

**THE GRACE OF GOD**  
**Gary Wiley, The Kenya National Students Conference 2026**

**GRACE SESSION ONE - IN THE PAST**

*Not only when you were born into the world did Christ love you,  
but His delights were with the sons of men before there were any sons of men!  
He often thought of them; from everlasting to everlasting He had set His affection upon them.* Alistair Begg

**INTRODUCTION**

- A. The priority of knowing God
- An Archbishop of Canterbury, *The longest spiritual journey is from head to heart.*
  - There is a big difference between knowing about God and knowing God. Too many people spend their lives gaining information about God but it never gets past their hear. We serve a God who is personal who has done everything necessary so we can know Him.
  - This conference should be a mix of learning to know about God with the intent of knowing Him.
  - The better you get to know God the less you will ask why and how? God is not bound by time. We are. God is all knowing. We are not. It is not a sin to ask why and how but the spiritually mature believer will trust in the Who.
  - Jeremiah 8:23-24, *Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."*
  - 2 Peter 1:3, *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,*
- B. Importance of Grace
- J. I. Packer, *Properly understood, this single word encompasses New Testament theology in its entirety.*
  - G. L. Bray, *Every dimension of human salvation—from initial calling through redemption, justification, conversion, sanctification, and final glorification—constitutes an act of divine grace.*
  - Charles Ryrie, *Christianity is distinct from all other religions because it is a message of grace.*
  - All other religions are works.
- C. The meanings of grace in the Bible
1. Grace in the Old Testament
    - a. Chen
      - It is the closest word to grace in the Old Testament, *to favor someone, of a superior to an inferior.*
      - It is first used in the Bible with reference to Noah, Genesis 6:8, *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.* Grace involves God's selective salvation of a few while judgment falls on the many.
      - A beautiful verse that declares a transition to the concept of grace in the New Testament, Zechariah 12:10, *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*
    - b. Chesed
      - It is God's steadfast loving-kindness.
      - Psalm 130:7, *O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.*
      - Chen and chesed overlap with mercy and goodness in Old Testament thought, Psalm 86:15, *But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*
    - c. The fulness of God's grace takes place in the New Testament. The new component is redemption not covering.
  2. Grace in the New Testament
    - a. Charis in the Greek language
      - It conveys the sense of a gift of kindness and favor given to a person or persons.
      - The Greek philosophical concept of man was based on merit apart from grace.
    - b. Charis in its Biblical sense
      - Grace in the New Testament is the culmination of God's favor first demonstrated in the Old Testament, note John 1:16-17, *For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*
      - Charles Ryrie, *...the lavish gift of God's Son becoming grace's distinctive meaning ... Christianity gave grace a meaning it never had before.*
      - It is God's sending His Son to make payment for the sins of those called to Himself.

- c. Charis explained
  - It is the great exchange, 2 Corinthians 8:9, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*
  - One of my first encounters with the issue of Adam's sin at seminary was when the professor said when Adam sinned, we were there. He was our representative. His failure became our failure. But is that fair? Consider the great exchange. Jesus gave us His righteousness in exchange for our sins. Was that fair? Of course not. But, I am eternally grateful for what He did for me and you.
  - It is grace received through faith, Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
  - The fallacy of stating, *My faith saved me.* Faith is not the price of salvation, but gives access to salvation. God's grace through Jesus Christ is the means of salvation. Sins are not excused but paid for by Jesus on the cross. His resurrection proves His payment was accepted by the Father.
- d. Charis defined
  - G. L. Bray, *Grace fundamentally means undeserved favor, typically extended from a superior to an inferior ... God's grace operates as a free act through which he reaches out to sinful humanity and rescues them from condemnation, despite their lack of merit.*
  - Horatius Bonar, *Upon a life I have not lived, Upon a death I did not die, Another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity.*
  - That's grace!

