

Living in God's Grace

A 6-Part Study

By HopeHouse.vi

Living in God's Grace

This six-part series explores the powerful, undeserved favor of God—grace that reaches into our weakness, rescues us from striving, and reshapes how we live. Each part unpacks a unique aspect of God's grace, from its unmerited nature to its expression through freedom, transformation, and love. Whether you're new to the idea of grace or seeking a deeper understanding of it, this series will help you rest in the truth that God's love is not earned—it is given. Through biblical teaching, reflective questions, and prayerful response, *Living in God's Grace* invites you to walk in the beauty and freedom of a grace-filled life.

Part 1: The Lord Helps the Helpless

- Introduction to grace vs. works-based religion.
- The truth behind the myth of “The Lord helps those who help themselves.”

Part 2: Grace is Unmerited Favor

- Exploring the nature of grace: it's unearned, undeserved, and fully given by God.

Part 3: The Prodigal Son — A Story of Redemption

- A deeper look at the parable of the Prodigal Son and how it illustrates grace.

Part 4: Grace in the Old Testament

- Examples of grace in the Old Testament and how God's favor was given to the undeserving.

Part 5: Grace and Works — Finding the Balance

- Discussing how grace and works are related but how grace always precedes works.

Part 6: Living in the Freedom of Grace

- Practical ways to live daily in the freedom and power of God's grace.

Part 1: The Lord Helps the Helpless

The Myth of "The Lord Helps Those Who Help Themselves"

The phrase "**The Lord helps those who help themselves**" is commonly quoted, but it's nowhere to be found in Scripture. In fact, it reflects more of a **self-help philosophy** than biblical truth. The idea that God will only help those who first take action contradicts the core of the gospel message.

This phrase misrepresents the **heart of grace**. It suggests that God's help is **conditional** on our actions, a concept that stands in stark contrast to the gospel, which is rooted in the **unmerited favor** of God.

Grace Doesn't Require Us to Help Ourselves First

At the heart of Christianity is the truth that **we cannot save ourselves**. Jesus didn't come for those who had it all together; He came for the **broken**, the **weary**, and the **helpless**. He didn't say, *"I will help you once you help yourself,"* but rather, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28)

Grace is not about **earning** God's favor—it's about **receiving** it. Jesus declared, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). The work of salvation was completed on the cross. We don't need to **earn** God's help; we simply need to **receive** it in faith.

The Gospel vs. Self-Reliance

The gospel message is one of **dependence**, not independence. It's about recognizing that we are **spiritually bankrupt**, and without God's intervention, we have no hope. As Jesus said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:3).

We must first **acknowledge our need** for God before we can receive His help. This is the beauty of grace: it's freely given, not earned through our efforts.

Jesus Helps the Helpless

One of the most beautiful aspects of Jesus' ministry was His deep **compassion** for the helpless. He didn't wait for people to clean themselves up before He reached out. He

healed the sick, restored the broken, and loved the outcast. He didn't say, "I'll help you once you've done your part"—He simply **gave**.

Think about the **parable of the prodigal son** (Luke 15:11-32). The son didn't help himself first—he was **lost, broken, and destitute**. But when he returned to his father in humility, the father **ran to him**, embraced him, and restored him. This is the gospel: the Father's love isn't based on what we can do for ourselves—it's based on His grace and mercy.

A Call to Humility and Faith

Instead of focusing on trying to help ourselves in a futile attempt to earn God's favor, we are called to **humility** and **faith**. We acknowledge that we are **helpless** and **in need of grace**, and we **trust** in God's ability to save, heal, and transform us—not because we deserve it, but because of His great love.

As **Romans 5:6** says: *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."* Jesus didn't wait for us to help ourselves. He **came to help us when we were helpless**.

Final Thoughts: Rest in His Grace

The true gospel is a message of **grace**, not self-effort. The idea that we must first help ourselves in order to earn God's favor diminishes the **greatness of grace**. God's love and help are **given freely**, not because of our ability, but because of His mercy.

Instead of living by a false principle like "The Lord helps those who help themselves," let's embrace the truth of the gospel: **The Lord helps the helpless**. And for that, we can be truly thankful.

Part 2: Grace is Unmerited Favor

What is Grace?

Grace is the foundation of the Christian faith, yet it is often misunderstood. Many people see grace as just a nice “gift” from God, but in reality, it’s far deeper and more profound than that. Grace is **unmerited favor**—it is God’s **undeserved, unearned, and unrepayable** love and kindness extended to us, not because of anything we’ve done, but simply because **God chooses to give it**.

