

Grace is a *Five* Letter Word!

by Jim Rector

Grace is a term and concept that many of us have relegated to the realm of Protestant religion. In our former church affiliations, this subject was seldom expounded, and consequently, we are the less for it.

Grace has been defined as *unmerited favor*, and that certainly is an appropriate meaning for this word. In this case, it would *divine* unmerited favor--that which comes from God Himself.

Without grace, it is really not possible to even discuss the many other facets of God's character, God's doctrine or God's plans. Even the concepts of *agape* love and faith must take their places behind *grace*. Why is this so? Simply because it is grace that opens the door and allows the Father in heaven to dispense His acts of love and mercy toward us. It is a quality of His mind and His character that permits Him to look beyond what we deserve (death), and extend Himself to us, in spite of who and what we are. Grace, therefore, over-arches us from birth to grave.

There is truly no way that the reality of God's grace could possibly be overstated or emphasized too much. It is what makes everything else that comes from God possible, including even the sacrifice of His own Son for our sins! Nothing could be more true than the apostle Paul's famous words:

“For you are saved by GRACE through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

Undeserved favor from God is the greatest blessing we could ever receive, for with it comes all the good things in His storehouse. Every day that we live, we ought to praise and thank our Father for His grace in dealing with us, for without it, we not only would be doomed, we almost surely wouldn't even have been created in the first place!! God's grace infiltrates every aspect of His own activity, as well as every facet of our own lives. It is something that can so easily be overlooked and taken for granted.

GRACE IS POWER!

You may not have thought about grace in terms of divine power, but this is also a part of the whole concept. Notice how Peter puts it in regard to grace as power:

“As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold GRACE of God” (I Pet. 4:10).

Paul also commented on grace in a similar manner in his letter to the Ephesians:

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us given GRACE according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He said, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men...And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints to accomplish the work of the ministry, edifying the Body of Christ” (Eph. 4:4-8, 11-12).

Divine grace is more than just unmerited favor, although it is certainly that. It is also a divine gifting of power to utilize the gifts of the Spirit. Paul again tells us:

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the GRACE that is given us” (Rom. 12:4-6).

So we see that all of God’s dealings with humanity, whether we are talking about forgiveness of sin, the granting of eternal life, knowledge of the truth, freedom and liberty in Christ, the indwelling of the Spirit, or the use of the gifts, come about as a result of His *grace*.

Not only are we saved by grace, we are also justified by the same. The source of justification is the

grace of God. The means of justification is the blood of Christ. The instrumental appropriation of justification is faith. And the fruit of justification is good works.

We are never saved by faith alone. The faith that saves, however, is never alone. We are not saved by faith plus works, but by a faith that works! But basis in grace, manifested in the blood of the Savior.

It might be good to remember that religion (for lack of a better term - pertaining to salvation, forgiveness, empowerment, justification, etc.) is grace, and ethics (moral living, obedience, righteousness) is gratitude (or a spirit-led response to the grace of God in one’s life). You will note that every letter of Paul’s begins and ends with grace. The last word of the New Testament is grace, **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all” (Rev. 22:21).**

Grace is, therefore, both the outpouring of forgiveness, reconciliation, mercy, and love upon an undeserving, unlovely people, as well as a divine empowerment that provides a framework within which the various gifts are manifested and utilized through various individual believers. Suffice it to say that without grace, nothing that God seeks to accomplish would be present in our lives. We simply can never afford to take this precious blessing for granted.

GRACE HAS A NUMBER!

It is true that *grace* means *favor*, but there are all kinds of favor. If we show favor to the poor, we call it *pity*. Favor shown to the miserable, we call *mercy*; favor granted the suffering, we call *compassion*; and favor that is given to the obstinate, we call *patience*. But favor extended to the undeserving, we can only call *grace*, and it truly must come from God Himself.

It is very interesting and instructive to note that when Paul says in Romans 3:24 that we are justified *freely* His (God’s) grace, the same word translated *freely* is rendered as *without a cause* in John 15:25 (**“They hated Me without a cause”**). Was there any legitimate cause for the Messiah to be hated? Absolutely not! He lived a perfect, Godly life. In like manner, is there any reason at all for God to justify us? None whatsoever!

THE HAND OF GOD

Abraham was a man who was called by the grace of God to leave his home town and country, even his father's house, and go trekking off into a foreign and hostile nation about which he knew nothing. There was no cause for God to have called Abraham. We do not know to what extent he was a worshiper of the one true God, but he certainly came from a part of the world that was steeped in rank paganism, and there is a strong Scriptural indication that Abraham's own father, as well as others in his genealogy, practiced idolatry. No matter what his background, there was simply no good reason to call and work with Abraham, based upon his own merits.

