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Divine Love

Over and over preachers can be heard in their sermons defining grace as unmerited favor, and that is about as far as they take it. Love is another word used today, seemingly by everyone, even more commonly than the word grace. The use and meanings of words can change from generation to generation. Modern meanings and uses do not necessarily reflect ancient usage, as in Bible times. Take today's use of the word Christ. In English, the word is a transliterated Greek word, and used in such a way as to imply that it is the last name of Jesus. The Greek, however, is an adjective that means anointed. The phrase Jesus Christ, should read in English as Jesus, the anointed one. Translated correctly, perhaps for some, it would bring up the question, "Anointed with what?"

Webster gives the current meaning of grace as unmerited Divine assistance, and the archaic, or more primitive, use as mercy, pardon. In other words, the meaning of grace as mercy, pardon have only survived from the past in specialized uses. The obsolete (no longer used) meaning of the adjective gracious is Godly, and the archaic is pleasing, acceptable. Words need to be understood in order to grasp the depth of what is being taught in the Bible, as it is based on primitive use of languages. For instance, the English word love can be a verb or noun, and is used to translate all forms of two different Greek words, phileo (5368) and agape (26), both of which were used in the conversation between Jesus and Peter, just before the Lord ascended to heaven. One English word alone, is insufficient to relate the depth of two different Greek words.

Here is a simple comparison:

phileo agape

Have a common interest in another Take an interest in another

Be content with Indicates a deliberate direction of the will

Indicates feeling, affection Embraces judgment, duty, principle

More of friendship, acting friendly Action based on reasoning and conduct

Grace (charis) - modern Grace - archaic

Unmerited favor from God Divine influence on the heart

General favor, charm, thanks Manner or act of principle

A short prayer at mealtime *A different word - eucharisteo (G2168)

*The root of G2168 (verb), 2169 (noun) is 2170 (adj). 2170 consists of 2095 & a derivative of 5483 (grace). The verb means to “give thanks” & the noun means “thanks, thankful.”

I firmly believe that most spiritual concepts must be understood in their Old Testament settings. The real depth of some however, are not clearly revealed except by the cross. Grace and love are two such concepts.

Grace: Psalms 84:11: For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. One condition to receive grace is to walk uprightly. One way the Lord gives grace is defined in Proverbs 13:15: Good understanding giveth grace (2580)...; To get understanding, like any gift, one must receive it. Proverbs 3:3-4: 3. Let not kindness and truth forsake thee, Bind them on thy neck, Write them on the tablet of thy heart, 4. And find grace (2580) and good understanding in the eyes of God and man. Of all the Bible versions checked, only Young used the word grace instead of favor. Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above (Jam 1:17). So, if a good understanding giveth grace, then grace is closely related to Divine kindness and truth. Lot expressed this idea upon delivery from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: Genesis 19:19: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy (kindness), which thou hast shown unto me in saving my life ... It is evident that Lot and his family were influenced by the people of Sodom, yet the Lord considered Lot as walking uprightly.

Very often have I heard preachers state that it is by grace alone whereby we are saved, sometimes used as opposed to salvation by keeping the law. This idea is man’s interpretation of the Bible. Ephesians 2:8-9: 8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9. Not of works, lest any man should boast. The underlying word for through is the Greek word dia (1223). When in the “genitive” the meaning is by means of, through, by, and indicates the channel by which something takes place. We are saved by grace and the channel is faith. But what faith? Whose faith? Galatians 2:16: having known also that a man is not declared righteous by works of law, if not through the faith of Jesus Christ, also we in Christ Jesus did believe, that we might be declared righteous by the faith of Christ, and not by works of law, wherefore declared righteous by works of law shall be no flesh. (of writer’s emphasis) While Young’s Literal Translation is quoted here, of the fourteen versions checked, the only other correct translations were the King James and Darby. There is no of in the Greek. There is, however, a Greek word for in (en - 1722), and it is not present where many versions substitute the English word “in.” There are additional verses that support the idea that it is Christ’s faith which renders one righteous. Here is one: Isaiah 53:11: ... by his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness... (Darby renders it similar to most versions). The Son’s knowledge is His faith, and it is His faith, His spiritual understanding that will save those who receive it. This is why “works of law” (i.e. keeping the law according to man’s interpretation) cannot save you. (See also Phil 3:9; Rom 3:22; Gal 2:20; 3:22, 24; 5:6; Eph 3:17; 1 Tim 3:13; Rev 14:12). We must have faith in Jesus to be saved by the faith of Jesus.

