

Bible Study Series: The Gift We Could Never Afford

Topic: The Grace of God and Our Response

Focus: Jesus as the source of Grace for imperfect people.

Introduction for the Leader

- **Perspective:** This study views Grace as God's unmerited favor. It emphasizes that while we cannot earn salvation (it is a gift), God has designated a specific way for us to accept that gift through faith and obedience (specifically repentance, confession, and immersion for the remission of sins).
- **Goal:** To help the group understand that they are broken and loved, and to show them the Biblical "roadmap" for accessing that love.

Part 1: The Reality of Our Condition (We Are Broken)

Objective: To establish that "being a good person" is not enough to bridge the gap between us and God. We need an outside intervention.

Scripture Reading:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." — **Romans 3:23**

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." — **Romans 6:23**

Commentary: In the Restoration tradition, we look at the Bible as a mirror. When we look into these verses, we see a hard truth: everyone is in the same boat. It doesn't matter if you are a "religious" person or someone who has never stepped foot in a church. We all have missed the mark. Sin isn't just "doing bad things"; it is a separation from the source of Life. We cannot fix this separation by simply trying harder. We need a rescue.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it hard for modern people to admit they are "sinners"? Does that word carry too much baggage today?
2. If the "wages" (what we earn) of sin is death, why is it good news that salvation is a "gift" rather than a "wage"?
3. Have you ever tried to fix a spiritual problem with a physical solution (working harder, being nicer)? Did it work?

Part 2: The Initiative of God (Grace Appearing)

Objective: To define Grace as God moving toward us before we moved toward Him.

Scripture Reading:

"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age..." — **Titus 2:11-12**

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"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." — **Romans 5:8**

Commentary: Grace is often defined as "unmerited favor." God didn't wait for us to get our act together before sending Jesus. He sent Jesus *while* we were messy and broken. This is crucial: Grace is not God ignoring our sin; it is God paying for our sin through Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. In Romans 5:8, what is the significance of the phrase "while we were still sinners"?
2. Titus 2 says Grace "teaches us." How does receiving kindness make you want to change your behavior more than receiving punishment does?
3. Do you think God expects us to be perfect before we come to Him? Why or why not?

Notes:

Part 3: Accessing the Gift (The Response of Faith)

Objective: To explain the Biblical response to Grace. This section introduces the specific distinctives of the Church of Christ view: that faith is active, not passive, and culminates in baptism.

Scripture Reading:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." — Ephesians 2:8-9

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" — Acts 2:38

Commentary: Here is the heart of the matter. We are saved by Grace (God's part) through Faith (our part). But what is "Faith"? Is it just a mental agreement? In the New Testament, faith always involves action. Think of it like a check written to you for a million dollars. You didn't earn the money (Grace). But the money isn't yours to use until you endorse and deposit the check (Obedience). Endorsing the check isn't "working" for the money; it is the required method of accepting the gift.

Biblically, we see this acceptance happen through:

1. **Believing** Jesus is Lord.
2. **Repenting** (Turning away from self-rule).
3. **Confessing** His name.
4. **Baptism** (Immersion).

In Acts 2:38, Peter connects repentance and baptism directly to the "remission" (forgiveness) of sins. We view baptism not as a "work" of merit, but as the moment God operates on the heart (Colossians 2:12), washing away sin through the blood of Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. Look at Ephesians 2:8. If salvation is a gift, why does God require us to respond?
2. Read Acts 2:37 ("Brothers, what shall we do?"). Why is it important that they asked what *they* should do?
3. Many people view baptism as just a symbol or a public ceremony. How does reading Acts 2:38 change that perspective to seeing it as the moment we meet God's grace?
4. Is it comforting to know there is a specific point in time where you can know you were "buried with Christ" (Romans 6:4)?

Part 4: Walking in Grace (The Christian Life)

Objective: To ensure the group understands that Grace is the fuel for the Christian life, not just the entry point. We don't earn our stay; we walk in the light.

Scripture Reading:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." — 1 John 1:7

Commentary: Once we have been washed, we are part of God's family. We will still make mistakes. We will still be imperfect. But the promise of 1 John 1:7 is beautiful: as long as we keep "walking in the light" (staying in relationship with Him, admitting our faults, trying to follow Him), the blood of Jesus *continues* to cleanse us. We don't have to be re-baptized every time we mess up. We live under a "canopy of Grace."

Discussion Questions:

1. What does "walking in the light" look like in a practical, everyday sense (at work, at home)?
2. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus' blood *keeps on* cleansing you as you stumble forward?
3. How can we as a group help each other "walk in the light"?

Conclusion & Next Step

Leader's Closing: "God has done everything necessary to save us. He provided the sacrifice (Jesus), He provided the plan (The Gospel), and He provided the invitation. The only variable left is our response. He doesn't ask us to be perfect; He asks us to be obedient and trust Him."

Final Challenge:

- **For the Believer:** Are you extending this same grace to others that God extended to you?
- **For the Seeker:** If you believe Jesus is who He said He is, what is holding you back from accepting His gift the way the Apostles taught in Acts?