It is most interesting how God confirmed that Abraham was a product of His grace, for when He changed his name, He did so by inserting the **FIFTH** letter (*hey*) of the Hebrew alphabet to form the word *Abraham*. This particular letter is also the symbol for the number five as well.

Why mention the number five? Because research has demonstrated quite clearly that certain numbers in the Bible have significance, and the number five signifies *grace*. Let's analyze this number.

Five is a total of four plus one. Four is the number that is most closely associated with the earth. There are four directions of the compass, and four winds, and four corners of the globe, and four seasons of the year, and four rivers that ran through Eden, and the four-fold division of mankind into families, tongues, lands, and nations, and the four great prophetic world powers listed in Daniel 2, and four horns of the altar, and the four-square layout of Israel's camp, etc. Clearly, therefore, the number four is the number of this world and its weakness--its need for God.

The number five is the number four with the addition of the number one, thus representing divine favor being granted to an otherwise weak and defenseless humanity. There are quite a few Scriptural examples of how the number five is related to the concept and reality of God's grace. One of the most interesting can be found much closer and more readily than you might imagine. What is the first thought that occurs to you when ask to name something associated with the number five? I'll bet you came up with the same answer as did I--Your hand with its *five* fingers!

The human hand has five fingers. We are told that we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), and, while such a statement is almost surely to be interpreted primarily as spiritual in nature, still there are numerous passages where either the hand of God or the finger of God are mentioned, or where the use of the word *hand* is significant in relationship to God's grace.

When the ancient system of sacrifices and rituals was instituted, the command was given that every one bringing a calf or other appropriate animal to the tabernacle was to lay his hand upon it that it might be accepted (Lev. 1:1-4). God had this done to indicate His grace in allowing the Israelites the privilege of participating in such practices as His chosen people, and also because every animal sacrifice was representative of the Messiah's death, which transpired only because of God's grace toward a otherwise undeserving humanity.

The hand of God is mentioned so many times in the Bible that it would take an exhaustive study to cover them all in any detail. Let's just look at a couple of them for purposes of our discussion. Here is what God Himself said through the prophet Isaiah:

“Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you, yea, I will help you; yea, I will uphold you with the RIGHT HAND of my righteousness” (Isa. 41:10).

In like manner, David writes:

“My soul follows hard after You: Your RIGHT HAND upholds me” (Psa. 63:8).

And once again, he says:

“Show Your marvelous loving-kindness, O You that saves by Your RIGHT HAND them that put their trust in You from those who rise up against them” (Psa. 17:7).

While God accomplishes many different things with hands, He probably is shown most often upholding, strengthening and delivering His people by this method. I am persuaded that He uses His hand in so many of

these instances, because the hand, consisting of its five fingers, is indicative of His grace, by which He is able to defend and uphold the undeserving and weak human beings through whom He is working.

God also instructed the Israelites to be gracious toward each other. The way He did this, however, is very interesting. Notice how He phrases the following command:

“If there be among you a poor man of one of your brethren within any of your gates in your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your HAND from your poor brother: But you shall open your HAND wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wants” (Deut. 15:7-8).

Here the use of the hand is shown in open, rightly motivated, spontaneous giving to those in need. The opening wide the hand was and is a divine indicator of God’s precious grace toward us all

The hand figures prominently in other areas of the Scriptures as well. For instance, Christ often placed His hand on the head of sick people when He was about to heal them. In the ancient days, priests had hands laid on them at the time of their consecration.

Paul speaks in Galatians 2:9 of extending the *right hands* of fellowship to the brethren. In fact, shaking hands is very common, and is always a sign of friendship, respect, admiration, courtesy and grace toward someone.

THE FINGER OF GOD!

Remember that the number five consists of the numbers four and one. Four is the number of the world and of man’s weakness, and one is the number of God and His divine power. When these two are combined, you have human beings who are strengthened and blessed by God, even though they have nothing intrinsic within them to warrant such bestowal.

Following this analogy of the hand, we can see a similar 4 + 1 pattern. Interestingly enough, there is a

substantive amount of teaching in the Scriptures on the *finger* of God. When Pharaoh called upon his magicians to replicate the plague of lice upon the land of Egypt, here is what transpired:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out your rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so...and all the dust of the land became lice...And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not; so there was lice upon man and beast. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the FINGER OF GOD” (Ex. 8:16-19).

We also know that God specifically tells us in Exodus 31:18 that He wrote the Decalogue with His **FINGER**. In like manner, when the Jews confronted Him in the matter of the woman taken in the act of adultery, He stooped down and with His **FINGER** wrote on the ground. This particular episode is rich in its overtones of grace.

