

**GRACE: Chosen by Grace** <http://oakbrookchurch.com> Morgan Young 10.23.11

We are people who like justice. We want things to be fair. We want equality. We are a justice culture.

We want there to be well defined lines and if someone crosses them we want them to be dealt with. We like justice.

When someone blows past you on Dixon Rd. what do you say? You shake your head in disapproval and say,

*"Where's a cop when you need one?!"* We like justice.

There may be no better indicator of this than the overwhelming amount of crime-based TV shows since the beginning of television.

### **50's**

Peter Gunn  
Phillip Marlowe  
Dragnet  
Highway Patrol

### **60s**

77 Sunset Strip  
The Fugitive  
The Untouchables  
Perry Mason  
MOD SQUAD

### **70s**

Adam 12  
Manix  
Ironside  
Hawaii Five-0  
Baretta  
Kojak

### **80s**

Hill Street Blues  
Magnum PI  
Miami Vice  
Moonlighting  
21 Jump Street

### **90s**

The Commish  
Law & Order  
Murder She Wrote

Matlock (sr citizen crime-solving spree)

Now we have more than **30** police or crime related shows on the air!

Since 1955, television characters have been murdered at a rate **1,000 times higher** than real people!

And what we like about those shows is seeing justice served. People getting what they have coming to them.

SELAH

But we're starting a series called GRACE. And as much as we use that word inside of churches and in Christian tweets, I'm not sure how well we truly understand and comprehend it.

Perhaps mostly, because we're so unknowingly justice-oriented.

Justice is about what we have coming to us.  
Because he did *that*, he deserves *this*.

Grace is about what we *shouldn't* have coming to us.  
Because he did *that*, he *doesn't deserve* this, but he *gets it anyway*.

Justice hinges on the word "deserve."  
*"Hey—they got what they deserved!"*

"Deserve" cannot go with grace.  
"Deserving grace" is a contradiction in terms.

As Andy Stanly says (book: *The Grace of God*),

***"You can no more deserve grace than you can plan your own surprise party. In the same way planning voids the idea of surprise, so claiming to deserve voids the idea of grace..."***

***The minute you think you deserve it, the it you think you deserve is no longer grace. It is something you have earned. But grace can't be earned"***

And grace can't be fully appreciated or understood unless we've messed up something. Broken something. Made a mess of things.

When we discover something in our home that one of our children has broken, and we track them down—finding them hiding in a closet—and say to them,

*"It's ok... I love you... Let's go clean it up.... It's ok..."*

In that moment it's only the guilty child that comprehends grace. Only people who acknowledge their messes and feel bad about them, can know grace.

This too is why grace is so foreign to us.

In our culture we hide our messes and find excuses for why we did what we did. Grace can't exist in that scenario.

Instead of hiding in the closet--if we found our child eating Doritos watching TV and we confronted them-- and they didn't feel bad and expected us to forgive them. That wouldn't be grace. When we expect grace, it cannot exist.

SELAH

Biblically, grace existed with the first sentence of the Bible. Genesis 1:1.

**"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."  
Genesis 1:1 nlt**

From the very beginning, God gave us incredible sunrises and sunsets.  
Star-drenched, moon-glowed nights on black velvet.  
Awe-inspiring mountains.  
Lush plains.  
Ridiculous vegetation.  
Autumns that explode with color...

Incredible imagery that no one deserved.

Genesis 1:26 reads,

**"Then God said, 'Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals.'"  
Genesis 1:26 nlt**

From the very beginning, God out of his grace, created us.  
He did not created us robotically.

God created us with passions, pleasures, desires, dreams.

Created man and woman to enjoy each other emotionally, relationally, physically, spiritually.

He gave us the responsibility to rule over all of the other life on this planet.  
We didn't deserve to be created like we are.  
We didn't deserve to be the top dog on the planet.

God could have created us to function in the dark, like moles.

Given us an existence void of color and diverse terrain. Made us mindless drones.

But He gave us a global home that's inspired thousands of years of great art.

Even in flat north-central Indiana, we drive in our cars in awe of the fall colors on the background of deep blue skies and wispy clouds.

God created us and our global home out of his GRACE.  
We didn't deserve this home or this life.  
It was graciously lavished upon us!

SELAH

One of the biggest misconceptions in Christianity is about the Bible and GRACE. We wrongly read the Old Testament and think,

"That's the God of wrath. The Smiter.  
That's about law and justice.  
The Old Testament God was a judging, warring, genociding God who's different from the New Testament God."

We wrongfully think, "Grace didn't come into the picture until the New Testament in the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Like most parents, as God got older, couple thousand years go by, He softened up and He eventually became the fuzz-bunny-grace-filled God."

Uh, no. That's incorrect.

To give us the correct picture of grace as it is threaded through the Bible, I'm going to share an excerpt from Scot McKnight's book, *The King Jesus Gospel*, that I've edited and adapted.

If you've struggled to understand the big story of the Bible.

If you've thought it to be hard to understand and follow—then listen up—what I'm about to share is the essence of the Bible from cover to cover. The cohesive story from Genesis to Revelation.

