Grace is power, not just pardon!

**Response from Charles Strong of** [**Bible One**](http://www.bibleone.net/)**, a mentor and my friend: Always happy to assist you as we both endeavor to do the will of our Father in heaven. I certainly agree that He has given grace to all; but, He doesn’t force any of His created beings (humans) to accept or use it. We are simply to submit to His guiding hand, the hand of grace, which allows us to accomplish faithful works for the salvation of our souls.**

**Grace and Faith  
By Bill Gothard**

Two years ago I wrote a paper on the topic of grace. The questions that it raised confirmed to me that grace cannot be explained apart from faith. The two are linked together in Scripture, and the one activates the other. Both are gifts of God. God’s grace gives us the desire and power to do His will. Related to this is God’s mercy, which withholds the just punishment when we fail to act upon grace. The following points summarize and expand what I have been teaching in the Basic Seminar for more than 40 years.

**Grace is the desire and the power that God gives us to do His will.**

**Grace is free and unmerited.**

There is nothing we can do to earn or merit the grace of God. It is the free gift of God to us, apart from any works or effort that we can achieve:

“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” ([Ephesians 2:8–9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8%E2%80%939&t=NKJV)).

**Grace is given to every person.**

Everyone in the world is given sufficient grace to respond to the light of conscience and of the Gospel. This point is emphasized in [Titus 2:11–12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Titus+2.11%E2%80%9312&t=NKJV):

“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

**Grace is interrelated with faith.**

It is not possible to define grace without at the same time referring to faith because the two are so intricately entwined, as stated in [Ephesians 2:8–9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+2.8%E2%80%939&t=NKJV):

“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”

(See also [I Timothy 1:13–14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Timothy+1.13%E2%80%9314&t=NKJV), [Romans 5:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.2&t=NKJV)). Both grace and faith are gifts of God.

**Grace is expressed in action.**

Both grace and faith are expressed in God-directed action. Paul emphasized this in [II Corinthians 8:1–2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=II+Corinthians+8.1%E2%80%932&t=NKJV), when he explained how the grace of God that was bestowed on the churches in Macedonia resulted in their generosity. Then he challenged the Corinthians:

“God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” ([II Corinthians 9:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=II+Corinthians+9.8&t=NKJV)).

**Grace is given progressively.**

We have access to all of God’s grace; however, it is given to us as we have need of it and as we have responded to previous grace. Therefore, Peter urged the believers to “grow in grace” ([II Peter 3:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=II+Peter+3.18&t=NKJV)) and prayed that grace would be multiplied unto them (see [II Peter 1:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=II+Peter+1.2&t=NKJV)). Paul was assured that God’s grace was sufficient for the trials that he was enduring (see [II Corinthians 12:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=II+Corinthians+12.9&t=NKJV)). As we respond to the grace God gives us, He gives more grace. Therefore, different believers will have different measures of grace.

**Grace can be resisted.**

Since grace is given to every person, but not every person is acting upon it to carry out the will of God, it is obvious that we can resist the work of God’s grace in us. Scripture warns of this possibility in [Hebrews 12:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hebrews+12.15&t=NKJV):

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

**Grace is given to the humble.**

One of the strongest ways to resist the grace of God is to have pride. Thus, Scripture states:

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” ([James 4:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+4.6&t=NKJV)).

Peter also emphasized the importance of humility in order to receive God’s grace:

“Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” ([I Peter 5:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Peter+5.5&t=NKJV)).

**Grace requires good stewardship.**

Peter stated that we are to be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (see [I Peter 4:10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=I+Peter+4.10&t=NKJV)).

Grace is singular in this passage; however, there are different applications of grace. For every need, there is grace:

“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” ([Romans 5:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.20&t=NKJV)).

Different applications of grace would also include various spiritual gifts that are given to each believer:

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us…” ([Romans 12:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+12.6&t=NKJV)).

**Grace is the power to overcome trials.**

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” ([Romans 5:1–5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+5.1%E2%80%935&t=NKJV)).

**Grace Can Be Abused**

Since grace is given to overcome sin, some might wrongly conclude that by sinning more, we receive more grace. Such a conclusion is condemned by Paul:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” ([Romans 6:1–2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+6.1%E2%80%932&t=NKJV)).

There are also those who view grace as freedom to do what they want rather than power to do what they ought. This view turns God’s grace into a license to sin and is condemned in scripture.

A further abuse of grace is dividing it into two parts. One for salvation, and the other for Christian living. There is no such division in Scripture. One Bible scholar noted, “It is a great irony that the people who cultivate a two-stage Christianity do so in the name of grace but in effect nullify grace. They say there is a faith stage necessary for getting to heaven, and then an obedient stage not necessary for getting to heaven (but perhaps for getting better rewards there)… Underlying this mistake is a misunderstanding of grace. Grace is not simply leniency when we have sinned. Grace is the enabling gift of God to overcome sin. Grace is power, not just pardon” (Pleasures of God, John Piper, p. 244+).

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(Response from Charles Strong of [Bible One](http://www.bibleone.net/), a mentor and my friend:

Always happy to assist you as we both endeavor to do the will of our Father in heaven. I certainly agree that He has given grace to all; but, He doesn’t force any of His created beings (humans) to accept or use it. We are simply to submit to His guiding hand, the hand of grace, which allows us to accomplish faithful works for the salvation of our souls. It appears to me that Gothard denies the three aspects of God’s comprehensive redemption program for man, believing that those of us who do actually “separate” grace. But there is no separation, even though there are degrees of it, of which we are privileged and encouraged to take advantage.)

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[Bill Gothard - Grace and Faith](http://billgothard.com/teaching/grace)