

THE THRONE OF GRACE

By

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Divine grace and the lordship of Christ are spiritual realities intricately interwoven to reveal a portion of the awe inspiring tapestry of the magnificence of God and His gift of salvation. The Hebrew writer penned, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16). Notice that this verse focuses upon a God of grace that sits enthroned as King of Kings. This means that the acceptance of Christ’s lordship is central to our reception of grace and that our characters play a vital role in the equation.

This issue of grace and lordship generates in us a great tension: grace is exclusively the gift of God which can never be earned, yet the reception of that gift is linked to our rightly approaching His throne. Since grace comes from the One who sits on the throne, only those who have authentically made Christ Lord will taste of His grace. John told us that anyone who continues in the practice of sin does not know Jesus and is outside of the benefits of saving grace (1 Jn. 3:6). The Savior freely offers all the supernatural power that we need to live godly lives when we authentically bow to Him as Lord (2 Pe. 1:2-3). With a pure heart and clean hands we can confidently approach His throne of grace (Ps. 24:3-4).

During the formative years of the early church the word “grace” (Greek: *charis*) was a common secular word that had a wide variety of definitions, some of which are employed in the New Testament. The word spans a large spectrum ranging from expressions of thankfulness to exclamations of external beauty to references on pleasing mannerisms. The Greek New Testament uses this elastic word over 170 times.

Early church fathers took this expressive word and formed it into an important theological term by uniquely applying it to God’s acts of mercy towards undeserving sinners. Paul eloquently employed *charis* to express the commonly taught definition of grace which is God’s undeserved love and favor demonstrated towards sinful humanity (Rom. 11:5-6). Grace teaches us that all a Christian is or has, is found exclusively in Christ and depends entirely upon Him.

Christ's redemptive work on the cross is a graphic picture of divine grace in action and the price it took for that grace to be made freely available to mankind (Rom. 3:22-24; Eph. 2:4-7). The Christian life can only be lived through divine grace. The transformation of our characters is directly linked to how we apply the gift of grace to our lives (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1). It is impossible for us to live such a lofty, other worldly life through natural strength, wisdom and abilities (Rom. 11:6).

Grace has never been, nor will it ever be, cheap. Its cost is beyond reckoning and demands that we stop practicing sin and self-governance through the power of that same grace (Tit. 2:11-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-9). Unmerited favor is offered to us so we can overcome sin, not wallow in it or make excuses for it. This marvelous gift is liberally supplied to rescue all who desire to live free from the power and love of sin. To turn grace into a means to justify sin is thoroughly wicked and wholly forbidden (Rom. 6:1-2).

How we view God and His grace directly affects the development of our characters and how we live in this world. We practice sin and become worldly whenever we turn grace into a cheap commodity. Remove grace from our faith and we are left with just another legalistic religion dependent upon human strength and will.

Paul taught that "it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). By grace alone we are saved, not through Bible knowledge, water baptism, church affiliation or natural abilities. How we respond to divine grace is our responsibility. To understand that the Lord is perfect in holiness and offers unholy people supernatural power to overcome their sin and corrupt characters is a major step towards victory.

A THRONE

A throne is a seat of authority and power. The King of Creation sits upon His throne possessing infinite power to fulfill all of His plans and execute all of His decrees. He is not like earthly monarchs, dictators and rulers who strive to control their kingdom through political maneuverings which easily succumbs to oppression, deception and manipulation. The Sovereign Lord does not use political intrigues to remain in power, for there is no threat to His throne. We can learn how to rightly approach Him because He is consistent in nature and temperament. "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed" (Mal. 3:6).

Christ is a good, benevolent and merciful king. He calls humanity to, "Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate,

slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity” (Joel 2:13). His throne is established upon righteousness, truth and justice. The treasures of His throne are mercy and love, which are inexhaustible. He delights in bestowing such gifts upon those who cherish them.

The Lord has only one throne. To one person is it a throne of grace, to another it is a throne of wrath. Our spiritual condition decides the function Christ will fulfill upon His throne as advocate or prosecutor, friend or enemy. The Lord dispenses mercy or wrath through absolute truth. Never has it been His desire to damn people to an eternal hell because He longs to demonstrate mercy (2 Pe. 3:9). He will do everything in keeping with His perfect character to redeem men and woman to Himself. Yet this Just Judge is not afraid to execute righteous punishment upon all who refuse to turn from their wicked ways. His promises of judgment upon the faithless are no less sure than those of blessings upon the faithful.

DRAW NEAR

How we approach the throne of grace is of infinite importance since God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Jam. 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5). Our character will either cause God to thrust us out of His presence or draw us to Him.

The Savior who sits upon the throne of grace is also our high priest (Heb. 4:14-15). Through grace alone we can “approach,” or draw near to the One who sits enthroned. To approach in the Greek presents an idea that we can constantly draw near to our sympathizing and great high priest who was “tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Yet it is madness to think that we can boldly come before a compassionate and Holy God in any condition we chose.

Jesus told a parable about a king holding a wedding banquet (Mt. 22:1-14). Those he initially invited refused to attend. Some even mistreated and killed the messengers sent to bring them to the banquet. “The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers” (Mt. 22:7). What a dangerous thing it is for people to reject the rightful reign of Christ over their lives, for it will bring upon them the justice of His wrath.

After the king’s wrath was poured out against those rebellious subjects he sent messengers into the highways and hedges to bring in people so his banquet would be full. After the hall was filled the king entered to see the guests and “noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’”

The man was speechless” (Mt. 22:11-12). Judgment was immediately executed against the man for the presumptuous pride of thinking he could come before the king in an irreverent condition. What an eternally perilous abuse of grace.

Character, grace and judgment are clearly seen in this parable. Grace was shown by the king’s undeserved invitation to the banquet. Those first invited would be deemed as religiously and socially fit for such a high societal function. When they rejected the offer of grace those considered unfit were invited. The first group was prideful, rebellious and thoroughly offensive to the king. His judgment upon them was quick, sure and just.

The second group invited understood the great honor offered them and promptly came. Though they were poor, it is implied by the story that they prepared themselves to attend such a privileged event. In this parable the type of clothing signifies a person’s condition of holiness and righteousness. The man that was not rightly clothed for the celebration arrogantly thought that the king would not mind if he was improperly clothed. This indicates that the man assumed he could approach the king with an ungodly character. Again, judgment was quick, sure and just.

There is a right and wrong way to approach the King of Kings. The Savior is not a cruel, moody or quickly angered lord. With confidence we can approach His throne so long as we are rightly clothed in humility, holiness and godly fear. He has made Himself approachable because He desires our nearness. Through brokenness, humility, holiness and the fear of God we can boldly draw near to Him. It is sheer foolishness to think that we could approach a holy God in sin, pride, and self-will and not face His wrath.

Paul closed his epistle to the Ephesians with a benediction crammed full of meaning. “Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love” (Eph. 6:24). Unmerited favor is freely available to us all. However, the One who sits on the throne demands a right response to His indescribable gift—to love Him with an undying love.

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