

# H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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## The Gift of Grace

Recently, a friend inquired about scriptures defining grace. All the teachings that I have heard on grace only defined it as “unmerited favor.” Also, that since the cross, we are no longer under the law, but we are under God's unmerited favor (grace). To be under someone, or something, is to be subject to it, as in **Mt 8:9**: *For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.* The Greek (*hupo* 5259) for ‘under’ indicates “of place beneath, especially of inferior place or condition.” A soldier does what he is told by one higher in rank, and therefore, the soldier is governed by a higher authority. To be ‘under’ the law or grace is a statement as to “condition.” That is, the spiritual condition of a person is determined by what they are governed - the law or grace.

Under the law is a term Paul used several times. Notice, **Gal 4:21**: *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law.* To be under the law, or, under authority of the law was to be subject to the priests interpretation of the law. It is no different today. Which ever church one chooses to join, they come under that church’s interpretation of the law, their creeds. However, our ‘head’ (1 Cor 11:3) is to be Christ, and, until Christ is your head or authority, you are under the law, or a man’s interpretation of it. It is impossible to under the law and under grace at the same time.

Grace: How can a person be governed by “unmerited favor?” Is grace available only after the cross? Let’s dig a little deeper and see what it is by which we are to be governed. *Noah found grace<sup>(2580)</sup> in the eyes of the Lord* (Gen 6:8). This is the first time that the primary Hebrew word for grace appears in the Bible. It is derived from the root *chanan*<sup>(2603)</sup>, which Gesenius describes the meaning as “to be gracious, favorably inclined towards, show pity, compassion, to make acceptable, entreat for mercy.” The ancient Hebrew is similar: “to give or show beauty, or mercy to another. Strong states that the proper meaning of the Hebrew root, *chanan*<sup>(2603)</sup> is “**to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior.**”

Wow! The creator (Christ) saw that mankind's thoughts were evil continually, and planned to destroy them all (Gen 6:3); but in His understanding, He bowed down in kindness and pity toward Noah (Gen 6:5-8), and saved him and his family through the flood. Just stop and think, and apply this personally between you and the Father and Son, both supernatural, super intelligent persons who bow to you, an inferior, in kindness because they love you. How do we return such kindness and mercy? By applying the same principle toward others with whom we come in contact.

Bowing is a form of worship of God. But what about bowing to man? In the Ancient East, and even some places today, bowing is a way of showing respect, kindness or humility toward another. In the Bible, the rite is closely connected with, and similar to showing grace. **Gen 18:1-3**: *1. And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2. And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favor (grace) in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.* Abraham saw three ordinary men toward whom he bowed. When he asked the men, *if now I have found favor (grace) in thy sight*, if you have seen my respect toward you, let me show my kindness by providing water to wash your feet and food to eat (verses 4, 5). In this example, grace is an act of humility and kindness toward another. This does not happen, except

you first have received God's grace, even if it is not understood at the time.

So already, we see that grace, or graciousness, is a condition of humility and kindness. God's graciousness is mentioned in a beautiful prayer of Ezra after he has been told of the people's transgressions: **Ez 9:7-9**: *7. Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. 8. And now for a little space grace<sup>(8467)</sup> hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. 9. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy [kindness] unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.* Here, a different Hebrew word for grace has been derived from the same root as above, and carries the same meaning. God did not desert Israel in their bondage, and His grace is manifest through divine influence that He had on the kings of Persia to allow Israelites to rebuild Jerusalem. God may show mercy and kindness directly, or by His divine influence through others. But ultimately, it is the inward bondage from which we need to be delivered.

Grace came by Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). Grace did not just start with the cross, but man's understanding of the depth of grace is revealed in the life of Jesus. It is the same as being kept under the law until faith (Christ's understanding) comes (Gal 3:23). The Son of God is the channel through and in whom the Father has chosen to bow down in kindness, pity and mercy toward humanity; and it is Jesus who reveals to each of us the Father's mercy and kindness (grace). Grace, like love (1 Cor 13:4-8), is an "action," has always existed and includes MUCH more than unmerited favor.

Here is one last example, borrowed from one of Scott's studies: **Lk 6:30-38**: *30. Give to every man that asks of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank<sup>(5485)</sup> have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank<sup>(5485)</sup> have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank<sup>(5485)</sup> have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he (the Father) is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. 36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. 37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete [measure] withal it shall be measured to you again.*

The word "thank" totally misconstrues the point being made here. **Lk 17:5, 7-9**: *5. The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" ... 7. Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at the table'? 8. Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? 9. Has he grace (kindness, pity, respect) toward the servant because he did what was commanded? I think not. Has this not been our attitude - ME FIRST. What graciousness, mercy, kindness, respect or humility are you showing if you only love those who love you?*

**Eph 2:8**: *For by grace are ye saved through faith.* God's gift of grace is the mercy, kindness and humility developed in us by receiving Christ's understanding of the Father's character of love. **Heb 4:16**: *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Amen!

