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Volume 44
Issue 1080

Grace: "Undeserved Favor"? Or Something Far Better?

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by —Clyde Pilkington

Key Points:

[The Traditional Definition of Grace is Misleading.....9063](#)
[We Were Never Undeserving in God's Eyes.....9063](#)

[The Greek Root of Grace Means Joy.....9064](#)
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After decades of studying "grace" and its root word, a lingering concern always remained surrounding its traditional evangelical definition – "God's unmerited favor," or "the undeserved favor of God."



Charis in the KJV is most commonly translated "grace," but it is also rendered as "joy" and "pleasure," among other words.

For 40 years I have questioned this meaning.

Numerous times when I was in the "Grace Movement" (from 1985 to 1995) I would inquire of fellow leaders privately concerning their understanding of the meaning of "grace," and how, especially etymologically, that became its definition. I never heard a satisfactory answer.

The root of χάρις (*charis*) is the verb χαίρω (*chairō*, G5463), which means:

to be full of "cheer," that is, calmly *happy* or well off (*SEC*);

to rejoice, be glad; to rejoice exceedingly; to be well, thrive (*TGL*).

The Greek word for "grace" is χάρις (*charis*, G5485), meaning *joy*. In fact, according to the *Concordant Keyword Concordance*, the Greek structure for this word is simply **JOY**.

Chairō, in the KJV, is commonly translated "rejoice"; but it's also rendered simply as "joy" and "glad," among other words.

This simple verb (*chairō*) and noun (*charis*) of *joy* have been pondered by my heart and mind for years. They have been complicated by religion.

Among its definitions are:

that which affords joy, pleasure, delight ... (*TGL*);

that which causes joy, pleasure, gratification ... (*CWS*);

an act producing happiness, a benefit bestowed ... (*CKC*).

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Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice,

misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
 - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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Father used some things to cause me to reconsider the simplicity of grace's core, finally granting my release from its religious definition, and to better embrace God's beautiful grace!

"UNDESERVED" GRACE?

A reader, Gary Bennis wrote:

I was wondering what you think as to why we don't "deserve" God's grace. ... The idea that we don't "deserve" grace, because we're "sinners," doesn't seem like that's God's mind to me. ... Man didn't even contribute sin to the equation, because it wasn't man's idea, nor was he the cause of it. ... We only see ourselves "guilty" because of the effects of religion ... We were never "guilty" in our Father's eyes, just ours. ...

Our brother was absolutely right. "Sinner" is merely a role that we are currently acting. In fact, we are "justified" (declared/constituted "righteous") in our divinely assigned role. The fact is plain – we pre-date sin, and we pre-date our role as sinner. We were *in Christ*, before the Disruption of the World. We're 100% righteous. We're as righteous as Christ.

Is the "grace" that we receive from God "undeserved"? Only in a relative sense! Yet, in the absolute, certainly not!

The second usage of "grace" in the Greek Scriptures (*i.e.*, the New Testament) was spoken of concerning Jesus Christ:

Now the little Boy grows up and was staunch in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of

God was on Him (Luke 2:40, CV).

God's grace was *on Christ*. If evangelical Christianity has the meaning of "grace" (*charis*) correct, then by the very definition, Jesus Christ Himself was undeserving of it. Yet, this is nonsense.

However, when we understand that what was actually *on Christ* was Divine "joy," "pleasure" and "delight," etc. – then all makes perfect sense. After all, the Father declared,

This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17).

How about us? Well, the *KJV* tells us that we have been made,

accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6),

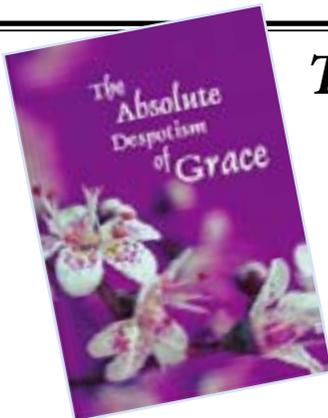
while the CV says that God,

graces us in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6).