Grace: The Gift We Could Never Earn

One of the central themes of the Bible is that **God’s favor cannot be earned**. It’s not about working hard to prove our worthiness or following a set of rules to make ourselves acceptable to God. The Apostle Paul writes in **Ephesians 2:8-9**:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

This passage highlights the heart of grace: it’s a **gift**. It’s not something we can work for, and it’s certainly not something we deserve. If we could earn it, it wouldn’t be grace—it would be a **payment** for our work. Grace, by definition, is **unearned** and **undeserved**.

Grace vs. Works

In many religious traditions, there is an emphasis on **good works**—doing things that please God in order to earn His favor. While good works are important and are an outgrowth of a life transformed by grace, **they are never the means of gaining grace**.

In fact, if grace could be earned by our actions, it would no longer be grace at all. Paul is clear on this point in **Romans 11:6**:

“And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.”

If we could earn God’s love by our works, it would contradict the very nature of grace. Grace is freely given, not earned. It is **God’s decision** to give us favor, even when we don’t deserve it.

Grace: God's Love Despite Our Failures

One of the most incredible aspects of grace is that **it's given despite our shortcomings**. We don't have to **clean ourselves up** before we come to God. Grace is not conditional; it doesn't depend on us being "good enough." In fact, grace is most fully displayed in our **weakness** and **failure**.

In **Romans 5:8**, Paul writes:

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

God didn't wait for us to become perfect before He sent Jesus. He sent His Son to die for us **while we were still sinners**—completely undeserving of His sacrifice. This is the true essence of **unmerited favor**: **God's love is not dependent on our performance**, but on His grace.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

Jesus told the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) to illustrate this very point about unmerited favor. In the parable, a landowner hires workers at various times throughout the day. At the end of the day, he pays all of them the same wage, regardless of how many hours they worked.

Naturally, the workers who had been hired first complained, feeling that the ones who worked fewer hours should have been paid less. But the landowner responds:

"Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matthew 20:15)

This story illustrates **grace** perfectly. The landowner, representing God, gives to everyone **according to his own generosity**, not according to what they deserve. The workers who were hired last did nothing to earn the full wage, but they still received it, because it was **the landowner's choice to give freely**.

Living in the Freedom of Grace

If grace is truly unmerited favor, how should we live in light of that? First and foremost, we should live in **gratitude**—acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God. This doesn't mean we should live carelessly or sinfully, but it does mean that we are **free from the burden of earning God's favor**. We can rest in the fact that God's love is not based on what we do, but on His **love for us**.

Grace should lead to **freedom**, not guilt or shame. In **Romans 6:14**, Paul says:

“For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”

When we understand that we are **under grace**, we can live in **freedom**—freedom from trying to earn God’s love, freedom from legalism, and freedom to **love and serve others** because of the grace we’ve received.

Final Thoughts: Rest in the Gift of Grace

In this series on grace, we’ve explored how God’s grace is **unmerited favor**—a gift we can’t earn and don’t deserve. It’s not about what we do, but about what God has already done for us through Jesus. Let’s remember that we are **not defined by our works**, but by God’s love and His grace, freely given.

As you continue in this journey of grace, may you be reminded that it’s a gift—a gift that doesn’t require you to be “good enough,” but only to receive. And in that receiving, you are called to offer the same grace to others.

Part 3: The Prodigal Son — A Story of Redemption

The Parable of the Prodigal Son: A Picture of Grace

One of the most powerful stories of grace in the Bible is the **Parable of the Prodigal Son** (Luke 15:11-32). In this parable, Jesus paints a vivid picture of God's **unfathomable grace**, showing that no matter how far we've fallen or how deeply we've sinned, **God's grace can redeem and restore us**.

This story is a **beautiful illustration of grace**, where the **unmerited favor** of the Father is extended to a son who doesn't deserve it. Let's dive into the story and explore its deep, life-changing message of redemption.

The Son's Rebellion: The Beginning of the Fall

In the parable, Jesus tells of a young man who demands his inheritance early, essentially wishing his father were dead. He takes the wealth, leaves his family, and spends it all in reckless living. The Bible says:

"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." (Luke 15:13)

This is a picture of **rebellion**—the son chooses to go his own way, rejecting his father's love and wisdom. In doing so, he loses everything. This part of the story speaks to how we often rebel against God, thinking we know better, only to end up **empty, broken, and far from home**.

