

“The Glorious Gospel of Grace”

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths © - pastorpat@waukeshabile.org
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“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Acts 20:28

I often have opportunity to meditate on the idea of Christ, grace, and the cross. I am always challenged to think critically about the doctrine, and I am forced by necessity to think practically about the doctrine. I have learned that defining grace is easier than describing grace. To speak of grace theologically is different from speaking of grace practically. Practical grace is descriptive. Theological grace is prescriptive. All of us have experienced grace, and what this “feels like” is different for all of us. We might agree on what it means, but not on what it looks like in “real time.” Because I believe defining grace is easier than describing grace, I sat down and tried to describe grace. My attempt was to capture grace as to its feeling. Again, this will be different for all of us, but I do believe there is a common thread that binds us all together in our continued celebration of Christ, grace, and the cross. So without further ado, here is an initial stab at an inexhaustible ever-changing idea.

- Grace is always being right with God. It is the doctrine of justification, of becoming a saint while still a sinner.
- Grace is never facing the wrath and anger of God. It is the doctrine of propitiation where God sits as a satisfied and contented Father.
- Grace is learning that *in Christ* I am always pleasing to God. And that *in Adam* I am always displeasing to God.
- Grace is always being accepted, received, and welcomed by my heavenly Father. Because of my reconciliation with the Father, I am always in fellowship with Him. He is always standing with open arms to receive me into His presence. Nothing I do can undo what He has done. His loving sacrifice truly paid all of my access fees, and thus I am free to come and go as I please.
- Grace is never being separated *from God*, rejected *by God* or displeasing *to God*.
- Grace learns to embrace failure as a part of the old nature and learn to rest in God for His victory against it.
- Grace receives murderers.
- Grace receives the divorced, regardless as to who is at fault.
- Grace receives drunkards.
- Grace receives the social outcast.
- Grace receives widows and orphans.
- Grace receives the non-patriotic.
- Grace receives the theologically aberrant.
- Grace listens attentively.
- Grace speaks softly.
- Grace touches lightly.

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- Grace holds firmly.
- Grace is non-judgmental.
- Grace supports, encourages, and edifies.
- Grace gives unconditionally and freely.
- Grace leaves people free; it liberates those in bondage to sin, guilt, and fear.
- Grace makes the awkward comfortable.
- Grace makes the social misfit welcomed.
- Grace puts aside personal preferences.
- Grace wears a suit and tie or a Mohawk and tattoo.
- Grace does not consider cultural adaptation.
- A theology of grace is exacting and precise, but flexible and tolerant.
- Grace celebrates Christ and the Word.
- Grace loves without condition, it accepts without requirement; it forgives without limit, and serves without reward.
- Grace “feels like” the receiving of a prodigal son by a loving father.
- Grace “feels like” an adulterous woman hearing words of forgiveness and acceptance by a compassionate Savior.
- Grace “feels like” a rebellious slave voluntarily returning to his Christian owner.
- Grace “feels like” a God-hater becoming a church planter.
- Grace “feels like” a Christ-denier becoming a church leader.

What does grace mean? To define it is painless; to describe it is profound. Let me encourage you to take time to describe in a manner suitable to your experience what grace looks like in your life. And I would equally encourage you to share your thoughts with others and with me. Friend, let us never forget that “*grace reigns because the cross still stands.*”