In ancient times, the priest was commanded to take his finger and dip it into the blood to sprinkle upon the horns of the altar of incense, again a further indication of God’s grace in action, for the blood was clearly symbolic of Yahshua’s (Jesus’) future sacrifice.

While the right hand signifies the grace of God in physical deliverance, His finger is typical of His grace being manifested in a more focused and perhaps a more spiritual manner. Notice the following comparison:

“But some of them (Jewish religious leaders) said, He casts out demons through Beelzebub, the chief of the demons. And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house fails. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?...If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges. But if I with the FINGER OF GOD cast out demons, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon You” (Luke 11:15-20).

In Luke’s account, Christ is said to have used the phrase *the finger of God* by which He admittedly cast out

demons. However, comparing this with the companion passage in Matthew, we see the following:

“And If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the SPIRIT OF GOD, then the Kingdom of God is come upon you” (Matt. 12:27-28).

Did you catch the difference in these two accounts? They are obviously two records of the identical event. There is no doubt about that. In Luke report, Christ said to be casting out demons by the *finger of God*, whereas in Matthew’s version, He does it by the *Spirit of God*. This is clear Biblical evidence that the finger of God and the Spirit of God are related in Scriptural imagery and type. This is very significant should you ever wish to pursue further any study into this fascinating subject.

Briefly, a couple of additional examples should wrap up this segment of our study. For one, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, the rich man, being in torment, begs God to send Abraham, that he might dip his finger into water and give him to drink. This was surely a cry for the grace and subsequent deliverance from God, but, in this instance, it was to no avail.

Finally, in John 20, we read the episode of *doubting Thomas*. Remember what Christ told him to do when he expressed unbelief? He could have just showed Thomas his wounds, but He went further to make a great point. He said:

“Reach hither your FINGER, and behold my hands; and reach hither your HAND, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27).

OTHER INTERESTING FIVES

Remember that four (number of the world and its weakness plus one (number of God and His divine strength) make up the number five (representative of God’s grace toward man). This combination of 4 + 1 is beautifully revealed in the story of David’s famous encounter with Goliath.

David was the least in his family. When Samuel came calling to anoint a king in the place of Saul, Jesse, David’s father, didn’t even call his youngest son to pass before the prophet. David was a shepherd, tending the flocks in the fields and hills around Bethlehem. It was purely a case of God’s outright grace that David was chosen to be king over all Israel. How often do we see that God has followed this pattern--of choosing the most unlikely people to become some of his greatest servants. In this manner, no one but God get’s the glory. David is certainly such an example.

When David was told to take provisions to his brothers who were with Saul and the army encamped in the valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines, his life, unbeknown to him, was about to be altered dramatically. The story is quite familiar to us all.

Goliath of Gath, the giant champion of the Philistines, taunted and vexed the Israelites, challenging any one of them to meet him in personal combat, but no one had the courage to take him up on his proposition. No one, that is, until young David arrives on the scene.

David no sooner had spotted his brothers and given them the supplies from home, when he quickly grasped the situation facing his fellow countrymen. But David was not nearly so moved to do what he did because of national pride. The thing that caused righteous indignation to rise up in him was the words he heard proceeding out of the giant’s mouth, as he belittled the true God of heaven and earth. And so the most unlikely candidate in Israel suddenly finds himself transported from the comfortable surroundings of home to the battlefield and the fight of his life.

This account is so remarkable, because it teaches us so much about God and how He is able to move His people and work through His people. In selecting David, God was showing forth His great grace, for in no other way could David have ever found himself in such a situation. The divine favor shown to this young man enabled him to walk fearlessly down into the valley and face this overwhelming adversary.

Goliath is typical of several things--certainly Satan himself, not to mention the enemy of God’s people in virtually any area of endeavor or life you might wish to choose. He is even symbolic of the anti-Christ to

come! David, of course, can be seen both as a type of Christ, who has already defeated Satan, and also as types of those empowered children and servants of the true God Yahweh, who stand up and do exploits for their God!

David refused the armor and weaponry of King Saul, opting rather for what most would have considered to be an inconceivable approach to doing battle with a nearly 10 foot high giant! He bent down and chose **FIVE** smooth stones from the nearby brook. Now notice that the number five is prominent in this episode. Also, that his ammunition is stones. Who is the ultimate stone? Obviously, it is our Savior. Five is the number of God's grace. The stones were selected not just from any ground, but from the water. Water is typical of the Holy Spirit.