The Reality of Sin: Hitting Rock Bottom

As the son's wealth runs out, a famine strikes the land, and he is forced to take a job feeding pigs—a job so lowly that a Jewish audience would find it disgraceful. The son is at his lowest point, where he is **desperate** and **hungry**. It's in this moment of utter **brokenness** and **humiliation** that the son comes to his senses.

"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!'" (Luke 15:17)

This represents the **moment of realization** for anyone who finds themselves caught in sin. We come to the point where we **recognize our need for God**, our **brokenness**, and the emptiness of the life we've chosen. It's when we've hit rock bottom that God's grace begins to make sense.

Repentance and Return: Turning Back to the Father

The son's return is marked by **humility** and **repentance**. He prepares a speech to confess his wrongs to his father, saying:

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." (Luke 15:18-19)

This moment of **repentance** is key in the journey of grace. The son **acknowledges his mistakes** and humbles himself, understanding that he no longer has the right to demand anything from his father. He simply wants to return home, even as a servant.

But here's where grace breaks through: The father, upon seeing his son from a distance, **runs to him**—he doesn't wait for the son to reach him. This is **unconditional love**, love that doesn't require us to be perfect, but that **welcomes us home**, no matter how far we've fallen.

The Father's Response: Unmerited Grace and Restoration

When the son arrives, the father doesn't scold him, but instead embraces him. He immediately orders a feast to celebrate his return:

"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. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'" (Luke 15:22-24)

The **father's response** is one of **grace** and **restoration**. The son doesn't deserve a feast; he hasn't earned back his place in the family. But the father's love isn't based on the son's merit. It's based on **grace**. The son is **restored** to his rightful place—not as a servant, but as a **beloved son**.

The Elder Brother: A Lesson in Self-Righteousness

The older son, however, reacts differently when he hears the celebration. He is angry and refuses to join the feast, saying:

"Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours... comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!" (Luke 15:29-30)

The elder brother represents **self-righteousness**—the belief that our relationship with God is based on our **own efforts** and **good works**. He sees the father's grace as **unfair**, and he is **angry** because the younger brother is **treated with mercy** despite his sin.

The father responds gently, saying:

“My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” (Luke 15:31-32)

The **elder brother** has missed the point of grace: It's not about what we **deserve**, but about what God freely gives. The **elder brother** sees himself as righteous because of his good deeds, but like the Pharisees, he doesn't understand that **grace isn't earned**—it's given.

Grace in the Prodigal Son: A Picture of God's Heart

The story of the prodigal son beautifully shows us **the heart of God's grace**. No matter how far we stray, God's arms are always open, ready to welcome us home. Our mistakes don't disqualify us from God's love—**His grace** is greater than our sin.

As you reflect on this parable, remember that grace doesn't depend on your ability to “get it right.” It depends on God's willingness to **love** and **restore** you.

Final Thoughts: The Heart of Redemption

The prodigal son's story is a story of **redemption**—a picture of what God offers us through Jesus. Just as the father welcomed his son back with open arms, God offers us **restoration**, no matter how far we've gone or how much we've messed up. Grace doesn't wait for us to be perfect—it invites us to come home, exactly as we are.

In the next part of this series, we'll continue exploring **grace** by looking at how it transforms us from the inside out. **Grace changes everything**—and it calls us to live **differently** in response.

Part 4: Grace in the Old Testament

When many people think of grace, they think of the New Testament—Jesus, the cross, Paul’s letters. But **grace didn’t begin at Calvary**. The grace of God is woven all throughout the Old Testament, long before Jesus physically walked the earth. From the Garden of Eden to the prophets of Israel, God was already showing His people **unmerited favor, mercy, and relentless love**.

Grace is not a new concept—it is part of God's **unchanging nature**.

Grace in the Garden of Eden

Even in the very beginning, after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, God responded with **grace**.

Yes, there were consequences—sin entered the world, and death came with it. But God didn’t leave them in their shame. Instead:

“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”
(Genesis 3:21)

God **covered their shame**. He didn’t abandon them. In fact, He initiated the very first **sacrifice** to cover their sin—a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice to come.

Grace showed up in the very moment of humanity’s first failure.

Noah: Grace in a Corrupt World

In a world full of wickedness and violence, God decided to cleanse the earth—but in the middle of that judgment, we read a crucial sentence:

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” (Genesis 6:8, KJV)

Noah wasn’t perfect. But he **walked with God** and found **favor**. God’s grace preserved humanity through Noah and his family. Even in judgment, **grace was at work**, preserving a path forward.

