

Illustrations of Grace & Mercy

Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

God doesn't always give us what we want. Even from human viewpoint this is known. Take the song that used to be played at some of President Trump's rallies. Of all places who would have expected the Rolling Stones to get this truth: "We can't always get what we want." In some cases, God might give us what we want even when that desire is for something foolish. At some point we might realize that our request was foolish and we asked for the wrong thing. We learned from the exercise. More on this later.

Today, look at the logic of uncircumcision. Paul is very clear in his logic.

Romans 4:9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness."

Romans 4:10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

Romans 4:11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who

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believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

Romans 4:12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

Romans 4:13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Heir of the world. This caught my attention. There is no specific promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the world. However, this can logically be deduced from the three promises to Abraham in God's covenant with him. Another line of reasoning is that Adam and Eve were given the earth to have dominion over. Because Abraham is the "father of us all" (Romans 4:16) by the example of faith, then at some point one might expect believers to populate the earth. Indeed, the Millennium starts out with no Satan, no fallen angels, no Cosmos Diabolicus but only born again believers.

Romans 4:14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

Romans 4:15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

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Paul's argument is fairly clear. So, I am not going to delve into the details. Instead, grace is the topic for today. In the past, in this chapter we have seen the illustrations of Abraham and David as examples of faith resulting in the imputation of righteousness. But what about grace? It is another side of faith.

R. B. Thieme Jr. said that God's point of contact with the human race is through His righteousness. Certainly His righteousness is important. In all His actions, He must act in accordance with His righteousness. Yet, like Herman said, God constantly demonstrates His love (John 3:16 and many other passages). When we look at the topic of God's grace and mercy, we see that all the attributes of God are at work. God is omniscient. He knows exactly what we need. His love towards us is guided by His love for the Son. It was the Son who bore the judgment for sin thereby releasing God's righteousness to act. And nothing is therefore impossible for God.

R. B. Thieme Jr. described grace as "all that God is able to do based upon the work of Jesus Christ on the cross."

GotQuestion.org says this about grace and mercy:

"Mercy and grace are closely related. While the terms have similar meanings, grace and mercy are not exactly the same. Mercy has to do with kindness and compassion; it is often spoken of in the context of God's not punishing us as our sins deserve. Grace includes kindness and compassion, but also carries the idea of bestowing a gift or favor. It may help to view mercy as a subset of grace. In Scripture, mercy is often equated with a deliverance from judgment (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:30–31; 1 Timothy 1:13), and grace is always the extending of a blessing to the unworthy.¹"

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/mercy-grace.html>

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And Paul provides the answer to questions in the book of Job. Actually, this is more than just a question. It is a challenge. Job's challenge.

**Job 14:4 “Who can make the clean out of the
unclean? No one!**

God said He could. And He did.

Job's challenge is based upon human and demonic viewpoint. The Devil likely didn't believe God could do it. He didn't understand the hypostatic union in which Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God. God did it. Satan knew that if God were to bear the sins of the world His righteousness would be perverted. Satan knew that if man provided the answer apart from God, then God's righteousness would be compromised. How can a sinful man make clean out of the unclean? From Satan's perspective, no one could. Satan is perhaps even now claiming God is unfair. Yet that is the point in the Angelic Conflict. God proves everyday that He is not just fair, but righteous and loving at the same time.

We understand the basic concept of grace as “unmerited favor.” We are like babies being helpless, hopeless and useless (Thieme's terminology again). Yet God in his omniscience knew all that would happen and made provision. He gives us what we need.

So far, Paul has dealt with righteousness. He will deal with sin and the death of Jesus on the cross. John in his gospel deals with the requirement for life. Remember the purpose of the gospel of John:

**John 20:30 Therefore many other signs Jesus
also performed in the presence of the
disciples, which are not written in this book;**

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John 20:31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Note that John says “that believing you may have life...” Paul has already covered the topic of righteousness. As I alluded to previously, Paul’s letter to the Romans could be titled, “The Book of Righteousness” whereas John’s gospel could be titled “The Book of Life.” Both are needed for salvation which is by faith alone in Christ alone.

But all depend upon God’s grace.

Romans 4:16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

The point of faith before circumcision and before the Abrahamic covenant is that Abraham is an example for all who believe. Faith, our believing, is based upon the standard of grace. All that God is able to do on the basis of Christ’s work on the cross. Grace solves Job’s challenge. Unmerited blessing in response to our faith. Unmerited blessing even before we believe.

Let us take the rest of the lesson to look at some illustrations of God’s grace in individual lives. Now prepare yourself for a view of grace blessing that comes through suffering. Rather than give you a bunch of hearts and flowers passages, I want you to understand that there is often intense blessing as a result of suffering, even undeserved suffering.

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Take Job. Looking at Job's situation, he is blessed, yet in the context of the Angelic Conflict, Job needed to learn some lessons. Job's life was near perfect. Satan said so.

Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

Job 1:10 Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Job 1:11 But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."

God used Job to communicate to believers, even now, the character of God. The righteousness of God cannot be perverted. God cannot just have fellowship with sinful man. No! So starting in Genesis 3:15 God begins to communicate His provision for sinful man with the purpose of "cleansing" those who believe. Then God can have fellowship with fallen man through His Son Jesus Christ. In the end, Job regained all he had, doubled.