The rest of the story we all know by heart. David took the first stone of the five (once again we see the 4 + 1 pattern), and proceeded to slay Goliath with a single shot to the forehead (please recall that the first purely Messianic prophecy in the Bible states that Christ would inflict the fatal wound in the **HEAD** of Satan - Gen. 3:15).

This marvelous episode of David and Goliath is a great lesson for us today. David chooses not one, two or twenty stones, but precisely five, symbolic of his own weakness (4) combined with the divine enablement of God (1), which equals **GRACE!** And, of course, it is of the greatest significance that David killed Goliath (Satan) with only one (God's strength) stone (Christ).

Closely related to the incident of David and Goliath is the confrontation of the Messiah and the devil during the 40 days of fasting. Here we have the ultimate fulfillment of the classic battle in which David and Goliath were only a distant typical figures and participants. What, you may ask, is the tie-in relative to the number five and the grace of God. Glad you asked!

We are told only of three specific occasions when Satan made outright propositions to Christ in an effort to tempt him to sin. There undoubtedly was turmoil and testing throughout the entire 40 day period, but we can only dwell on the details as they are given in Scripture. With that in mind, considered just how the Savior (Christ/David) disarmed and defeated Satan

(devil/Goliath). He did so not by choosing five stones, and using one of them to do the job. No, rather he choose one book of the first five books of the Bible, namely the fifth one--Deuteronomy (which in itself is also representative of God's grace, but that will have to wait). Christ spoke the words of the fifth book of the Pentateuch or Torah to Satan, and defeated him in the wilderness in preparation for the *advent* of His own public ministry.

Along another line, recall if you will that there were exactly four world-ruling kingdoms predicted by Daniel--Babylonian, Medo/Persian, Greek and Roman. But there is a fifth kingdom that, at the appropriate point in time, comes and destroys all the world kingdoms. There are really, therefore, five great kingdoms, four (representing the weakness of man), and one (symbolizing the Kingdom of God)!

It is also interesting that when God led ancient Israel out of Egyptian bondage, they came up out of the land in a particular formation. Notice the account:

“And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 13:18).

The correct marginal rendering for the term *harnessed* should read by **FIVE in a rank**. God had the Israelites go out this way to show that they were weak and utterly helpless (4), but that He (1) was with them, and His strength would preserve and uphold them.

As an aside, it is quite interesting that Sir Gardner Wilkinson, the eminent Egyptologist, has concluded that the number five was particularly hateful to the Egyptians. He states that it has been considered an evil number even down to this very day. Perhaps, just as Yahweh had brought plagues upon the land, afflicting the very areas where the various Egyptian gods reigned, in like manner He had the Israelites march out victoriously in ranks of five to further thwart the enemy. Who can say, but it is something to think about.

THE ANCIENT TABERNACLE

The tabernacle of Moses had the number *five* as its all-pervading number, says Dr. E. W. Bullinger in his

classic work *Number in Scripture*. Virtually every measurement is a multiple of *five*. The purpose of the tabernacle was for worship, and worship has everything to do with God's grace. That is precisely why the number five is stamped all over its dimensions.

Dr. Bullinger gives the following testimony:

“The outer court was 100 cubits long and 50 cubits wide. On either side were 20 pillars, and along each end were 10 pillars, or 60 in all; that is 5x12...The pillars that held up the curtains were 5 cubits apart and 5 cubits high, and the whole of the outer curtain was divided into squares of 25 cubits (5x5). Each pair of pillars thus supported an area of 5 squared cubits of fine white linen” (*Number in Scripture, p.142*).

In other words each pair of pillars supporting a 5x5 area of white linen is symbolic of God's grace, for our own righteousness is as filthy rags, but through God's grace, He adds to us His perfect righteousness. It is also remarkable that the brazen altar was precisely 5 cubits square!

The building itself was 10 cubits high, 10 cubits wide, and 30 cubits long. The boards on each side were held together by *five* bars passing through rings which were attached to them. On each side were hung *five* curtains held together by 50 taches of gold.

The first of the Entrance Veils was 20 cubits wide and 5 cubits high, and was hung on *five* pillars. The remaining two were 10 cubits by 10 cubits, also hung on *five* pillars.

These three veils are very significant in that they all represent Yahshua our Savior, for He is the only doorway through which we may enter into the presence of God, typified by the Holy of holies. It is very intriguing to note that the dimensions of the veils tell us something about the spiritual nature of the tabernacle pattern.

What I mean by this is that the first entrance veil has precisely the same area as the other two inner veils, but different dimensions. In the case of the first one, the size was 20 cubits wide by 5 cubits high. The inner veils leading deeper into the tabernacle and thus nearer God's presence have dimensions of 10 cubits by 10 cubits. So

what we can deduce from these measurements is that it is far easier to enter in through the first veil than to do so through the inner veils. This is all in keeping with the reality that not necessarily all of those who partake of the atonement (pictured by the brazen altar of burnt offering in the outer court area) move on deeper into the tabernacle--that not necessarily all who simply believe truly understand or participate in the fullness of spiritual worship.

