

What is Grace?

Mark Sappington
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Brethren, how often have we heard conversations or have read written material on the subject of grace? The Churches of God have written a myriad of booklets and articles on this subject.

Most of us have heard the definition given to the word “grace” by the Churches of God as being “unmerited pardon.” For decades, that was always the short answer to “What is grace?” Yet the meaning of the word “grace” goes much deeper and is much more meaningful in our lives than just that conceptual definition that we have heard so often.

We’ve all heard sayings such as “by the grace of God go I”, but what does that actually mean?

Brethren, in my sermon this afternoon entitled “What Is Grace?”, I would like to explore six points concerning this critically important but often misunderstood subject of the grace of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

The first point concerning grace is:

1. The word *grace* means “favor” in both the Old and New Testaments

Again, as I’ve said in previous sermons, we must define our terms. As in so many cases, the meanings associated with words and terminologies can change with time and can take on new ecclesiastical meanings in languages when the words in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek do not specifically connote that new ecclesiastical meaning.

In the Old Testament, the English word *grace* is translated from the Hebrew word **חֵן** *khen* Strong’s #2580 which means “favor, grace, acceptance, being well-favored.”

This Hebrew word **חֵן** translated “grace” occurs 39 times in the Old Testament. Let’s turn to a few scriptures in the Old Testament which utilize this word *khen*.

Please turn with me to Genesis 6 and we will read about the beginning of the story of Noah.

Genesis 6:5 *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

6) *And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*

7) *And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.*

8) *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.* (KJV)

Please turn with me to Exodus 33.

Exodus 33:12 *And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.*

13) *Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.*

14) *And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*

15) *And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*

16) *For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.*

17) *And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. (KJV)*

Please turn with me to Ruth 2, where we will read a portion of the story about Ruth and Boaz.

Ruth 2:8 *Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:*

9) *Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.*

10) *Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?*

Boaz treated Ruth kindly and generously because she had found favor in his sight.

Please turn with me to Proverbs 3. God the Father gives favor to the humble.

Proverbs 3:33 *The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.*

34) *Surely he scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.*

In each of these verses, the connotation and the meaning of finding grace or giving grace is finding favor or giving favor.

Please turn with me to Genesis 18. The Hebrew word *khen* is also translated as the English word *favor* which occurs 25 times in the Old Testament. Let's turn to a few scriptures in the Old Testament which utilize this word *khen* as favor.

Genesis 18:01 *And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;*

2) *And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,*

3) *And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray*

thee, from thy servant: (KJV)

Please turn with me to Exodus 12, and we will read about the triumph that Yehovah gave Israel in the eyes of the Egyptians.

Exodus 12:36 *And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.*

Please turn with me to 1 Samuel 16, which describes the relationship between King Saul and David.

1 Samuel 16:21 *And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.
22) And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.*

In all of the 64 cases of *khen* in the Old Testament translated as “grace” or “favor”, the meaning of the word is finding favor from or showing favor to someone.

In the New Testament, the English word *grace* is translated from the Greek word *kharis* Strong's #5485 which means “favor, grace, or kindness.”

The Greek word *kharis* has much the same meaning as the Hebrew word *khen* and occurs 157 times in the New Testament.

Let's turn to a few scriptures in the New Testament which utilize this word *kharis*.

Please turn with me to Luke 2, where a description is given concerning Jesus as a young boy.

Luke 2:40 *And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.*

This verse shows that the short definition of grace is not “unmerited pardon” because Jesus never needed an unmerited pardon from the Father. Jesus never sinned. The grace or favor of the Father was still upon Him.

Please turn with me to John 1. John gave a connection between grace or favor and Jesus Christ.

John 1:17 *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

In every one of the Apostle Paul's epistles, he greets the congregations or the person with the following salutation or a slight variation of it:

“Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 1, and we will read the opening in what Biblical
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scholars agree was the first recorded epistle that Paul wrote to the churches.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Please turn with me to Romans 1:07, and we will read this same opening in what Biblical scholars agree was the last recorded epistle that Paul wrote to the churches.