After all, we are God's "workmanship/achievement" (Ephesians 2:10), and we're His "offspring/race" (Acts 17:27-28). So, that being true, why would we not in fact be qualified to be the benefactors our Father's "joy" super excessively bestowed on us?

joy GRACE

Additionally, the current working revision of the *Concordant Literal Version* has inserted "joy" as the **superscript** before the renderings of the word "grace" throughout its text. Look at these examples:



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the *joy* gracious gift ... the *joy* grace of the God and the gratuity in *joy* grace (Romans 5:15).

the superabundance of the *joy* grace (Romans 5:17).

the *joy* grace superexceeds (Romans 5:20).

the *joy* grace shall reign through righteousness (Romans 5:21).

GOD’S EVANGEL OF JOY

Accordingly, Dean Hough, in the *Unsearchable Riches*¹ calls God’s Evangel of Grace, “the *Evangel of Joy*,” declaring it as “the joyous gratuity of God’s evangel.” He states that *grace* “is essentially **joy**.” “It is a teaching of God’s **joy** which reveals God’s righteousness and commends His love.” He continues:

The Greek word, *charis*, which is translated “*grace*” in most of its occurrences is essentially a matter of **joy**. Hence it is first defined in the *Keyword Concordance* (p. 132) as “an act producing happiness,” and in [the] *Englishman’s Greek Concordance* as “that which gives joy, pleasure, delight ...”

I would say, judging by its usage, that *charis* always conveys much the same sense as *chara*, and in one way or another all Greek words in the *char-* family (e.g. *chairō* = “rejoice”). It is to be noted that *charis* is sometimes rendered “*thanks*” as in Romans 6:17 and II Corinthians 9:15, but in those cases the word “*joy*” would serve as well (i.e., to give God *charis* is

to give Him joy).

JOYize

Another “*grace*” (*charis*) word used by Paul was *χαρίζομαι* (*charizomai*, G5483). The *Concordant Keyword Concordance* has the Greek structure of this verb as “**joyize**.” That’s what *grace* does – it **joyizes**! This is what God does with us, when bestowing His *grace* on us. Thus, based on the usage by Paul, we **joyize** each other.

What a beautiful picture all of this is. That’s what we’re here for – to **joyize** others. We’re **joyizers**! Father **joyizes** us, and then we in turn become **JOYizers** – **joyizing** those around us.

Sadly, the *King James Version* often translates **joyize** (*charizomai*) as “*forgive*.” Yet, the deeper one digs, the more *freedom* one finds – and the more sinister the conspiracy against *freedom* we discover!

One can’t help but think here of a contrast between **joyizers** and *Judaizers*. *Judaizers* place people in bondage. **Joyizers** help to liberate them from bondage.

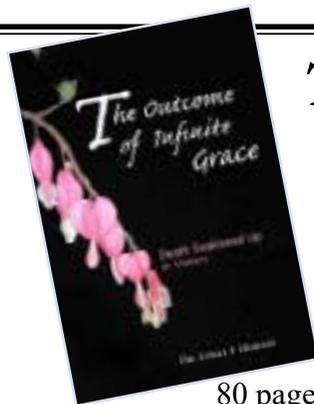
Grace is better than we ever could have even imagined. It isn’t about being undeserving – it’s about being deeply cherished. What father doesn’t cherish his children, and want to bless them (make them happy)? Not because they are deserving or underserving, but because they are his! **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Grace; Joy; **JOYize**; Pleasure

Minor: Evangel; Justification; Love; Sin; Translation

1. Volume 115, Number 4 (2024).



The Outcome of Infinite Grace

by — Loyal F. Hurley

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death!” It was this verse which caused the author, a pastor, to study afresh the subject of the fate of the wicked. The three choices apparent from a surface reading of various biblical texts were eternal torment, extermination or ultimate reconciliation. The author studied to find which one was true.

