

God's grace is unmerited divine favor, a favor from which comes many gifts.

God's [grace](#) flows out of his inter-Trinitarian, gift-giving life. Even in humanity's [fallen state](#), God freely grants to his creatures good things they do not deserve. The greatest of these goods is [Jesus Christ](#).

The bold thread of grace in the [Bible](#) is a distinctive marker of Christianity, one that sets it apart from other religions. [J. Gresham Machen](#) noted, "The very center and core of the whole Bible is the doctrine of the grace of God." The [works of God](#) in [creation](#) as well as his [covenants](#), his promises, his word, and his work of [redemption](#) all spring from his grace. All we have is due to grace, but, as [Michael Horton](#) says, grace itself is "not a third thing or substance," for "in grace, God gives nothing less than Himself."

God's grace toward mankind arises from the fullness of his being. He is gracious. When [God appeared to Moses](#) he declared his name, [Yahweh](#), the I AM, as the sum of his eternal being. This nature includes his graciousness: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" ([Exod 34:6](#)). [J. I. Packer](#) suggests that grace is simply God's [love](#) demonstrated toward those who deserve the opposite. God's grace is his gift-giving life, and the gift is himself.

The grace of Yahweh is not a reaction to our creaturely ways but the extension of God eternally giving himself as [Father](#), [Son](#), and [Spirit](#). Jesus Christ brought to man the grace he was already as the eternal Son within the Trinity ("full of grace and truth," [John 1:14–18](#)). Thus, in receiving "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" we participate in divine fullness of "the love of

God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" ([2 Cor 13:13](#)).

Theologians identify various kinds of grace—various purposes for which God exercises this divine attribute. **Common grace**, a category found most often in Reformed theology, is all the favor God shows to mankind that is less than [salvation](#). Wesleyan-Arminian theology teaches a similar concept with its universal **prevenient grace**, a grace extended to all that enables them to make a free choice for or against God. **Special grace**, on the other hand, is *saving* grace, the Spirit's work of applying Christ's [atonement](#) to humans. **Justifying grace** and **sanctifying grace** are what some call "future grace." Reformed theology states that saving grace is effectual and irresistible, because it is sovereignly ordered by God.

Protestants, Roman Catholics, Wesleyan-Arminians, the Free Grace, the Reformed, and the Orthodox all formulate their views on grace differently. The central issue separating them tends to do with when or how merit ([good works](#)) cooperates with divine favor. In most non-Christian religions, grace is absent; if not, grace is seen as God's enablement, as divine help that allows man to achieve salvation. As the Book of Mormon famously says, contradicting by addition [Paul's](#) wording in Ephesians, "It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" ([2 Nephi 25:23](#)).

Passages

KEY VERSES

[Ge 3:15–4:26](#) (The proto-evangelium and preparatory divine favor.); [Ex 33:17–34:9](#) (YHWH announces his divine character.); [Ps 86:15](#) (Praise for YHWH's graciousness.); [Ps 103:8](#) (Praise for YHWH's graciousness.); [Ps](#)

145:8 (Praise for YHWH's graciousness.); 1 Co 15:10 (Paul expresses total gratitude.); Eph 2:8–9; Ro 3:20–24

ADDITIONAL VERSES

2 Ki 13:23; Ne 9:17; Ne 9:31; Ps 111:4; Ps 116:5; Is 30:18; Joe 2:13; Eph 1:6–7; Eph 2:7; 2 Th 2:16–17; Heb 4:16; 1 Pe 5:10

🔒 Mobile Ed: TH265 Free Grace Theology (Wilkin).

🔒 *Systematic Theology* (Gulley), Vol. III.

🔒 *Free Grace Soteriology* (Anderson).

Recommended Resources

🔒 *Paul and the Gift* (Barclay).

🔒 *All of Grace* (Spurgeon).

🔒 *Grace Abounding* (Bunyan).

📖 *Four Anti-Pelagian Writings* (Augustine); see “On Nature and Grace.”

📖 *Confronted by Grace* (Webster).

🔒 *The Grace of God* (Ryrie).

🔒 *Person, Grace, and God* (Rolnick).

🔒 *Grace Alone* (Trueman), part of The Five Solas Series, 5 volumes.

🔒 *The Reign of Grace* (Booth), Vol. I in *The Works of Abraham Booth*.

📖 *The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel* (Boice and Ryken).

📖 *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston* (Boston), Vol. VIII, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State and a View of the Covenant of Grace*.

🔒 *God's Grace: Romans 5:12–21* (Barnhouse).

🔒 *Saved by Grace* (Hoekema).

🔒 *Future Grace* (Piper).

🔒 *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Van Til).

🔒 *Knowing God* (Packer), 226.

📖 *God Is Love* (Bray), 608.

📖 *Our Reasonable Faith* (Bavinck), 143.

📖 *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Murray), Vol. II, *Systematic Theology*, 93–122.

📖 *Aquinas on Nature and Grace: Selections from the Summa Theologica* (Aquinas).

🔒 *The Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection* (de Liguori).