

CHAPTER 1

WHY A STUDY ON GRACE?

NEED + INABILITY = GRACE

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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20 "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20, 21)

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AN INTRODUCTION

Charles Ryrie opens his work, *The Grace of God*, with the following thought. "Christianity is distinct from all other religions because it is a message of grace. Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God's grace; salvation is by grace; and grace governs and empowers Christian living. **Without grace Christianity is nothing.**"¹ With all that the Bible contains, "Why a study on grace?" In order to answer the question it is necessary to put the idea of grace into its biblical context.

Grace lives in the arena of need and inability. If there were no deficiency or need, there would be no necessity for grace. Although we are getting ahead of ourselves, the expression or act of grace did not exist until God created. Once something existed outside of who God is grace existed. Prior to creation all there was, was God existing in trinity. Within the godhead or trinity nothing needed grace for every thought or action was worthy of the thought or action. However, all this changed once God created something outside Himself. Grace existed even before the presence of sin and the fall. The created is always in need of grace from the Creator.

But as noted, we are getting ahead of ourselves. The initial question is, “Why a study on grace?”



THE BIBLE AS STORY

In order to answer the question it is necessary to consider the Bible as a whole. The Bible is a story. It is a story of a Creator who acts, an Author who writes, a King who rules, and a Hero who wins. It contains villains, war, defeat and victory. Inside the biblical story there are five parts or ideas unfolding the person and purpose of God. It will be God’s person and purpose that provide the subject matter or theme of the story. These five parts are as follows: **First**, God existed before the story. He wrote the story (Gen. 1:1, 31). **Second**, the stage in which the story will be told is creation. **Third**, in the story the primary character is God. **Fourth**, the secondary character is humanity. **Finally**, the story has four distinct and underlying movements. They are as follows.

- Expression 1 - “Creation: The Power of God”
- Expression 2 - “Transgression: The Mystery of God”
- Expression 3 - “Condemnation: The Justice of God”
- Expression 4 - “Redemption: The Grace of God”

Inside the larger movements of creation, transgression, condemnation, and redemption which are woven throughout the various sub-plots there are seven definable chapters.

- Chapter 1 - The Subject of the Story - The Person and Purpose of God
- Chapter 2 - The Villain Appears
- Chapter 3 - The Hero Foretold
- Chapter 4 - The Hero Arrives
- Chapter 5 - The Hero’s Work
- Chapter 6 - The Hero’s Legacy
- Chapter 7 - The Story’s Epilogue



THE NEED FOR GRACE

The reader will notice how there is transgression and condemnation. This is seen in the villain’s appearance. As noted earlier, grace exists simply because God created; but its presence becomes even more pronounced with the arrival of the villain. It is “sin abounding where grace will much more abound.” “One of the reasons God allows sin is so that He might have this specific opportunity to manifest His grace.”² Grace is the kind action of God

toward those who deserve destruction and damnation. This action on God's part will bring Him glory.

All that He is and all that He does is from Him, through Him, and for Him. Every action of God is marked by a gracious condescension on His part to interact with what He creates. "There is no division of doctrine that is not related in some way or another - often vitally - to the concept of grace."³



THE STORY'S HERO – JESUS CHRIST

As the Bible is read as story it becomes apparent from the very start of the story everything will revolve around one primary and central figure. This person will be foretold and imaged so precisely that all who look for Him will find Him. Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, is the hero of the story. All of the chapters point to Him. The storyline has meaning only as it is sourced in and flows from Christ. The Hero's arrival in human flesh is the greatest embodiment of grace by God and His obedience to His Father in life and in death is the greatest display of grace for all times. Nothing else can match who He is and what He has done.

Both the incarnation and crucifixion are expressions of God's initiation toward man's inability and rebellion. Both acts on His part are gracious.



SUMMARY

"Why study grace" because without it there is no story. God created and in this simple sentence grace was born. Everything that happens after this initial act will be platforms for God to act graciously toward those He loves for the purpose of bringing them into His presence so that they might enjoy Him forever.

¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 9.

² Robert A. Pyne, "Humanity and Sin," in *Understanding Christian Theology*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 811.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.