

# PLAIN TRUTH<sup>®</sup>

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION<sup>®</sup>

## Grace Is the Gospel of Christ

By Greg Albrecht

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.*  
—Galatians 1:6-7

**T**he most fundamental meaning of the word *grace* flows out of the essence of God, who defines and reveals himself to us as love. **Grace is love and love is grace.** Beyond direct reference to the spiritual wonders of God's grace there are a wide variety of ways in which this multi-layered word *grace* is used in everyday life.

Gifted ballerinas, hockey players and ice skaters (among other talented artists and athletes) are said to move **gracefully** because, in

part, they seem to do so with uncommon ease and little apparent effort. Our usage in this regard correctly contrasts God's grace with human effort and toil.

Banks offer a **grace period** before the payments on a credit card will be assessed with additional interest charges. A **grace period** in our earthly economy explains a temporary exemption—but in this usage the bill or debt is still owed.

When we humans apply the word *grace* to our world, apart from God, it is diminished and watered down. Needless to say, there are no **grace periods** that God gives us after which we must pay in full.

We bow our heads before a meal and say *grace*. In the context of prayer, **grace** is our thanksgiving for all of God's gracious gifts.

When considerate, thoughtful and compassionate behavior and

communication is seen and experienced, both the message and the messenger are said to be **gracious**.

A **grace note** within the world of music is an embellishment or variation of a principle notation or theme. Once again, as with a *grace period*, the musical usage of *grace note* limits the totality and essence of grace.

A **grace note** in music is an extra embellishment not essential to the composition or arrangement.

**God's grace** is not just one note. God's grace is not merely one bean on a combination plate of Mexican food. **God's grace is the whole enchilada!**

### God's Grace is a Way of Life

**God's grace** is a privilege given to us that springs from his love and mercy rather than a "right" we can expect or demand.

**God's grace** is receiving what we do not deserve...and it is failing to receive what we believe we do deserve. God's grace is mercy, not merit.

**God's grace** is intricately connected to his love. God does not *have* love—he *is* love. In a similar way, **God's grace** is not a facet nor is it a part of the whole, but rather grace is the divine essence of God revealed to us in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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God's grace is not a measuring stick that determines where we stand with God. We either stand before God on the basis of law, or we stand before him on the basis of grace.

*If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.—Galatians 2:17-20*

Either we are justified—that is made right in terms of our relationship to and with God—by Jesus Christ, or we are made right in terms of our relationship to and with God by law. We are either justified to and with God by law—or by Jesus Christ—it must be one or the other—it cannot be a combination.

Paul had visited the Galatians, proclaimed the gracious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and then after he left, he found out that other teachers arrived and completely confused the Galatians. That's the background and backstory of Galatians.

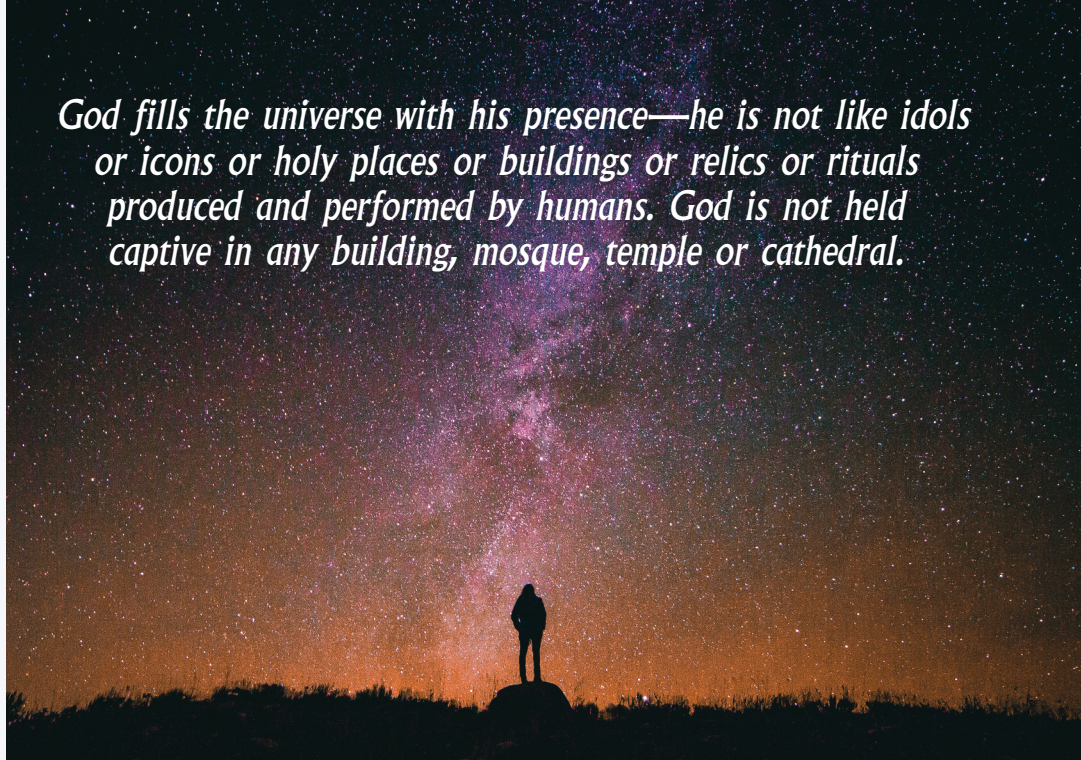
Galatians is a blunt and absolute testimonial detailing Paul's beef with the false teachers who were perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul insists they were changing Moses into Jesus, and Jesus into Moses.

