

QUESTION: Grace (Extended Definition)

Grace is the undeserved acceptance and love received from another. Grace (from *charis*) is a gift. For the Believer it especially refers to the unmerited love of God in providing salvation for sinners through Jesus Christ. It is a means to obtaining something we can't earn or lack the capacity to achieve. The recipient of grace ought to respond with a heart of love and thankfulness. It is the grace of God that makes salvation possible. Grace is not simply divine mercy toward some sin; it is the forgiveness of all we do and the provision of Christ's righteousness in our stead. Paul explains, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:8-10 NIV)." The biblical understanding of God's grace includes His continuing work in the life of a Believer whereby, through the work of His Spirit, He enables the Believer to live the victorious Christian life. Grace, then, is the salvific work of God as well as His continuing work in sanctifying a Believer. Grace is not merely the overlooking of past sin but the present application of Christ's righteousness to our account. Paul speaks of this process when he writes, "We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18 NIV)." Grace is God's gift of a salvific act and an ongoing sanctifying action. Paul writes, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Phil 2:12b-13)." Cheap grace is when we cheapen what was costly to God. When our response to God's costly sacrifice is not full devotion (discipleship) or when we offer someone something outside of sound biblical precepts, we have cheapened grace.