### **GRACE IN THE PAST**

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.  
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9*

- A. Grace in eternity past
  - 1. God's sovereignty versus man's free will.
    - Ephesians 1:4-6, *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*
    - Romans 8:29-30, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*
    - The mind of God can't be fully understood by the limited ability of creatures. God is not bound by time so it is difficult to fully understand God's decrees since we are bound by time.
    - All of God's decrees, including the process of salvation, are controlled by grace not works.
    - God initiates and completes the salvation process solely on grace, not on any goodness that could be found in an individual.
    - God calls some out of sin by grace and allows others to remain in spiritual darkness since mankind chose sin with its consequences.
    - God's sovereignty and man's free will are parallel facts which I believe meet in the heart of God at the cross of Jesus Christ.
    - Alistair Begg, *There is a delicate tension in reconciling the responsibility of man with the sovereignty of God. Many people believe they must choose between the two when, in fact, both ideas are biblical and connected. They are two truths that sit side by side, seemingly irreconcilable in our finite human minds yet both entirely true. We don't need to worry away at them as an intellectual exercise. Instead, we are free to respond by bowing down in wonder over the kindness of Almighty God on our behalf.*
  - 2. An examination of key terms of salvation in Romans 8:29-30
    - a. *Foreknowledge - For those whom he foreknew*
      - God foreknows those who will come to faith.
      - It is not necessarily a decision by God to save but a precursor to that step.
      - The important point is that God's decrees are solely based on grace despite our inability to understand the connection of each point.
    - b. *Predestination - he also predestined*
      - It means *decreed, decide upon beforehand.* God decided in eternity past to choose some for conformity to Christ.
      - Ephesians 1:11, *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,*
      - Alistair Begg, *Our election in Christ is not some kind of historical afterthought; it goes all the way back into eternity past, before creation. Yes, we do decide to follow Christ—but it is so humbling to recognize that we could never have chosen God if He had not chosen us before the creation of the world. You would not be capable of deciding to follow Him if He had not first decided to make you His child.*

- c. Calling - *he also called*
- It means to *summon* or *invite*, here, God calls individuals to salvation.
  - 2 Timothy 1:9, *who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,*
  - Charles Ryrie, *Grace by its very nature cannot be deserved; thus election is not of deserving people.*
  - Alistair Begg, *The doctrine of election is not a banner under which we march but a bastion for our souls. It makes all the difference to our security and our joy. Once you humbly recognize that your identity in Christ was established the moment He first set His affection upon you, even before the dawn of time, you find freedom and you have confidence. You don't need to seek to come up with some reason in yourself to understand why you have received His amazing grace; you can simply enjoy knowing that He chose you because He loves you. You don't need to live burdened by your sin or crushed because you feel you are making little progress in your Christian life, for His love was never based on your performance or on your promise of doing better. You can walk through the peaks and valleys of this life with the assurance that you are loved by the one who made all things and directs all things—and that because you never had to win His love, you can never lose it.*
- d. Justification - *He also justified*
- It means to *be pronounced and treated as righteous*. It is when God declares a person righteous and passes into spiritual life. It is the culmination of God's decision in eternity past which becomes actual for the believer at the new birth.
  - Romans 3:20, *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*
  - Charles Spurgeon, *The Lord Jesus had purposes for His people as their representative before the throne, long before they appeared upon the stage of time. It was "from ancient days" that He signed the contract with His Father that He would pay blood for blood, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death on behalf of His people; it was "from ancient days" that He gave Himself up without a murmuring word.*
  - Charles Ryrie, *Justification is the act of declaring a person righteous. This is the ultimate goal of God's work in salvation - that He may declare before all the universe a sinner to be righteous.*
- e. Glorification - *He also glorified*
- It means to *clothe in splendor*.
  - John 17:22, *The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,*
  - We will focus on glorification in Session Three, the Future.
- f. These verses center on two of the three key parts of salvation, justification and glorification. We will focus on the other, sanctification, in Session Two, the Present.

## B. Grace in the Old Testament

### 1. Illustrations of grace

- God's reaction to the sin of Adam, Genesis 3:21, *And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*
- Job's response of faith, 19:25-26, *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,*
- Abram's response of faith, Genesis 15:6, *And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*
- God's proclamation to Moses, Exodus 34:6-7, *The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."*
- The institution of Passover, Exodus 12:13, *The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. Grace by substitution.*
- The provision of the Bronze Serpent, Numbers 21:8-9, *And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live. **Grace - look and live.***
- God's choice of Israel, Romans 11:5, *So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. Jonathan Lo, *Grace in the Old Testament centers on God's character and his relationship with Israel.**
- God's declaration of the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31:31-34, *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