Job 42:10 The Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord increased all that Job had twofold.

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Job 42:16 After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations.

Job 42:17 And Job died, an old man and full of days.

God could have left Job alone. Yet, in grace, God chose to demonstrate an outstanding believer as evidence in the Angelic Conflict. Sometimes we need suffering. You may say that is not right. Yet, how do we grow without some adversity in our lives?

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

When someone goes through a difficult time yet survives, that person can look back and say, “I made it!” Job, for years after his great suffering could look back and say, “Because of the grace of God, I made it!”

I sometimes tell the true story that I witnessed in college. There was a young lady, a student at a college, who asked a pastor how she could grow quickly and mature in the Christian life. His reply was, “Ask for suffering.” She was aghast. “Suffering?” This can cause us to focus on what is important in life: our relationship with God. For the Christian, our relationship with God the Father is critical. But how do we get there? We depend upon the Holy Spirit to empower us with the fruit of the

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spirit. As we know, this takes us to Jesus Christ who points us to God the Father. In Job's life, it was unfortunate that his wife did not understand. She said:

Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

The illustration of Job is evidence on display for all eternity. People point to Job and complement those who have the patience of Job. Certainly he received many blessings in heaven as well as on earth.

As an addendum to this journey through the book of Job, there are some lessons I jotted down.

Job may have learned, but we certainly can learn the following from Job's suffering.

1. Knowledge of the Angelic Conflict
 - A. Existence of Angelic Beings
 - B. Judicial/Court Vocabulary
 - C. Lucifer's antagonism towards God
 - D. Requirement of God's Permissive Will
 - E. Humans as exhibits in Angelic Conflict
2. Knowledge of Undeserved Suffering

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- A. Demonstration of Faith
- B. Personal Testing
- C. Purpose is spiritual growth
- 3. Knowledge of God's Character
 - A. Knowledge of Righteousness
 - B. Righteousness of God
- 4. The questions of Job concerning righteousness
 - A. Inability of man to cleanse the unclean

Look at the man born blind in John chapter 9. Another blessing out from suffering.

John 9:1 As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.

John 9:2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"

The disciples' question is based upon non-Biblical thinking, perhaps some religion extant at the time. Children are not judged for the sins of the parents. They may suffer as a result of parental misconduct and poor decisions. Jesus answered them authoritatively.

John 9:3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so

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that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Do you take time to enjoy a breath of fresh air? Imagine those who suffer with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Or someone who has lung cancer. Where every breath can be a struggle and even painful. Just getting old can be a struggle. Or our eyesight? Glaucoma, Cataracts or Macular Degeneration. All of a sudden you are thankful for what you have.

I have a cousin who was born blind. He does not know what sight is. He heard descriptions of it. He may have read about it using braille books. But it was not a loss for him. Just something he did not have. Instead, he developed an incredible hearing. As a teenager, he had a record collection of 45 RPM records. He could pick up a record and bang it lightly on the side of his head (he had very short hair) and tell you what song(s) was on the record, on the correct side of the record!

In John chapter 9, there is a man who was born blind like my cousin. He has never seen. But God had a plan for him. That the works of God might be displayed in him (John 9:3). In short, this man would be given eyesight. That means he would also be given “updates” to his brain in order to identify what he saw. This never happened before. But more than that, when Jesus healed this blind man, this was a sign to everyone that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. This man was evidence that the Messiah had arrived. Clear evidence based upon prophecy. Not just to the Jews, but as evidence in the Angelic Conflict. And now this miracle is highlighted because of that.

Look at Moses. He, being a Jew, had been taken in by Pharaoh’s daughter and raised as Egyptian royalty. That while many Jewish babies were being slaughtered. Yet he rejected the Egyptian royal culture.

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Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

Hebrews 11:25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

Hebrews 11:26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

Also, remember that Moses had murdered an Egyptian guard.

And yet, he became the leader of his people. And he has always been held in the highest esteem by the Jews.

Take Gideon. He was apparently a worshiper of Baal. His father had constructed an altar to Baal. Yet the Angel of the Lord, approached him and got him to save his country.

Let us finish with David. He wrote Psalm 32 after he sinned by raping Bathsheba² and having her husband murdered. He is ashamed, humiliated and disgusted at himself. He recognizes the mercy of God. But he also points to God's "lovingkindness." Included in that is God's grace. Because of the work of Jesus on the cross, David could acknowledge his sin to God and be forgiven. His sin is covered, atoned for and he has been reconciled to God. That is grace, based upon the work of Jesus on the cross.

² Even if Bathsheba was willing to have sex with David, he was the king and she didn't have much say in the matter. The king got what he wanted. From my perspective, I consider this a form of statutory rape.

A Psalm of David. A Maskil.

Psalm 32:1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!

Psalm 32:2 How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

Psalm 32:3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.

Psalm 32:4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

Psalm 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

Psalm 32:6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You [g]in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

Psalm 32:7 You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

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Psalm 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

Psalm 32:9 Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.

Psalm 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him.

Psalm 32:11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.