Abraham: Grace Before the Law

Abraham's relationship with God is one of the clearest examples of grace. God chose him—not because Abraham had done anything great—but simply because of **God's purpose and promise**.

“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6)

Abraham's righteousness came not by law (which didn't exist yet), but through **faith**—just as it does for us today. Paul later quotes this verse in Romans and Galatians to show that even in Abraham's day, salvation was by **grace through faith**.

Israel: A Nation Sustained by Grace

Over and over, Israel rebelled. They grumbled in the wilderness. They turned to idols. They broke the covenant. But God continued to show them **mercy and grace**.

“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Psalm 103:8)

David, a man after God's own heart, knew the grace of God well. He committed terrible sins—adultery, deception, and even murder—yet when he turned back to God in repentance, he found forgiveness and restoration. Psalm 51 is David's cry for mercy, and it overflows with the understanding that **only God's grace** could cleanse him.

The Prophets: Calling People Back to Grace

The prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and others—were not just messengers of judgment. They were voices calling people back to the God of **grace and compassion**.

God's words through Joel are especially powerful:

“Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love...” (Joel 2:13)

Even in warning of destruction, God was **extending an invitation** to return to Him—offering **restoration, not rejection**. That is grace in action.

Grace Foreshadowed: The Sacrificial System

The entire Old Testament sacrificial system was **not a way to earn salvation**, but a **temporary covering** of sin—always pointing forward to the coming of Christ.

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Hebrews 9:22)

God gave the Israelites a way to live in relationship with Him despite their sin. These sacrifices were symbols of **grace**, not works—a system designed to show the seriousness of sin and the **need for a Savior**.

God’s Grace Is Not New—It’s Eternal

We often think of God’s character in Old vs. New Testament terms—as if He were a God of wrath in one and grace in the other. But this is a false divide. The truth is: **God has always been a God of grace.**

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

His methods may have changed as the story of redemption unfolded, but His heart never did.

Final Thoughts: Grace From Beginning to End

The Old Testament is not devoid of grace—it is **saturated with it**. From the first breath of creation to the final prophetic promises, we see a God who **pursues, forgives, and restores**. Grace is not just a New Testament theme—it is the heartbeat of **all of Scripture**.

As we continue this journey into God’s grace, we’ll next explore how grace and works interact—not as opposites, but as **grace leading to transformation**.

Part 5: Grace and Works — Finding the Balance

The Tension: Grace vs. Works

One of the most frequently misunderstood aspects of the Christian life is the relationship between **grace and works**. Some lean so far into grace that they forget about obedience and transformation. Others focus so heavily on works that grace feels like a reward rather than a gift.

But Scripture doesn't present grace and works as **opposing forces**—it shows us a **beautiful balance: we are saved by grace**, and we respond in **good works**.

Understanding this balance is crucial to living in the **freedom** of the gospel without falling into either **legalism** or **license**.

Salvation Is by Grace Alone

Let's start with the foundation:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."
— Ephesians 2:8–9

We are **not saved by our efforts**. No amount of good behavior can earn us salvation. Grace is **unmerited favor**—it is the **undeserved kindness of God** extended to us through Jesus Christ. That means our salvation is completely dependent on what **Christ has done**, not what **we can do**.

But Grace Leads to Good Works

And yet... Paul doesn't stop at verse 9. He immediately adds this:

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
— Ephesians 2:10

We are not saved **by** good works—but we are saved **for** good works.

Grace doesn't make works **irrelevant**—it makes them **possible**. We don't serve God to **earn** His love. We serve Him **because** we have experienced His love. It's not about working to be accepted; it's working **from** a place of being accepted.

Faith That Works

James famously writes:

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”
— James 2:17

Some have seen James and Paul as contradicting each other—but they are not. Paul talks about **how we are saved**: by grace. James talks about **what real faith looks like**: a life that bears fruit.

True grace doesn’t produce **passivity**—it produces a desire to honor God with our lives. Not out of fear or obligation, but from a **changed heart**.

Legalism vs. License

When we misunderstand grace and works, we tend to fall into one of two traps:

1. Legalism:

The belief that we must earn God's favor through performance, rule-keeping, or religious effort.

Legalism says, *“God loves me when I do good.”*

But grace says, *“God loved me while I was still a sinner.”* (Romans 5:8)

2. License (or Lawlessness):

The belief that since we’re saved by grace, we can live however we want.