Divine Love: 1 John 4:16: And we know and have believed {received in the heart} the love which God has in us. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (ASV) All three times the Greek word for the noun "love" is agape (26). Verse 8 of this same chapter contains the noun and verb form of agape. Nearly 30 times the King James Bible translates the Greek word as "charity." Jesus used agape when explaining that the law was to teach love (Mt 22:36-40). Divine love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

How do we recognize divine love? 1 Corinthians 13:5: ... (love) thinketh (3049) no evil. (KJV), rendered as doesn't keep a record of wrongs (CEV), or, does not impute evil (Young; Darby). The proper meaning for the Greek translated "thinketh" (3049) is to take an inventory. God is not taking an inventory of our sins - i.e. He is not keeping a record book in heaven of every sin you have committed. As it is now, everything we have done, or has been done to us is recorded in our minds. The concept of letting go of these things is stated in the formula for forgiveness: John 20:23: Whose soever sins ye remit (863), they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. Other versions use "forgive" instead "remit," which can be used for the verb form of "forgive." The proper meaning of the Greek, *aphiemi* (863), is "to send away." Jesus is talking about another's sin against you. If you let go (or, forgive) of a sin committed against you - i.e. do not hold a grudge, or hate the person who wronged you, then it is up to the other person to deal with the issue they have against you. If you do not let go, then you retain what ever it is you have against the person - i.e. bitterness, hurt feelings, anger, etc.

The Father's divine love is seen in the Son of God at the cross: Father, forgive them (Lk 23:34). Jesus forgave the ones who killed him and they did not even believe that He was the Son of God nor did they ask for forgiveness. 2 Corinthians 5:19: To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing (3049) their trespasses unto them ... The Father is not keeping a record of the sins of those who killed His only Son, and He is not keeping a record of your sins. YOU are the one keeping the record - stored in your memory. You must seek to know the Father through the Son in order to receive the Father's love. But, if you believe that God is keeping a record of your sins, or, that He will make you pay some penalty for sinning, or, kill you, then you have not received His love. 1 John 4:6-7: 7. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. 8. He that loves not knows not God; for God is love. Seek to understand and acquire LOVE, because love NEVER fails (1 Cor 13:8). John is considered the disciple that Jesus loved, and it is John who best explains the concept. Some form of the word "love" appears 32 times in 1st, 2nd, & 3rd John, and with one exception (3 Jn 1:9) it is the Greek word agape.

Grace & love meet together: Luke 6:32-36: 32. and - if ye love those loving you, what grace have ye? for also the sinful love those loving them; 33. and if ye do good to those doing good to you, what grace have ye? for also the sinful do the same; 34. and if ye lend [to those] of whom ye hope to receive back, what grace have ye? for also the sinful lend to sinners - that they may receive again as much. 35. 'But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping

for nothing again, and your reward will be great, and ye shall be sons of the Highest, because He is kind unto the ungracious and evil; 36. be ye therefore merciful, as also your Father is merciful. (Young) You cannot have love or grace without the other. To be governed by grace is to act out the agape love principle toward others, including your enemies. Psalms 37:21: The wicked is borrowing and repays not, and the righteous is gracious (KJ = sheweth mercy) and giving. (Young)

Summary: A [good] name is to be chosen rather than abundant riches, rather than silver or gold - grace (2580) is better. [Hebrew] (Pr 22:1) The proper meaning for the Hebrew word (chen) for "grace" is to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior - i.e. be gracious, merciful, kind, show pity. God's name is His character (Ex 33:19; 34:5-7), and it His character we are receiving when we receive and act on His instructions. She (Wisdom - verse 5) shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she (wisdom) deliver to thee. (Pr 4:9) Wisdom is a metaphor for Christ (1 Cor 1:24, 30), and it is He who gives us the Father's character. A crown is a metaphor of your riches, or your knowledge and understanding (cf Pr 14:24, 18).

Again, the agape love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Love and hate are principles of life. How we treat others determines the principle by which we are living. Proverbs 14:21: He that despises his neighbor sins; but he that is gracious to the afflicted, happy is he. (Darby) The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. (Eccl 10:12)

Once the principle is understood, usually it can be seen in many places in the Bible: Anyone being gracious to the poor is lending to Yahweh; and that which he has given will He repay unto him. (Pr 19:17) Galatians 5:14: For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love (25) thy neighbor as thyself.

For of the grace are you saved by means of the faith (Christ's spiritual wisdom), and that (absolutely) not of yourself, it is the gift of God. (Eph 2:8) The gift of God is His righteousness, or His way of thinking (cf Rom 5:15-18). Anyone's objective should be to hear and do as the Spirit of God directs through a teacher or the written word. Let your conscious be your guide and learn to be gracious to all in your circle of influence. Amen.