This is the Reader's Digest version—Genesis to Revelation in 5 minutes or less.  
(Adapted from *The King Jesus Gospel* by Scot McKnight)

In the beginning God **<Genesis>** (The Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit) created everything we see and some things we don't see. He made Adam & Eve and gave them one task: govern this world on God's behalf.

Instead of following God, they listened to the serpent and to themselves and ruined their opportunity to govern.

They acted like God. They rebelled.

So God banished them from Eden and into the world as we know it.

Sadly all Adam and Eve's descendents have proven the same pattern:  
We want to rebel. We want to make the rules.

Still, God gave the descendants an opportunity to right the ship.

But they did miserably. They didn't rule God's way.

They constantly revealed their stark rebellion against God. God would have to choose another way of establishing His rule on earth. How?

God chose Abraham; He chose the nation of Israel. **<Genesis 12>**

God created a covenant (promise) between Him, Abraham and Israel—an eternal covenant to redeem people.

God transferred the governing assignment from Adam & Eve to Abraham and Israel.

They did well at times and other times they rebelled and went their own way.

As God's chosen people, He was with them when they were slaves in Egypt. God was for them. God led them (Israelites) out of Egypt through Moses. **<Exodus>**

God wanted them to live as a kingdom of priests, so He gave them the Torah (1<sup>st</sup> five books of Old Testament) and renewed His covenant with them at Mount Sinai.

This Torah was to govern them in Israel **<Exodus 19>** and if they followed it, they would flourish.

But they did not do well. They didn't allow the good Torah of God to govern them. This second arrangement wasn't working either. (1<sup>st</sup> was Adam & Eve)

Israel asked for a king like other nations had. **<1 Samuel 8>**

God hesitated but eventually gave the rebels what they wanted: a human king.

Out of His grace, God gave them King David. This was God's third attempt for man to govern God's way. (1<sup>st</sup> Adam & Eve, 2<sup>nd</sup> Torah)

Because King David was a descendent of Adam & Eve, he too rebelled and messed up the kingly reign. **<2 Samuel 11>**

He passed the throne onto someone who messed up even worse, Solomon. **<1 Kings>**

King after king ruled, ultimately failing, out of rebellion.

So God sent prophets to tell the kings that they were off track and there was only one true King, one God, YHWH. (Ya'-way: Hebrew name of God) **<Isaiah thru Malachi>**

Because of their rebellion, God had to discipline Israel to regain the people's attention. Sometimes it worked. (Eg. Exile of Babylon) But in the end Israel had forgotten their assignment (same assign. as Adam & Eve); that they were a priestly kingdom to bless the world.

After a long silence, God began the final plan and broke into history with Someone who was both a descendant and non-descendant of Adam & Eve; someone who would rule rightly and not rebel. **<Matthew, Mark, Luke, John>**

God sent Jesus, through Mary and Joseph. He sent an angel to tell Mary that Jesus would rule on God's behalf as Messiah (one who saves people).

But even though Jesus did exactly what God told Him to do, neither Israel nor the Gentiles (non-Jews) accepted Jesus as Messiah. *(This theme further reveals that we are all rebels who want to go our own way and think we know what's right.)*

Even though Jesus led a sinless life focused on God's will and redeeming the lost, both the Jews and Romans put Him to death in the most unfathomable manner: crucifying Him naked on a cross.

The rebels were in control; Adam & Eve's descendants had reached a new low.

What the rebels and descendants didn't know was that Jesus was actually entering into their rebellion and the death they deserved for their sins.

He died the death they deserved.  
He absorbed the just wrath of God against all sin for all time.

They didn't know that God could reverse their rebellion and reverse their death and start all over again.

They didn't know that the cross was the crown and that power comes only when it is surrendered.

They didn't know they'd met their match in King Jesus, who was ushering in a different kind of kingdom.

The same grace of God that was there for Adam & Eve, and throughout the Old testament, was now unleashed in a new way on the cross.

God raised Jesus back to life to end the power of death;

to prove that rebels would not have the last word, and to show that descendants could have a new lineage.

Instead of staying in Adam & Eve's family, we can now be adopted, becoming sons and daughters of God.

If people simply turn to Jesus, they are forgiven and their rebellion forgotten forever.

To create this new kingdom society, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit **<Acts>**

to empower them, fill them, and transform them from rebels into servants of God's love, peace, justice, and holiness.

This is the right way to govern the world on God's behalf: by loving others with everything we've got.

From the Garden to now, God's been showing us grace, giving us another chance.

At the cross, God chose to allow everyone to be people of the kingdom, called the church.

And He summoned them to believe in Jesus, to turn from their rebellion, and to identify with Jesus. They would enter His death and resurrection and through that, find new life.

Even with the Holy Spirit, we are an imperfect people imperfectly reflecting Christ in an imperfect world.

Someday the Perfect One will return to earth. **<Revelation>**  
He will rescue His people and set them up one final time in this world.

All rebellion will end.

Everyone will serve Jesus in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God the father.  
Humans will finally govern on God's behalf in the way of Jesus. Forever.

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So. Out of grace, God creates us and an incredible home for us.  
But grace doesn't stop there.