The highest worship--entrance into the Holy of holies--was denied the Israelites, except through the admittance once a year of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. But it was this very inner veil separating the Holy of holies from the rest of the temple that was rent in two at the time of Christ's crucifixion.

THE HOLY OIL AND THE INCENSE

In Exodus 30:23-25, we read God's instructions concerning the holy anointing oil. Notice that it contains **FOUR** spices, namely, Myrrh (500 shekels = 5 x 100), cinnamon (250 shekels = 5 x 50), calamus (250 shekels=5 x 50), and cassia (500 shekels = 5 x 100). These spices were then combined with the pure olive oil to make a total of **FIVE** components.

This holy oil was used as the chief outward sign of divine consecration and separation. Aaron was anointed with it, as were his sons. The tabernacle was sanctified with the same oil, and all the furniture and vessels as well. Only the Almighty God can consecrate someone or something. Men cannot accomplish this act, even though they have tried to do so and claimed to do so for millennia! People believe that they can consecrate themselves to God's service, but this an erroneous concept. One may dedicate himself to God, but only God can consecrate. That is why the number five is so directly associated with this process, because consecration can only transpire as an act of divine **GRACE!**

When the was consecrated under the Old Covenant, the numbers *three* and *five* were closely associated with the ritual involved. Three acts linked with the number *five*. The blood and then the holy oil were put upon the priest in the following manner:

1) On the right ear - Thus signifying that the priest would hear the Word of God. Notice that hearing is *one* of the *five* senses given to man (again 4 + 1).

2) On the right thumb - This act emphasized that the priest was to obey God in action and service. Notice that *one* of the *five* digits was separated (4 + 1).

3) On the right big toe - Showing that the priest would walk in all the ways of Yahweh. Once again, the combination of *one* of the *five* prevails.

Today, this physical ritual is no longer performed, but the spiritual counterpart of it certainly obtains for true believers today; for we are also consecrated and sanctified by the blood of Messiah and the Holy Spirit. The significance of the three steps listed above cannot possibly be lost on the saints today, because the application is profound and more real than was ever the case in ancient Israel!

Today, brethren, we are considered by God as a part of the royal priesthood. Notice what Peter wrote:

”But you are a CHOSEN generation, a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Pet. 2:9).

Our selection to this most wonderful, prestigious, and responsible position has transpired in your life and mine because of God’s over-arching **GRACE!** We have already been anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit and covered with the blood of Christ. Now we must walk in Christ, even as we received Him, and that is by **GRACE THROUGH FAITH.**

In closing, I should mention the fact that the incense used by the ancient Israelite priests was also composed of *five* parts. In Exodus 30, we have God’s instructions in the matter. The ingredients of the incense follows the same pattern 4 + 1 pattern that we have observed in other instances. The four spices were: stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense. To this combination was added salt to make the total components five in number.

This special incense was very precious, and was not permitted to be duplicated for anyone’s personal use. It represented the merits of the coming Savior, and, in that regard, is also related to the prayers of the saints. Unless our prayers ascend to God through the person, accomplishments, excellence, and virtue of Christ, they are prayed in vain. That is why the restrictions were so rigid when it came to the composition and handling of the incense.

David said, **“Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” (Psa. 141:2).** The lesson to be learned here is that our words are worthless apart from the all-sufficiency of God’s grace and mercy. The smoke of the burnt offering of the evening sacrifice was representative of Christ’s priceless suffering. When David combines the smoke of the incense with the burnt offering, we are at liberty to make the direct connection between our prayers (incense) and Christ’s sacrifice (burnt offering). This is why we read in the New Testament the following passage from the book of Hebrews:

“BY HIM therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15).

CONCLUSION

Grace is indeed a *five* letter word! Were it not for the grace of God, not a single one of us would, most likely, even exist. God’s grace covers us like a garment and is responsible for all His blessings being bestowed upon us, the undeserving.

In our former religious affiliations, we really were not taught a great deal about God’s grace toward us, and this is so sad. It is impossible to place too great an emphasis on this marvelous facet of our Father and His Son.

To reinforce the importance of grace in the lives of human beings, God has incorporated a number of very intriguing types and patterns into the Scriptures, only a few of which have been covered in this short article, tha

can help us to sense His grace in action. No truer words were ever spoken than those given to the apostle Paul: **“My GRACE is sufficient for you.”**