2. Grace in the Old Testament is all about Jesus

- Alistair Begg, *Jesus clearly taught that every part of the Old Testament finds its focus and fulfillment in Him ... When you read the Scriptures, you meet Jesus, because this book testifies to Him. Even if our studies and understanding of Old Testament passages provide us with good, important ethical truths about life, there's great danger of us missing the Truth, Jesus The purpose of every page of your Bible is for you to meet Jesus, to come to know Him, and to proclaim His great name, all for His joy.*
- Charles Ryrie, ... *though there were displays of grace (in the Old Testament) ... It was like a candle in comparison to the sun, for Jesus the Son of God, who is the fulness of grace, was not revealed in the Old Testament. All foreshadowings of Messiah were a faint glimmer of light, for grace and truth came through Jesus Christ at His Incarnation.*

C. Grace in the New Testament

1. Perspectives

- Justification is a past yet ongoing event in the life of a Christian.
- This is the start of the Christian faith walk, the culmination of God's calling by grace in eternity past.
- It is how God sees us with a view to future conformity to the image of His Son.

2. Trinitarianism

- Unity
  - ▶ He is but one God and that divine nature is undivided and indivisible: Deuteronomy 6:4, *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*
  - ▶ Unity is not inconsistent with Trinity, for a unity is not the same as a unit.
- Trinity
  - ▶ The word, Trinity, means three eternal distinctions in the one divine essence.
  - ▶ It is not found in the Bible but early usage included Theophilus of Antioch (d 181 AD) and Tertulian (d. 220 A.D.).
  - ▶ It was affirmed in the Athanasian Creed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.
  - ▶ The concept of Trinity may be found developed in the Bible.
    - Diversity, Genesis 1:26, 26 *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*
    - Triunity, Isaiah 48:16, *Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there."* And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.
    - Names, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 13:14, *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

3. The focal point of grace in the New Testament is Jesus.

- ▶ The pre-existent Son of God became man
  - ▶ John 1:14, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
  - ▶ Galatians 4:4, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,*
- The nature of His incarnation
  - ▶ Hypostatic union
    - It is the union of two natures: divine and human in one person. Jesus is fully God and fully man.
    - Irenaeus (170 A.D.), ... *the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impossible become capable of suffering, and the Word being made man.*
    - Tertullian of Carthage (160-222 A.D.), ... *we see plainly the twofold state, which is not confounded, not intermixed but conjoined in One person, Jesus, God and Man.*
  - ▶ Kenosis
    - Jesus gave up the independent use of His divine attributes.
    - His divine power was veiled but not surrendered. He surrendered no attributes of deity but He did voluntarily subordinate His use of them in keeping with His propose of living among men and their limitations.
    - Max Anders, *As God, he did not selfishly grasp hold of or tightly hold to his position as equal with God. Instead, he was willing to leave his high position in heaven temporarily and to give himself over to serving our needs.*
- Nicene Creed: *"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance [ousias] of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance [homoousion] with the Father, through whom all things came to be, those things that are in heaven and those things that are on earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and was made man, suffered, rose the third day, ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead.*
- The reasons for incarnation
  - ▶ To reveal the Father, John 12:45, *And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.*
  - ▶ To confirm God's promises to send the Savior, Micah 5:2, *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