The false teachers were putting the law in place of Christ—they were removing Jesus from the throne and replacing him with law so that law became the focus—lord and savior.

In his *Commentary on Galatians* written in 1535, Martin Luther summarizes the spiritually toxic problem Paul was combating:

*Men fast, pray, watch, suffer. They intend to appease the wrath of God*

**God fills the universe with his presence—he is not like idols or icons or holy places or buildings or relics or rituals produced and performed by humans. God is not held captive in any building, mosque, temple or cathedral.**



*and to deserve God's grace by their exertions. But there is no glory in it for God, because by their exertions these workers pronounce God an unmerciful slave driver, an unfaithful and angry Judge. They despise God, make a liar of him, snub Christ and all his benefits, in short they pull God from his throne and perch themselves on it.*

### **God's Grace is Greater Than Law**

Paul says that the law of Moses, the old covenant, condemned him (and us) BUT he now has another law, the law of grace and liberty which liberates him from the bondage of the old covenant law (Galatians 3:1-3, 5:1).

Paul talks about prisoners of the law and that the law results in bondage. Whereas, says Paul, when faith is revealed in and through Jesus Christ, those who trust, accept and embrace him are *no longer under the supervision of the law* (Galatians 3:25).

Paul says he has died to the law. He is a new man, a new creation of God, and by the grace of God he is free from the law, free in Christ. In Galatians 2:20 Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ. That is, for Paul as a Christ-follower, Jesus is Lord over all, including the law. For those who are prisoners of the law and held in its clutches, this is an amazing statement—and a

statement their religious beliefs cause them to reject.

People who are imprisoned by the law (Galatians 3:23)—any law, particularly within the world of religion—cannot imagine that God loves anything or anyone more than he does his law. But the gospel of Jesus Christ insists that he does love you and me more than any law!!!

Jesus was crucified by the law and by those who worshipped the law instead of Jesus, God in the flesh. Paul says as he embraces and trusts in Jesus—he joins Jesus in his death and resurrection.

With Paul, you and I continue to live in the flesh, so of course our crucifixion with Christ is a spiritual metaphor. But Paul says the life he now leads is a radically different life than the one he lived before, when he lived trying to please and appease God by the law.

Galatians 2:17-20 lays the groundwork for the great argument of this magnificent book of Galatians—that if someone seeks to please and appease God by their works and deeds, they are in fact rejecting the grace of God. Martin Luther offers these thoughts about this passage in his *Commentary on the book of Galatians*:

*Let us be warned. Everyone who seeks righteousness without Christ,*

*either by works, merits, satisfactions, actions, or by the law, rejects the grace of God and despises the death of Christ.*

### **God's Grace is Greater Than Karma**

Join me now as we focus carefully on God's grace, hovering over it like a drone or a helicopter—examining and contemplating God's amazing grace:

*Grace is not* like winning the lottery, because winning the lottery is luck, not an intentional gift. When grace is received and experienced it is never capricious or coincidental. Just as grace is never earned or deserved grace is always an intentional gift that can (and should) be traced back to God.

*Grace* is the economy of God—grace is the way he works and he is always at work in our world. Because we humans think we and others earn our own way and “get what we deserve,” we often don't perceive God's grace in action. God's grace flies under (perhaps over is more precise) our radar. God's grace is mysterious and “out

of this world” and is an economy we do not prefer.

We are engineered to work and earn, and thus we do not prefer the manner and means and way in which God works, and the ways in which he seems, from our perspective, to be silent and fails to perform to our expectations.

*Grace* is abundant, immeasurable and without restrictions. The supply of God's grace is limitless. We never need worry that God will run out of grace. *Grace is not* only something we receive, but once grace is given to us, we are empowered to pass it on to others. By definition, grace is dynamic and does not reside in one place, but is always moving forward, touching lives in many ways and places.

