

B O T T O M L I N E

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SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 2:8; Luke 15: **grace**.

Islam.

Heaven is described in the Qur'an as a beautiful garden. Jannah is **Paradise**, where those who have been good go. It is described in the Qur'an as "gardens of pleasure" (Qur'an 31:8). Muslims believe they get to **Paradise** by living religiously, asking Allah for forgiveness and showing good actions in their life.

Hinduism.

Moksha is a state of enlightenment that can only be achieved through a series of good deeds from one life to the next. Once Moksha is reached, there is no more suffering and ultimate self-realization comes into focus during that life. From there, with the rebirth cycle broken, the final step is loka (**heaven**).

Buddism.

In **Buddhism there** are several **heavens**, all of which are still part of samsara (illusionary reality). ... Because **heaven** is temporary and part of samsara, **Buddhists** focus more on escaping the cycle of rebirth and reaching enlightenment (nirvana). Nirvana is not a **heaven** but a mental state.

The way to achieve Nirvana has to do with karma and reincarnation. Each life you live can move you closer to the ultimate goal of not having to move in and out of this life but living in the ultimate state of enlightenment.

Judaism.

This is a bit of an over-simplification, but in Judaism salvation can be achieved in the following manner: Live a holy and righteous life dedicated to Yahweh, the God of Creation. Fast, worship, and celebrate during the appropriate holidays.

In general terms, all of the world religions are centered around what an individual has to do to earn their way to heaven or enlightenment or nirvana. Not so in Christianity...

Core verse:

Ephesians 2:8

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

Paul was a world traveler and premier teacher. Yet he had a remarkable ability to reduce the most complicated ideas into to a singular truth that you can put in your pocket and take with you. Here are some of his B O T T O M **L I N E** truths that will make a world of difference.

Today:

GRACE:

GOD'S UNMERITED FAVOR

What all other religions have in common is some human effort to achieve favor with God.

But with Christianity, it's not about us or *what we do or don't do...* it's about Jesus and what God has already done for us.

The word GRACE in the greek is the word:

χάρις *cháris*, (khar'-ece); is 1) that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: 2) grace of speech, good will, loving-kindness, favour

So literally when we talk about God's grace, we are talking about a gift that gives us joy.

It is an undeserved favor.

Christianity is based on **God's goodness** not ours.

Romans 3:23-24

²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

On our own we fall short. But with God's grace we can be justified.

Most people and all other world religions spend an extraordinary amount of time trying to be good, but our goodness will never earn us God's favor.

We are made new only because of God's grace, his unearned favor.

Technically, you can get to heaven on your own... all you have to do is be perfect.

Romans 3:23 says, "we all sin and fall short of that mark."

So we rely not on our own goodness, but on God's goodness through Christ.

Romans 3:24

²⁴and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

CHRISTIANITY IS BASED ON
CHRIST'S SACRIFICE NOT OURS.

Romans 5:8

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

Jesus died for us before we did a thing for Him. God didn't wait for us to get things right before He sent His Son to die. In fact, God sent his Son because He knew we could never get things right apart from Jesus!

Many of us spend our lives trying to do enough things or make enough sacrifice to make up for our mistakes, but it doesn't work that way.

It's not about what we do, it's about what Christ has already done.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God allowed Jesus to become sin for us. Jesus took upon himself our sin, so that by going to the cross his sacrifice might appease God's sense of justice and now our sins can be forgiven.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Because he was without sin, his sacrifice covers our debt.

CHRISTIANITY IS BASED ON
GOD'S FREE GIFT NOT OUR WORKS.

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Salvation is a free gift. Grace is a free gift of God. Being good enough is not good enough.

Isaiah 64:6

⁶All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

As hard as we try, our good deeds or righteous acts are like filthy rags compared to God's gift of grace. No matter what we do we cannot make things right with God through our own good deeds.

Ephesians 2:9

⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

Paul says, if we could then we would just become conceited. That kind of power would go to our heads.

God comes in and frees us, not because we are not guilty, or because we have done enough to make up for our sin, but God frees us based on what Christ has done. He sets us free in spite of our own mistakes.

Luke 15:11-24

¹¹Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who

sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on

his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

- a. The lost son comes home.
- b. He had spent his inheritance and now comes back to the only one who would welcome him, his own FATHER
- c. This younger son did more than come home from college. He was completely gone. Jesus describes him as dead and now alive again.

That's grace. The father calls the lost son back to himself and reinstates him back into the family.

The son simply had to return home.

Maybe that's you today. Maybe it's time to return home. The father is waiting with arms open. His grace will cover your mistakes.

There's another son in this story. This one is mad because he thinks the younger son had taken advantage of the father.

I actually think this is why Jesus told this parable. Because sometimes that's the way we think about others. We think our righteousness gains us more favor with God. But it's not true.

Luke 15:1-2

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ²But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Jesus tells a series of stories about things that are lost
Luke 15. Lost coin. Lost sheep. Lost son.

In each case there is rejoicing when those things are found. God is not waiting to condemn, he is waiting to rejoice.

So neither should we be looking to condemn others, rather we should be waiting to rejoice when those who are lost and far away return home.

Let's not be quick to condemn others. Let's help everyone find their way home, back to the father.

INVITATION:

Who are you today? Far from home? Spiritually bankrupt? God's grace is sufficient.

Ephesians 2:8

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

By grace you can be saved. Put your faith in God's power and Jesus sacrifice.

Repent. Be Baptized. Live for God.

Or maybe you have experienced God's grace, but you are living like the older son. Let's rejoice and be glad when others find their way home.

_____ is going to lead us into a time of communion.

Let's pray.

SGL Questions

1. The word GRACE in the greek is the word: χάρις chárīs, (khar'-ece); is 1) that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: 2) grace of speech, good will, loving-kindness, favour. What does grace mean to you?
2. What is the difference between Christianity and other the major world religions when it comes to grace?
3. God is good at grace. Why aren't we good at showing grace?
4. How can we be better at showing grace.

5. Do you ever have a hard time accepting grace? Why do you believe that is?
6. Who do you identify with the parable of the prodigal son?
7. Have you ever identified with the brother that stayed? Why do you think we act like son this sometimes?
8. The prodigal son asks for forgiveness and humbleness, so to show grace seems like it would be easy. How do we show grace to those that don't ask for forgiveness, yet they still need it?