

The Reign of Grace

Chapter 1

By [Abraham Booth](#)

That we may proceed with greater clearness and certainty in our following inquiries, it is necessary to consider what is implied in the term *grace*. The primary and principal sense of the word, is *free favor; unmerited kindness*. In this acceptation it is most frequently used in the inspired volume; and thus it is to be understood in the words of the Holy Ghost under consideration. Grace, in the writings of Paul, stands in direct opposition to works and worthiness, all works and worthiness of every kind, and of every degree. This appears from the following passages. *Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace. For by grace are ye saved, not of works, lest any man should boast. Who hath saved us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.* (Rom. 4:4,16. Eph. 2:8,9. 2 Tim 1:9)

As the word *mercy*, in its primary signification, has relation to some creature, either actually in a *suffering* state, or obnoxious to it; so *grace*, in its proper and strict sense, always presupposes *unworthiness* in its object. Hence, whenever any thing valuable is communicated by the blessed God to any of Adam's apostate offspring, the communication of it cannot be of *grace*, any further than the person on whom it is conferred is considered as *unworthy*. For, so far as any degree of worth appears, the province of grace ceases, and that of equity takes place. Grace and worthiness, therefore, cannot be connected in the same act, and for the same end. The one must necessarily give place to the other, according to that remarkable text: *If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.* (Rom. 11: 6) From the apostle's reasoning it is evident, that whatever is of works, is not of grace at all; and, that whatever is of grace, is not of works in any degree. In the apostle's view of things, works and grace are essentially opposite, and equally irreconcilable as light and darkness. Besides, when Paul represents the capital blessings of salvation as flowing from divine grace, we are led to consider the persons on whom they are bestowed not only as having no claim to those benefits, but as deserving quite the reverse, as having incurred a tremendous curse, and as justly exposed to eternal ruin.

That grace, therefore, about which we treat, may be thus defined: *It is the eternal and absolutely free favor of God, manifested in the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal blessings to the guilty and the unworthy.* What those blessings are,

we shall endeavor to show in the subsequent pages. Meanwhile be it observed, that, according to this definition, the grace of God is *eternal*. Agreeable to the import of those reviving words; *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* (Jer. 31:3) It is divinely free, and infinitely rich. Entirely detached from every supposition of human worth, and operating independently of all conditions performed by man; it rises superior to human guilt, and superabounds over human unworthiness. Such is the eternal Origin, such the glorious basis, of our salvation! Hence it proceeds and is carried on to perfection. Grace shines through the whole. For, as an elegant writer observes, it is "not like a fringe of gold, bordering the garment; not like an embroidery of gold, decorating the robe; but like the mercy-seat of the ancient tabernacle, which was gold, pure gold, all gold throughout."

Yes, reader, this is the inexhaustible source of all those inestimable blessings which the Lord bestows on his unworthy creatures, in this or in a future world. It is this which, in all that he does, or ever will do for sinners, he intends to render everlastingly glorious in their eyes, and in the eyes of all holy intelligence. The indelible motto inscribed by the hand of Jehovah on all the blessings of the unchangeable covenant, is, **TO THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE.**

Hence we may learn, that if grace in its own nature, and as it is exercised in our salvation, be directly opposite to all works and worthiness; then those persons are awfully deceived, who seek to join them together in the same work and for the same end. However high their pretenses may be to holiness, it is plain from the word of God, and may in some degree appear from the nature of the thing, that they take an effectual way to ruin their souls forever, except that very grace prevent, of which they have such false and corrupt ideas. For divine grace disdains to be assisted in the performance of that work which peculiarly belongs to itself, by the poor, imperfect performances of men. Attempts to complete what grace begins, betray our pride and offend the Lord; but can not promote our spiritual interest. Let the reader, therefore, carefully remember, that grace is either absolutely free, or it is not at all: and, that he who professes to look for salvation by grace, either believes in his heart to be saved entirely by it, or he acts inconsistently in affairs of the greatest importance.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to RPM

RPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like RPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [RPM](#), please select this [link](#).