“A helpful introduction to the great truth that God is the Savior of all mankind.” — A.E. Knoch, *Unsearchable Riches Magazine*

80 pages

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Leaving Religion, Walking Alone, and Trusting God Anyway

by — Steve Martin

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Key Points:

Leaving religion isn't rebellion..... 9065
The wilderness is lonely –but it's not empty..... 9066

Freedom means trusting God without the old scaffolding.... 9066
You're not the only one out here—and that matters..... 9066

Let's be honest: leaving Christianity – especially when you still believe in God – isn't just a shift in beliefs. It's a rupture. A tearing away from everything you were taught to trust. The sermons, the rules, the community, the identity. And when you walk away from all of that, it's not just disorienting – it's lonely.



And the more I studied the Bible for myself, the more I started to see a different God. A God Who wasn't holding a clipboard. A God whose grace really *was* enough. A God Who wasn't building fences, but tearing them down.

Eventually, I realized that I couldn't stay. Not without losing something deeper – my soul, my peace, my honesty. So, I walked away from the Mennonite church.

I know, because I've lived it.

I grew up in the Mennonite church. That world shaped everything I thought I knew about God, about myself, about what it meant to be good, faithful and acceptable. For years, I served in that system. Gave my heart to it. Believed I was doing what God wanted.

But something started to crack.

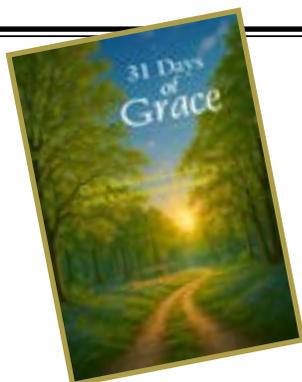
Not all at once. It was slow – quiet even. But little by little, the rules started to feel heavier than the grace they were supposedly built on. The sermons about submission and separation didn't sound like Jesus anymore. The pressure to measure up – to conform, to keep the peace, to stay inside the lines – started to feel like chains.

And that's when the real wilderness began.

Because leaving the system didn't just mean leaving a building. It meant leaving an entire *world*. People I loved stopped calling. Others thought I was deceived. Some quietly wrote me off. I wasn't angry – I understood it. They couldn't see what I was seeing. They weren't hearing what I was hearing. God hadn't revealed it to them yet. So how could they understand?

But the silence was deafening.

That's the part that nobody warns you about. The long stretch of spiritual isolation that comes after you leave. You lose your community. Your footing. Sometimes your identity. And at first it feels like



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compiled by — Steve Martin

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☞ *All will see, eventually, that you, I, every thing and every being, are a perfect operation of a perfect and infinite Being. – Jeff Bohlander*
you've lost God too.

But you haven't.

Because here's what I've come to believe: this road – the one that looks like rebellion, like failure, like falling away – isn't a detour. It's the plan. **This path is sovereign.**

Even your questions. Even your doubts. Even your disillusionment.

God isn't pacing heaven wondering what went wrong with your theology. He's the One Who *led you out*. The One Who stirred the unrest. The One Who said, "There's more. Come with Me."

This journey – the wilderness, the quiet, the letting go – it's not punishment. It's preparation. It's not exile. It's invitation.

And here's something worth noticing: this is how God has *always* worked.

The lonely path isn't a sign that something's wrong – it's often proof that something sacred is happening. It's the cocoon before the wings. It's how God re-makes people. Look at Moses. Elijah. Jesus. And Paul.

Even Paul – after all of his ministry, his writing, his church planting – said, near the end of his life, "*Everyone deserted me.*" Alone. Forgotten. Misunder-

stood. But not shaken. Why? Because he had learned something through the fire: **when God is all you have, you find out that He's enough.**

That's what this journey teaches you. It strips away your dependence on institutions and the approval they offer. It shows you that your worth isn't tied to your performance, your doctrine, or your reputation. It compels you to trust God – not a church, not a title, not a tribe.

And along the way, something beautiful happens.

You start to find others. Not many. But a few. People who have walked the same road. People who understand the questions, the ache, the exile. People who speak your language – not the old language of religious obligation, but the new language of freedom and grace.

