

# Grace and More Grace

## 1 Timothy 1:13-14

When Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt, but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court.

The judge asked, "Guilty, or not guilty?" When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, "That'll be ten dollars -- a dollar for every mile you went over the limit."

Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. "You have violated the law," he said. "The fine must be paid--but I am going to pay it for you." He took a ten dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner! "That," said Billy Graham, "is how God treats repentant sinners!"<sup>1</sup>

We partially covered the subject of God's grace last week as it related to Paul specifically and of course us generally. Today we will continue with verses 13 and 14 from 1 Timothy 1.

1 Timothy 1:13-14 NAS:

<sup>13</sup> *even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;*

<sup>14</sup> *and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.*

The grace of God was especially meaningful to Paul because of his past. As a sinner first class he needed first class forgiveness and grace. God gave that grace to Paul abundantly. Before his dramatic personal introduction to Jesus on the Damascus Road, Paul **had been "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor"** (1 Timothy 1:13). A *blasphemer* is a person who insults, ridicules, scoffs at, lies about, and generally speaks evil about God. Not only had Paul been guilty of all these things, he had encouraged and even demanded that others blaspheme God as well (Acts 26:11). Paul related how he "*tried to force (Christians) to blaspheme,*" and his attacks were aimed directly at Jesus (Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8; 26:14-15).

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<sup>1</sup> *Progress Magazine*, December 14, 1992.

Paul did not just dislike Jesus. He was relentlessly and ferociously driven to make Jesus out to be nothing more than a clumsy, stupid, incompetent imposter. He was equally violent toward Christ's followers who belonged to this new Church. Thus Paul was considered a "persecutor," one who causes others to suffer because of their beliefs.

Acts 8:1-3 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> *Saul (Paul)<sup>2</sup> was in hearty agreement with putting him (Stephen)<sup>3</sup> to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

<sup>2</sup> *Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.*

<sup>3</sup> *But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.*

Acts 9:1-2 NLT:

<sup>1</sup> *Meanwhile, Saul (Paul)<sup>4</sup> was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest.*

<sup>2</sup> *He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.*

Not only did Paul fully support the murder of Stephen but many others as well.

Acts 26:9-11 NAS:

<sup>9</sup> *"So then, I (Paul)<sup>5</sup> thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*

<sup>10</sup> *"And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.*

<sup>11</sup> *"And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.*

Now just what is a **violent aggressor** (verse 13)? Webster says it is "a forceful action or procedure (as an unprovoked attack) when intended to dominate or master another person or thing."<sup>6</sup> "Bully" would be a good description of a "violent aggressor." It describes someone who has no regard for human kindness and decency. Someone like this has such contempt for a person that they are not satisfied unless they can physically

<sup>2</sup> Parentheses added.

<sup>3</sup> Parentheses added.

<sup>4</sup> Parentheses added.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. Eleventh ed.* Springfield, Mass. : Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003.

or emotionally hurt them. Such action gives them pleasure. Considering the kind of baggage Paul had in his past, you can readily understand why the Christians were very skeptical about accepting him as one of them after he claimed to have been converted (Acts 9:13, 26). They may have feared Paul was only pretending to be a Christian so he could find more Christians to kill or imprison.

Paul never forgot the kind of life Jesus delivered him from. Remembering his past helped Paul to maintain a humble, grateful attitude. How could a person not be grateful when shown such mercy? 1 Timothy 1:13 states that God granted mercy because Paul acted ignorantly in unbelief. Paul thought he was doing God's work when he persecuted Christians. He was an ardent Jew who wanted to keep the Jewish faith uncontaminated by what he thought was heresy about Christ being God in the flesh. Only a face-to-face meeting with the resurrected Christ showed Paul how wrong he was and that Christ is truly God's Son and the only way to heaven.

So Paul knew better than most, because of his sordid past, what he was talking about when he wrote to the Romans: *"but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"* (Romans 5:20 NASB). How stained with sin are you? Do you think you are too dirty to clean up? Well you are not! No matter what you have done, God has enough mercy and grace to forgive you and for you to take a major role in His plans for humankind. And the really great thing about grace is that you do not have to do anything to earn it. All you have to do is ask for it. Simply say, *"God I regret the sins I've committed. I acknowledge my need for a Savior to pay for my sins because I am not capable of doing it on my own. I trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to be that Savior. Please forgive me!"* You would now have gained entry to the most exclusive club in the universe, the family of God. You could never receive a more valuable and expensive gift than this, and it was free for the asking. How about that!

"Two or three years before the death of John Newton, when his sight was so dim that he was no longer able to read, a friend and brother in the ministry called to have breakfast with him. Their custom was to read the Word of God following mealtime, after which Newton would make a few short remarks on the Biblical passage, and then appropriate prayer would be offered. That day, however, there was silence after the words of Scripture 'by the grace of God I am what I am' were read.