But Scripture says:

“Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!”
— Romans 6:1–2

Grace sets us free—not to sin, but to **walk in freedom, righteousness, and gratitude**.

The Fruit of Grace

When we truly receive grace, it **changes us**. We don’t keep on living the same way. The Spirit of God begins to **transform our hearts**, shaping our desires to align with His.

“For the grace of God... teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.”
— Titus 2:11–12

Grace is not just pardon—it’s **power**. It doesn’t excuse sin; it empowers righteousness.

Walking the Balance

The Christian life is not a tightrope walk between grace and works—it’s a life firmly grounded in grace, **producing works** as the fruit of a changed heart.

We don’t strive to be loved—we are already loved.

We don’t serve to be saved—we serve because we’re saved.

We don’t work to earn grace—we work because **grace is at work in us**.

Final Thoughts: Responding to Grace

So how do we respond to grace?

With worship.

With obedience.

With compassion.

With service.

Not to earn something, but to **reflect** the One who gave everything for us.

In our next post, we’ll explore what it looks like to live in the **freedom of grace**—not bound by guilt or fear, but walking daily in joy, peace, and purpose.

Part 6: Living in the Freedom of Grace

From Earning to Resting

When we truly understand grace, it changes **how we live**. It moves us from striving to resting, from fear to peace, and from guilt to gratitude. Grace doesn't just rescue us from sin—it **releases us into a new way of living**.

This final part of our series explores what it means to **live daily in the freedom of God's grace**.

What Is the Freedom of Grace?

Freedom in Christ means that we are no longer bound by:

- The **burden of trying to earn God's approval**,
- The **weight of our past failures**, or
- The **fear of condemnation**.

As Paul writes in **Romans 8:1**:

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

That one sentence is the key to spiritual freedom. Grace **breaks the chains of shame** and sets us free to walk in relationship, not religion.

Freedom Is Not a License to Sin

It's important to clarify: freedom doesn't mean **lawlessness**. Grace isn't an excuse to do whatever we want—it's the **power to become who we were created to be**.

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."

— Galatians 5:13

Freedom isn't the **absence of boundaries**, it's the **presence of love**—where we no longer live under the law, but under **the leading of the Holy Spirit**.

Grace Frees Us to Be Honest

When you live under grace, you no longer have to hide.

You don't have to pretend you've got it all together. You don't have to carry the weight of your past. You can say, "Yes, I've failed—but I'm not a failure. I've sinned—but I've been forgiven. I am not what I was—I am being made new."

Grace gives us the **freedom to be real**, because it's not our perfection that earns God's love—it's His love that perfects us.

Freedom to Rest

One of the most overlooked gifts of grace is the **freedom to rest**.

You don't have to strive. You don't have to perform. You don't have to constantly prove yourself. Jesus said:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
— Matthew 11:28

This is the rest of **knowing you are accepted, loved, and secure** in Christ. That kind of rest gives you strength to live joyfully and serve freely—not from exhaustion, but from overflow.

Freedom to Grow

Grace doesn't leave us where it finds us. It transforms us.

When you live under grace, you have the **freedom to grow at God's pace**. You don't need to compare your journey to someone else's. You don't need to fake progress. God is patient with your process.

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
— Philippians 1:6

Freedom in grace means **you are allowed to be a work in progress**. And God is faithful to finish what He starts.

Freedom to Love

Perhaps most importantly, grace gives us the freedom to **love others without judgment**.

When we understand how deeply we've been forgiven, we can extend that same forgiveness to others. When we stop measuring ourselves by performance, we stop measuring others that way too.

Grace doesn't puff up—it reaches out.

Living Grace-Filled

To live in the freedom of grace means:

- You serve God with joy, not fear.
 - You obey out of love, not duty.
 - You forgive, because you've been forgiven.
 - You rest, because the work is finished.
 - You grow, because God is patient and present.
 - You love, because you are loved.
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Closing Thoughts: Grace for the Journey Ahead

As we conclude this series, remember this: grace is not a one-time gift—it is the ongoing rhythm of the Christian life. It met you at salvation, and it walks with you still. You don't have to earn God's love, and you never have to fear losing it. His grace is sufficient in your weakness, faithful in your failure, and generous in your growth. Let this journey be just the beginning of living each day with confidence—not in yourself, but in the One who says, *"My grace is enough."* Go forward in peace, resting in the arms of grace and extending that same grace to a world in need.

Scripture for the Road Ahead

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

— Hebrews 4:16