

# Grace Living

Dr. Joe L. Wall

Vice President of International Training

*Grace* can be defined as “the unmerited favor of God,” or “the expression of God’s love toward undeserving men.” The biblical doctrine of grace is important to us as a mission, because we sense that it is important to God and because we have observed that grace oriented churches and believers tend to be more effective in evangelism and church growth. Paul the Apostle spoke and wrote often about grace, and he was willing to die for the message of grace (Acts 20:24). Much of his ministry was focused on developing churches that truly taught and lived out the doctrine of grace. Here are some of the major biblical teachings about living under grace (or “grace-living”):

1. **Assurance of Salvation**—Living under grace starts with our coming to God, without any dependence on our works, and trusting Him to graciously provide forgiveness and eternal life, based entirely on the sacrificial death and resurrection of His Son. Furthermore, living under grace is greatly enhanced by our having the assurance that our relationship with God is secure, not because of our faithfulness, but because of His. Although we are aware of the possibility of divine discipline if we refuse to listen to our heavenly father, we live our lives in joyful and thankful fellowship with God without the fear of losing our salvation. (Ephesians 2:8, 9; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 John 5:10-13).
2. **Dependence on God**—Living under grace is a walk of faith (Galatians 5). Grace living means we live with a complete dependence on Jesus Christ to produce everything that is of any eternal value in our lives, by living in and through us (John 15; Galatians 2:20). It involves our trusting God’s grace to be totally sufficient to meet all of our needs during both the good times and the hard times (2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:13).
3. **Thankful, Humble Attitude**--Grace living means that we recognize we deserve nothing but judgment from God, so we live our lives with thankfulness to God for all He has done and is doing for us, without any complaint about any of our circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 2:14). Furthermore, those with a grace-attitude are not arrogant toward or envious of others, but they live with an awareness of their own sinfulness and limitations (Romans 5-7; John 15; 1 Corinthians 13).
4. **Freedom from Law and Holy Living**--Grace living means that we recognize that we are free from living under law, and that we now live under grace as personal slaves of Jesus Christ, (Romans 6:14, Galatians 1). This does not mean that we are free to sin, or that God has lowered His standards of holiness. Rather it means that we are free from trying to please God by obeying rules or laws (which we can often rationalize our way around). It means that we recognize that we have become slaves of Jesus Christ whose life is our model of holiness. Truly living under grace produces Christ-like holiness (Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Titus 2:11-12).
5. **Motivation and Power**--Grace living means we are primarily motivated to serve God out of love for Christ and our desire to please Him. We want his “Well done” when we appear before Him at His judgment seat in heaven. Grace living also means that we live our lives under the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit, as He helps us to understand the heart of God by illuminating our understanding of God’s Word and as He produces in us Christ-like qualities like the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (2 Corinthians 3; 5:14; Ephesians 4:13; Galatians 5).
6. **Conduct of Others**--Grace living means that we allow the Holy Spirit to lead other believers to an understanding of how he or she is to live a holy life, and that we not impose our standards of conduct on others. It means that we don’t judge another believer’s conduct unless we have the responsibility as church leaders to carry out discipline for major immorality or clear contradiction of major biblical doctrines (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 1).
7. **Acceptance of Others**--Living under grace means that we accept other believers as brothers in Christ even if we differ on non-essential issues (Galatians 2). It means that we do not separate from or judge another believer because we disagree with his or her application of biblical principles to church practice and Christian conduct—e.g. music styles, time for worship services, participation in cooperative Christian ministries, smoking, drinking, makeup, hair style, apparel, etc. It also means that we do not express a judgmental or a condescending attitude toward those whose lifestyles are different from ours; nor does it mean we are free to flaunt our liberty in such a way that we offend those who have different standards of conduct (Romans 14). Grace living means that when we disagree with another brother, we communicate with him and about him in a gracious fashion motivated by love (Philippians 2).