"Finally, after several minutes, Newton spoke, 'I am not what I ought to be! How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be, although I abhor that which is evil and would cleave to what is good! I am not what I hope to be, but soon I shall be out of mortality, and with it all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor yet what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was: a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge that by the grace of God I am what I am!' Then, after a pause, he said. 'Now let us pray!'"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations : A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations*

**Now before going on we should probably distinguish between mercy and grace** as they are both referred to in verses 13 and 14. Grace removes guilt while mercy takes away the misery caused by sin. “Paul received the undeserved relief of misery and guilt that accompanies saving grace.”<sup>8</sup>

How about you? Are you miserable? Would you like to be free of that misery and guilt? Freedom is available through faith and trust in Jesus Christ. If you find yourself continuing in misery and guilt after declaring your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, it simply means that you do not have enough faith and trust to set you free. You may also have some psychological issues that need attention with a trained professional, but even those issues will be helped by faith and trust in God and Jesus. You, therefore, have some work to do. I know I do. So it is time for us to get to work and what is it that we need to do? We need to study Scripture and pray over it. When you read a passage from Scripture, do not just close the Bible or go on to another passage. Pray over the passage you read and ask God to help that wisdom change your life.

So Paul says that even though he was the worst of sinners he received **mercy** because he acted ignorantly in unbelief. Paul was not a man who turned against the teaching of Christ, abandoning a previous loyalty to Jesus. He was not like the Pharisees who understood what Christ was teaching and rejected Him. Hebrews 6:4-6 NLT tells us:

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible to bring back to repentance those who were once enlightened—those who have experienced the good things of heaven and shared in the Holy Spirit,  
<sup>5</sup> who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come—  
<sup>6</sup> and who then turn away from God. It is impossible to bring such people back to repentance; by rejecting the Son of God, they themselves are nailing him to the cross once again and holding him up to public shame.

Before his conversion, Paul did not know the fallout that would result from his actions.

Hebrews 10:26-27 NLT:

<sup>26</sup> *Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins.*  
<sup>27</sup> *There is only the terrible expectation of God’s judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies.*

Sinning deliberately after having the truth results in judgment. However, both the Old

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*for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

<sup>8</sup> Brian L. Harbour, *Notable Harbour Verse Studies – Verse by Verse Bible Studies on 1 Timothy*, WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Amazing Grace".

and New Testaments speak about what can be considered unintentional sins. Numbers 15:22-27 says:

Numbers 15:22-27 NLT:

<sup>22</sup> *“But suppose you unintentionally fail to carry out all these commands that the Lord has given you through Moses.*

<sup>23</sup> *And suppose your descendants in the future fail to do everything the Lord has commanded through Moses.*

<sup>24</sup> *If the mistake was made unintentionally, and the community was unaware of it, the whole community must present a young bull for a burnt offering as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. It must be offered along with its prescribed grain offering and liquid offering and with one male goat for a sin offering.*

<sup>25</sup> *With it the priest will purify the whole community of Israel, making them right with the Lord, and they will be forgiven. For it was an unintentional sin, and they have corrected it with their offerings to the Lord—the special gift and the sin offering.*

<sup>26</sup> *The whole community of Israel will be forgiven, including the foreigners living among you, for all the people were involved in the sin.*

<sup>27</sup> *“If one individual commits an unintentional sin, the guilty person must bring a one-year-old female goat for a sin offering.*

However, should a person commit sin intentionally and defiantly, that is a different ballgame. That person will be cut off from among his people.

Numbers 15:30-31 NLT:

<sup>30</sup> *“But those who brazenly violate the Lord’s will, whether native-born Israelites or foreigners, have blasphemed the Lord, and they must be cut off from the community.*

<sup>31</sup> *Since they have treated the Lord’s word with contempt and deliberately disobeyed his command, they must be completely cut off and suffer the punishment for their guilt.”*

Those who sinned deliberately and willfully were beyond hope because they were unrepentant. Those who sinned unintentionally and came in repentance and faith were covered by the atonement made on the Day of Atonement.<sup>9</sup>

Even the New Testament has some harsh directives concerning the Christian who intentionally sins.

1 Corinthians 5:2-5, 11 ESV:

<sup>2</sup> *And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has*

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

*done this be removed from among you.*

<sup>3</sup> *For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.*

<sup>4</sup> *When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,*

<sup>5</sup> *you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. . . .*

<sup>11</sup> *But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.*

So we see that even Christians are to be cut off from the community of believers if they intentionally and willfully engage in sin.

However, we also see in the New Testament, that Jesus prayed for those who had crucified Him. Luke 23:34 (NLT): *Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”* Note that Christ is basing His request on the fact that they were unknowingly, therefore unintentionally, killing the Son of God.

