **Atoned**

Here we have a sacrificial image. Under the Law, sin was forgiven through the offering of the blood of bulls and goats. Here Paul says that Jesus sacrifice runs parallel to those animal sacrifices...it deals with sin and involves blood. Why do the sacrifices of bulls and goats take care of sin? We must trust that they did, just as we must have “faith in his [Christ’s] blood” that it takes care of sin. It would be a distortion to adopt the Greek idea of sacrifices averting the angry gods. While God’s wrath is (will be) poured out on sin, his grace is given with a smile. Besides, in this case God has offered the sacrifice to himself!