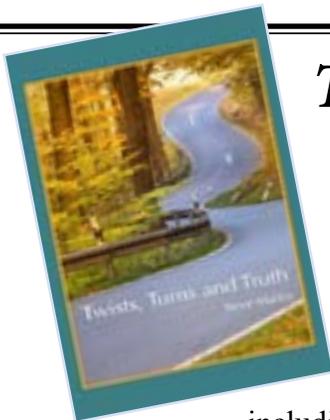
And when you find those people? They're not just friends. They're gifts. Sacred companions. Proof that, even in the wilderness, God knows how to bring hearts together.

You don't need to be understood to be valid.

You don't need to be right to be loved.

You don't need a religion to walk with God.

I'm still on that journey. Still learning to trust the quiet. Still shedding old skins. Still discovering Who God really is – and who I really *(see [TRUST](#), last page)*



Twists, Turns and Truth

by — Steve Martin

Steve is an author and host known for his insightful contributions to the Bible Student's Notebook and his engaging YouTube series, "Freedom Journey" and "Interviews with Steve."

Raised in a conservative Mennonite community, Steve embarked on a transformative journey of understanding and embracing unconditional love. This revelation led him to question and reject many traditional Christian doctrines,

including the hell doctrine.

Steve's passion lies in sharing the message of freedom through grace, a concept he believes is for everyone. Beyond his writing and online presence, Steve is a devoted husband to Ella Mae, a proud father of three children, a loving grandfather to 11 grandchildren, and a great-grandfather to little River.

59 pages

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Memory of Me

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a poem by — Darson Buckner



I know my future, Because
of the past.
Thoughts of my stay here,
Will therefore not last.

In one hundred years,
Maybe even less.
Thoughts of me are gone,

No place they possess.

Vanity in all, Life here is just vain.
We endure trouble, We endure much pain.

Grandchildren will die, None live who knew
me.
All thoughts are gone, To my grave they flee.

How should I live here, Knowing life is vain?
People keep striving, It is so insane.

We want to live here, We don't want to die.
Death is upon us, The reaper is nigh.

I hope for an age, When life is again.
A life most perfect, I hope for time then.

Faith in a Father, Who is in control.
Nothing beyond Him, Not even your soul.

Peace comes from knowing, His essence is
love.
He watches each one, From His throne above.

A good day will come, Wrongs will be
righted.
Nobody will lose. All there delighted.

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TRUST (continued from page 9066)

am without the mask.

But I can tell you this: I've never been more free. And I've never been more certain that *God is in this*. All of it. Every doubt. Every tear. Every lonely mile.

So, if you're out here too – walking away, walking alone – take heart. You're not backsliding. You're becoming.

This is the way of the rebel soul.

And the One Who started this journey in you? He *will* finish it. Because that's what sovereignty looks like. A God Who authors it all – and wastes *nothing*. **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Alone; God; Grace; Legalism; Sovereignty
Minor: Calling; Growth; Religion



The Great Omission:
Christendom's Abandonment of the Biblical Family

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
204 pages

This book presents twenty years of study, taking a candid look at the issue of multiple wives in Scripture and society. The book chapters are:

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"THE WORKS WERE FINISHED FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD" (HEBREWS 4:3). FOR INDEED ALL HIS WORKS ARE FINISHED TO HIM FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, AND WE ARE SAVED IN HIM BEFORE THE NOTICE OF IT COMES TO US, AS THE APOSTLE SAID, THOUGH IT WAS A MYSTERY AND WAS HID IN GOD TILL IT WAS MANIFESTED BY THE GOSPEL. SO THE SALVATION OF ALL MEN IS A DONE THING WITH GOD, THOUGH IT HATH ITS PROPER SEASONS TO BE EXHIBITED TO THE VIEW AND NOTICE OF MEN.

– Jeremiah White (1629-1707)
(Chaplain to Oliver Cromwell)



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by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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