Peter addressed the issue in Acts 3:17 (NLT) when he was talking to Jewish leaders about their crucifixion of Christ. He told them, *“Friends, I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance.”* Once Paul was aware of the glory of Christ, he recognized his sin and took responsibility for it. In writing to Timothy, Paul declared himself to be the foremost of sinners.

1 Timothy 1:15 NLT:

*This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and **I am the worst of them all.***

Even though Paul may have considered himself the worst sinner of all, he received forgiveness because he obeyed God.

Acts 26:19 NLT:

*“And so, King Agrippa, I (Paul)<sup>10</sup> obeyed that vision from heaven.”*

When confronted by the truth, Paul embraced it.

Romans 7:9 NLT:

*At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life.*

Philippians 3:7-9 NLT:

<sup>7</sup> *I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*

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<sup>10</sup> Parentheses added.

<sup>8</sup> *Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ*  
<sup>9</sup> *and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.*

The grace of God is always bigger than the worst sin, and will always be given to the sinner who is willing to repent. Much sin can be conquered by a never ending supply of grace as supplied by God.

***“More than abundant”*** in verse 14 means that God's grace is always greater than mankind's sin. You might say that if the worst sinner in the world contained ten pounds of sin, God would be able to supply eleven pounds of grace. If the sin of all people in the world totaled 6,000,000,000 (6 billion) pounds, God could provide 6,000,000,001 pounds of grace.

Romans 5:21 NAS:

*so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

2 Corinthians 9:8 NAS:

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;*

Saving faith is not something we earn. Saving faith is a gift of God's divine grace.

Ephesians 2:8 NAS:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*

We are now going to make a statement that we are not sure we will ever be able to comprehend in this life. Many theologians over the years have come to this conclusion, so see if you can get your thinking caps working and come up with an explanation for us. Here it is:

*“Electing grace grants us the ability to believe in Jesus Christ and trust God for salvation.”<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995),



Well, how about it? What does it mean to you? Is it a statement which suggests a doctrine of predestination? Did God sit on His throne in Heaven long before He created the first man and the first woman and make a long list of all the people He would create and then decide which of them would be saved and which would go to Hell? There are a lot of people who are a whole lot smarter than us that think that is so.

It is at this point where we could detour into an extended theological evaluation of the doctrine of grace and predestination, but we do not think you really care to do that. So let us tell you what we think it means. If we were to list all the passages in Scripture that refer to God's grace, we would have pages and pages of Scripture to read. It is possibly the most important teaching in the Bible. Because without God's grace we would all be toast. We would have no chance of salvation and consequently no hope for the future.

There are perhaps six verses that pretty well help explain this statement we are trying to evaluate. Let us look at each of them because if you understand them you may understand all you need to know to guarantee your own salvation and then to be able to help someone who is not saved to understand the process of becoming saved. So here they are:

Titus 2:11 NAS:

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men.*

Revelation 22:21 NAS:

*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*

These two verses would lead us to believe that salvation is available to all people, which would place the doctrine of predestination in serious question.

Galatians 1:15 NAS:

*. . . God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace.*

This could lead us to believe that God longs for our salvation even before we are born (2 Peter 3:9; Psalm 139:9 ff).

Romans 5:1-2 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> *Therefore, having been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*  
<sup>2</sup> *through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.*

2 Timothy 1:8-9 NAS:

<sup>8</sup> *Join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,*  
<sup>9</sup> *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us*



*in Christ Jesus from all eternity.*

God's grace offers salvation to all people who accept Christ Jesus as the One who paid for their sins by His death on the Cross. Grace is offered where there is faith.

Acts 20:32 NAS:

*And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

“A true Christian is marked by continuing faith (Colossians 1:23) and love (1 John 3:14). God's grace is so abundant that it includes not only salvation, but the faith and love that accompany it.”<sup>12</sup>

John 1:16 ESV:

*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*

Lloyd Ogilvie has this to say about this verse in John:

“Try that on for real enjoyment! Grace *upon* grace. This not only describes God's mighty acts in history but in our own personal experience in Christ: grace that He found us; grace that He filled us with His Spirit; grace that intervenes in hundreds of serendipities each day; grace to cry out for Him when we are down; grace to praise Him when we count our blessings; grace when we are ill; through trials; grace to die victoriously; grace to live forever. Grace heaped upon grace, indeed!”<sup>13</sup>

Now let us go back and read the statement that is so difficult to understand and see if we can make some connections.

“*Electing grace grants us the ability to believe in Jesus Christ and trust God for salvation.*”<sup>14</sup>

God's grace provides every man, woman, and child the ability to believe in Jesus Christ because God has built into us a desire to know His truth (Romans 1:19-20). We are therefore provided the ability to trust that knowledge to be the truth, and when we do that through faith, God by His grace will grant us salvation. **Hold that thought until next week.**

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Lloyd Ogilvie, *Enjoying God*. Dallas TX: Word Publishing, ©1989. Page 24.

<sup>14</sup> John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 27-31.