**Karma is the opposite of grace**—the idea behind *karma* is that the chickens will always come home to roost. *Karma* teaches cause and effect as a moral principle—*karma* believes good and virtuous actions lead to rewards and evil actions lead to trouble and torment.

*Karma* attempts to reduce God to the lowest possible human denominator, so that we humans can understand, manage and control him. *Karma* presents God as altogether predictable, and because he is predictable, *karma* suggests that we can steer, handle and even manipulate and influence God.

Grace however, is far bigger and transcends the temporal world of *karma*.

**Grace means** that God and the way he works is mysterious to the human capacity to comprehend and understand.

**Grace means** that

God gives good things to bad people—which is precisely what Jesus, in speaking of the heavenly Father, teaches us in Matthew 5:45: *He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

God does not need to be appeased—he is not angry or upset or filled with wrath, contrary to some well-meaning folks who think he is.

God is grace, and he gives us good things—should good things be dependent on humans deserving them, then humans would never receive anything good from God.

### **God's Grace is Everywhere for Everyone**

God fills the universe with his presence—he is not like idols or icons or holy places or buildings or relics or rituals produced and performed by humans. God is not held captive in any church building, any mosque, temple or cathedral.

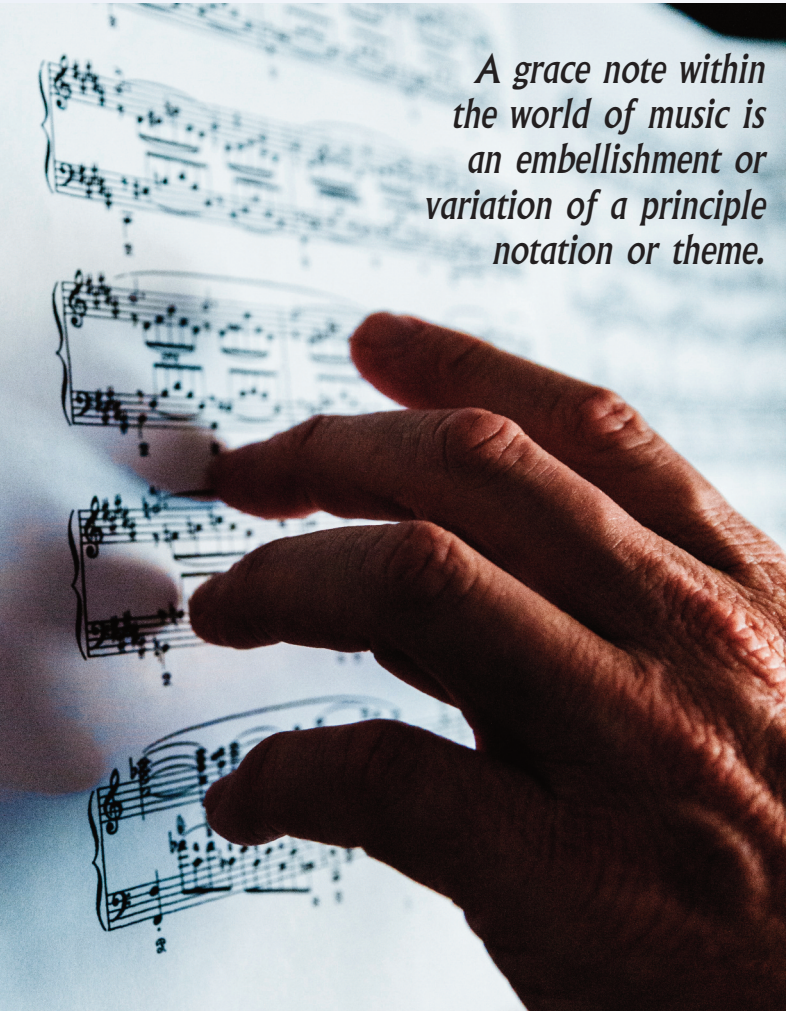
God defies denominational boundaries—it is impossible to place God within a religious or doctrinal strait jacket, though religions historically have attempted to do so, and still do. No one has the right to claim that they and their organization may “dispense” God's grace.

**God's grace** obliterates human claims about having an exclusive right to own God or exclusive franchise to speak for him. **God's grace** bulldozes religious country clubs where people band together, “protected” and “safe” from outsiders who are sinful, undesirable, unqualified spiritual scum, while the insiders in their holy huddle celebrate their own righteousness.

*Grace* demolishes the human idea of success. *Grace* is not about getting and keeping and controlling and being gratified. *Grace* is about serving, pleasing and giving to another.

*Grace* demolishes claims of human superiority, of greater virtue and righteousness, of unique status before God. *God's grace* demolishes Christ-less religion, nationalism and racism (see Galatians 3:28).

**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!** □



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