As that biblical overview illustrated: Out of grace,  
***God continually cleans up what we mess up.***

As we see in the Bible, God can "take people out" at the drop of a hat.

But God has a plan for us—a covenant—a promise-- to use us to be His people on this planet.

The biblical phrase is, "a priestly nation."  
Or the priesthood of all believers.

What that means is that you and I have direct access to God—we don't need an earthly priest. It means that you and I are on mission to do the work of God on this planet.

God didn't just call us into a life of attending church on Sun.

He calls us into the mission of God's purposes and God's plans for this planet.

It's not a covenant we made with God—*He* made it with us.

We don't deserve to be His people.  
We don't deserve this covenant.

But by His grace, we *ARE* His people.  
We *ARE* a priestly nation. And when God says "nation" He does not mean "government,"  
He means "PEOPLE."

And even though we keep messing up, out of grace, He keeps cleaning up.

But please hear me on this:

When we hear that grace is threaded through it all,  
and that God cleans up what we mess up...

It's easy to slip into the bad theology of,

*"Whatever I do, it's cool—I gotta Holy Maid to make it all good! It's ALL grace!"*

Listen to me: that's wrong! And even though this is a series on GRACE there's more to it than only GRACE.

Let's look at Matthew 5:17-20

(Jesus speaking)

**<sup>17</sup> "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. <sup>19</sup> So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

**<sup>20</sup> "But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!**

**Matthew 5:17-20 nlt**



“Don’t misunderstand” means there’s been a misunderstanding.

The next sentence says what the misunderstanding is:

People think that since Jesus came, now the rules and laws in the Old Testament don’t matter anymore.

Translation: They think it’s ALL GRACE, YO!

But Jesus says that He, in fact, came to accomplish the purpose of the Old testament. A way to translate that verb “accomplish” is to say,

Those laws and writings POINT TO JESUS.

And not only do ALL those writings point to Him, but Jesus says (18-19) even the tiniest law in the Old Testament matters.

Jesus is saying,

**“It’s not law OR grace—it’s law AND grace!”**

Why did He say that? Why is it law AND grace?

If we have kids, do we just love them and let them run around like little hellions without any parameters?...

No. We define rules.

We define rules to:

- keep them safe
- help them grow,
- help them develop character
- help them learn virtues,
- help them reflect the values of our family.

We define all these rules because we LOVE them!

That’s the answer to why Jesus said it’s law AND grace:

God defined rules (Old Testament) to:

- keep us safe
- help us grow
- help us develop character
- help us learn virtues
- help us reflect the values of God’s family that we are adopted into!

And as we strive to live by even the *tiniest* bit of the law, when we mess up God’s there to clean it up. Law AND grace.

Ok, now the last part v 20:

**“But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!**

**Matthew 5:20**

“I Warn you” = SERIOUS...

“Righteousness” means “right relationship with God.”

So translation: “Unless your relationship with God is better than the Pharisees’ relationship with God...”

The Pharisees had RULES about God. They never got past the rules into a relationship with God.

So Jesus is saying, if you do religion the way the Pharisees do, you’ll never get to heaven.

Jesus is saying, (my paraphrase)

“Keep the law, because it’s good and my Dad wrote it, because He loves us. And trust Me. Know me. Be in right relationship with ME. And I will get you to heaven...”

SELAH

And getting past the law—for them back then, and for us now—means being willing to trust God.

Rules are tangible. We can track them. They require no faith.

Trusting God isn’t quite as black and white. It requires faith.

And because this covenant God made with us is based in grace—He won’t force Himself on us.

This covenant that God offers us started with Abraham:

**23 And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.”<sup>[a]</sup> He was even called the friend of God.**

**James 2:23 nlt**

God asked Abraham if he would trust Him. And as it’s retold here in James, Abraham chose to believe—chose to TRUST that God was who He said He was and that God would be with him.

And since Abraham believed God—  
(remember what “righteous” means? *Right relationship.*)

Abraham trusting God brought him into relationship with God—as it says, “*God counted him as righteous.*”

And the covenant that God offered to Abraham, He offers to us.

SELAH

Life with God doesn’t begin with a command.

Life with God begins with a question, “Will you trust me?  
Will you trust that I am God?  
Will you trust me to take away your sins; past and future?  
Will you trust me to lead your life?”

Will we trust a God who gave us the gracious gift of incredible life?  
Will we trust a God who gave us the gracious gift of this incredible global home?

Will we trust a God, that even though we’ve been messing things up for thousands of years—keeps coming after us?

Will we trust a God that was so earnest and grace-filled about His covenant with us that He sent His sinless Son to seal the deal on a cross?

Will we trust a God who has proven over thousands of years, that  
He is worthy.  
He is good.  
He is grace-filled  
He is committed to us?

(setup salvation)  
(Concluding text:)

**For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.**  
***Romans 3:23***

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

**For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”**  
***Romans 10:13***

Are you ready to trust God?

Do you want to know Him personally?

Then pray in your own words:

Thank Him for what Jesus did on the cross for you.

Ask Him to forgive your sins...

Ask Him to lead your life

Thank Him...