

Amazing grace

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy – Psalms 103.8

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work – Romans 11.6

Mabvuto has been in prison for many years. Finally, he is released. He decides to travel to his family. Halfway he must spend the night in a village with people whom he does not know. He is warmly welcomed and gets the best food that the people have. He has not eaten such nice food for years.

It is night and everybody sleeps. But Mabvuto does not sleep. He decides to carry out a wicked plan. As quietly as possible he searches for money and valuables in the house. He puts everything he can find in his worn bag and sneaks out of the house. Nobody has noticed him.

The next day Mabvuto is caught by the police and brought to the people from whom he had stolen. He expects them to be very angry with him: he has been ungrateful and wicked to steal from them while they looked after him with such care.

But it turns out differently than what he thought. The people are friendly and they give him delicious food again. They explain to him that they will not report him to the police so Mabvuto needs to be released. This is opposite from what Mabvuto expected! He deserved to be imprisoned again, but instead he is released! Mabvuto received grace: he got something that he did not deserve.

In the Bible we can also read about people who received something they did not deserve: in the Bible we read about grace.

Everybody deserves punishment

The purpose of everybody's life is to live for God's glory and to serve and love Him. But in the Bible we read that everybody disobeys God¹. Nobody does, thinks and wants to do what God has commanded and all people do, think and want what is prohibited by God. This disobedience is called 'sin' in the Bible. We are all sinners². The Bible says that everybody who commits sin is guilty and deserves punishment³. All people sin, so all of us deserve punishment.

The punishment for sin is that people, when they die, will go to hell⁴. Hell is the most terrible place we can imagine, the place where Satan will be⁵. Even in our daily life bad things happen as a result of sins, but when the Bible speaks about punishment because of sin, the most terrible punishment is to be in hell forever⁶.

God is merciful

In the Bible we read that we cannot save ourselves from this terrible and eternal punishment⁷. Even good things we do will not help to set us free⁸. Some people think that they will be allowed to be with God forever instead of going to hell because they go to church or because they read the Bible. Others think their sins are forgiven because they are baptized, regularly participate in the mass/Lord's supper or raised their hand when somebody asked them who believes in Jesus. Others say that God will forgive them because they do their best to live in the way God wants them to live. But God says that if we break one of His commandments, we have broken all His commandments⁹. Nobody is without sin. So it is completely impossible to save ourselves from the punishment of our sins.

The only way to be saved from sins and the punishment for sins is when God gives us grace and forgives our sins¹⁰, as in the example of Mabvuto. If our sins are forgiven, we do not need to be punished ourselves.

The Bible says that Jesus has borne the punishment!¹¹

God is so merciful that He sent His Son Jesus to earth to do everything what was necessary so that we can be saved from the punishment which we deserve. Jesus suffered and died on the cross¹². After three days He rose from the dead. Because of this, we are sure that Jesus has borne the full punishment for the sins of His people¹³. The good news which we can read in the Bible is that because of this great work done by Jesus, sinners can believe in Him and receive mercy¹⁴. Then they will also be one of His people for whom He bore the punishment of sin.

Saved by grace, through faith in Jesus

Everybody needs to receive that grace personally to be saved from the punishment for his or her sins. God gives grace to those who believe in Jesus¹⁵. God commands us to believe in Jesus. At the same time, faith is not something we must achieve, but it is also given by God through grace¹⁶. So God gives everything we need to be saved.

To believe means to believe everything that is written in the Bible¹⁷. To believe also means to put your hope in God, that He saved you from your sins because of Jesus who suffered and rose from the dead because of your sins¹⁸. This means that you acknowledge that there is no way for you to save yourselves, but that God gives forgiveness out of grace and takes away punishment¹⁹.

In the Bible we read that it is the Holy Spirit who gives faith²⁰. He works it in sinners' hearts by using the Bible²¹. Because of this it is important to read the Bible often and to listen when the Bible is read.

Did you receive grace?

If you did not yet receive grace, you should pray to God today for grace and you should believe in Jesus. Tell Him all your sins and ask Him to be merciful²². Do not ask Him to be merciful because of anything you do, but because of Jesus who died on the cross and rose again. God commands you to believe in Him²³. Read the Bible every day and believe that God can give you whatever you need, because He saves sinners²⁴. If you know that you have received grace, thank God for everything He has given you despite your sinfulness²⁵. Do what God asks you to do in the Bible and live your life to the glory of God²⁶.

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Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun
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The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
Revelation 22.21

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- ¹ Romans 3.12, 1 John 1.8
 - ² Romans 3.23
 - ³ Romans 6.23, Exodus 34.7
 - ⁴ John 3.36
 - ⁵ Revelation 20.10
 - ⁶ Romans 8.20, Romans 5.12, Matthew 25.41
 - ⁷ Romans 3.20
 - ⁸ Isaiah 64.4
 - ⁹ James 2.10
 - ¹⁰ Romans 6.23, Romans 3.24
 - ¹¹ Isaiah 53.5
 - ¹² 2 Corinthians 8.9
 - ¹³ Romans 8.34, 1 Thessalonians 1.10
 - ¹⁴ Ephesians 2.4-8
 - ¹⁵ Romans 3.28, Acts 16.31
 - ¹⁶ Ephesians 2.5 and 8
 - ¹⁷ John 17.17
 - ¹⁸ Romans 5.1, Galatians 2.20
 - ¹⁹ Galatians 2.16
 - ²⁰ 1 Corinthians 12.3
 - ²¹ 1 Corinthians 1.21
 - ²² Luke 18.13
 - ²³ 1 John 3.23, Acts 16.31
 - ²⁴ Luke 19.10
 - ²⁵ 2 Corinthians 9.15
 - ²⁶ 2 Peter 3.18