- ▶ To put away sin, Hebrews 9:26b, ... *he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*
  - ▶ To be our High Priest, Hebrews 4:15, *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*
  - ▶ To be our example, 1 John 2:6, *whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*
4. The best statement of God's grace of salvation is the Gospel and a key Gospel passage is Romans 3:19-26
- The purpose of the law is not to justify but condemn (19-20), *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*
    - ▶ Galatians 3:11, *Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."*
    - ▶ Warren Wiersbe, *Neither Jew nor Gentile can obey God's Law; therefore God must save sinners by some other means.*
    - ▶ Tom Constable, *The purpose of the law was not to provide people with a series of steps that would lead them to heaven. It was to expose their inability to merit heaven.*
  - The righteousness of God is affirmed by the Law and Prophets (21), *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—*
    - ▶ Warren Wiersbe, *The Law could witness to God's righteousness, but it could not provide it for sinful man.*
    - ▶ Douglas Moo, *If the Jews, with the best law that one could have, could not find salvation through it, then any system of works is revealed as unable to conquer the power of sin.*
    - ▶ Jerry Bridges, *This righteousness from God is none other than the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ who, through His sinless life and His death in obedience to the Father's will, perfectly fulfilled the law of God.*
  - The righteousness of God is only received by faith in Jesus Christ as a gift of God's grace (22-25a), *the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*
    - ▶ Philippians 3:9, *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—*
    - ▶ Ephesians 1:7, *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
    - ▶ Tom Constable, *Faith simply takes what God gives. It adds nothing to the gift.*
    - ▶ Faith is not the means of justification, but the way by which it is received.
  - The righteousness of God is demonstrated in the death of Christ (25b-26), *This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*
    - ▶ Tom Constable, *God had shown forbearance, not out of weakness or sentimentality but because He planned to provide a final sacrifice in the future, namely at the Cross.*
    - ▶ Robert Wilkin, *Christ's death demonstrates God's righteous standards (cf. 2:11). Sins were paid as God's justice demanded, but at the same time, Jesus' death on behalf of sinners allows God to declare a sinner righteous immediately upon faith in Christ.*
    - ▶ Charles Ryrie, *To preach righteousness on any other basis than grace is to frustrate the grace of God for it negates the value of the death of Christ.*
    - ▶ Warren Wiersbe, *A God of love wants to forgive sinners, but a God of holiness must punish sin and uphold His righteous Law. How can God be both "just and the justifier?" The answer is in Jesus Christ. When Jesus suffered the wrath of God on the cross for the sins of the world, He fully met the demands of God's Law, and also fully expressed the love of God's heart. The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament never took away sin; but when Jesus died, He reached all the way back to Adam and took care of those sins. No one (including Satan) could accuse God of being unjust or unfair because of His seeming passing over of sins in the Old Testament time.*
4. The Gospel is not just for the unsaved it is for the saved
- It should be a daily reminder that we are sinners saved by grace.
  - Let the Gospel stir our hearts as we picture Calvary with Jesus hanging on the cross.
  - Alistair Begg, *When we look upon the cross and see how Jesus hung there, we see what He did as something both necessary and voluntary. He took His place where we ought to be. That's grace ... If we were able to put ourselves in the right with God by our own endeavors, there would be no wonder in redemption and no beauty in the prospect of adoption. When we are tempted to look to ourselves and our works, we must remember that Christ has broken the curse. And in that wonder, we can glory. No matter how many days or years it is since you were first gripped by grace, sing anew to yourself right now: Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling.*
5. Additional quotes on grace
- D. L. Moody, *Law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out.*
  - Erwin Lutzer, *When the mask of self-righteousness has been torn from us and we stand stripped of all our accustomed defenses, we are candidates for God's generous grace.*
  - Vance Havner, *We can never be blessed until we learn that we can bring nothing to Christ but our need.*
  - C. H. Spurgeon, *The first link between my soul and Christ is not my goodness but my badness, not my merit but my misery, not my riches but my need.*

- Carl Trueman, ... *In the face of human sin and rebellion, the Lord has chosen not to exact justice, as he is entitled to do. He has chosen instead to be gracious and merciful. In other words, he has decided to show unmerited favor toward those who do not deserve it.*

### **SUMMARY**

- William Barclay, *Paul is insisting that nothing we can ever do can win for us the forgiveness of God; only what God has done for us can win that; therefore the way to a right relationship with God lies not in a frenzied, desperate, doomed attempt to win acquittal by our performance; it lies in the humble, penitent acceptance of the love and the grace which God offers us in Jesus Christ.*
- Justification is the act of God whereby I who was dead in sins was declared righteous when I accepted what Jesus did for me.
- It is how we move forward with our assurance of sanctification.

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

1. Are you able to trust God who is beyond your comprehension? If so, why?
2. List reasons why doctrine is important for spiritual growth.
3. Do you agree that grace is the most important word in Protestant theology? If so, why?
4. D. L. Moody, *law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out.* What role do I play in salvation?
5. What are some differences between grace in the Old and New Testaments?
6. Do you have more illustrations of God's grace in the Old Testament?
7. Prepare a personal testimony with an appropriate verse for each point. Consider the following points:
  - I am a sinner in need of a Savior.
  - Jesus set me free from sin and death by His sacrifice on the cross.
  - God declared me righteous as a gift of His grace.
  - God's wrath was appeased by Jesus' payment for my sins.
  - My justification took place not by my works but by placing faith in Jesus Christ alone based on Who He is and What He did.