Romans 1:7 *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

In each of these verses, the meaning of the word *kharis* is favor. So brethren, the word *grace* means “favor” in both the Old and New Testaments.

The second point concerning grace is:

2. **We have been specifically called into grace by God the Father**

Please turn with me to John 6, and we’ll read a scripture that is well-known to us all.

John 6:44 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

So God the Father is the Divine Being who calls us and draws us to Jesus Christ.

Please turn with me to Galatians 1. Paul writes that we are called into the favor of Christ.

Galatians 1:6 *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

The *Him* in verse 6 refers back to God the Father in verse 4. So the Father has called us into the grace or favor of Jesus Christ.

Please turn with me to Galatians 1.

Galatians 1:15 *But when it pleased God [ὁ Θεὸς – God the Father], who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, :
16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*

In verse 15, the word *by* is the Greek preposition *dia* and the word *grace* or *kharis* is in the genitive case. Thus, the meaning of the preposition *dia* means “through, because of, with the help of”. Thus, the meaning of the verse 15 is that God the Father has called us because
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of His favor, because we have found favor in His sight.

Please turn with me to 2 Timothy 1, where Paul writes that we are called according to the favor of God the Father.

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God [God the Father] hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

Verse 9 shows that we have been called by God the Father with a holy calling according to His favor that He has shown to us.

So brethren, we have been called by God the Father into His favor and into the favor of His Son.

The third point concerning grace is:

3. We are saved by grace.

Please turn with me to Acts 15. Brethren, we are saved by the favor that we have found with our Heavenly Father.

Acts 15:7 *And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.*

8) And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9) And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

Please turn with me to Ephesians 2, where we will read that we are saved by grace.

Ephesians 2:5 *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

6) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7) That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift

of God:

9) *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

We are saved by the favor that God the Father and Jesus Christ have shown to us, not by anything that we have done or can do.

Please turn with me again to 2 Timothy 1:09, and we'll read the verse with a different emphasis.

2 Timothy 1:9 *Who (referring to God the Father) hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

God the Father has called us according to His own purpose with us and according to His own favor that He has shown to us.

Please turn with me to Titus 2, where we will read that the favor of God brings salvation to mankind.

Titus 2:11 *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12) Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13) Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; (KJV)*

Titus 2:11 *For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. (NLT)*

So the Apostle Paul is telling Titus that the revealed favor of God brings salvation to the world.

Please turn with me to John 3:16, and we'll read the most quoted scripture in the Bible, but one which is still very misunderstood.

John 3:16 *For God [God the Father] so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

God the Father loved mankind so much, He loved His plan for our salvation so much, He loved His future spiritual children so much, He showed favor to His future children so much, that He was willing to let His own Son be killed in our stead so that we could be saved and have salvation and have everlasting life.

We are saved by God the Father's favor that He has shown to us by washing away our sins via the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, and by giving us His Spirit through which we can be resurrected to eternal life. We are saved by the favor that Jesus Christ showed to us by dying for us while we were still sinners.

The fourth point concerning grace is:

4. Having found favor, we are under judgment now as the first fruits of our Father

Please turn with me to 1 Peter 4. Again, brethren, God the Father is not calling everyone at this time into the truth. He is showing favor to and extending an invitation to a special relationship with Him to only those whom He calls in this lifetime. And for us, our time of judgment is now in this lifetime.

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

18) *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

19) *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (KJV)*

1 Peter 4:17 *For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household... (NIV)*

1 Peter 4:17 *For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God (NASB)*

Please turn with me to Ephesians 2:19. The saints are the household of our Heavenly Father.

Ephesians 2:19 *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household. (KJV)*

Brethren, we are members of the household of God, and judgment is on us now.

Please turn with me to Matthew 7, and we will read a warning from Jesus Christ.

Matthew 7:01 *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

2) *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

So Jesus Christ will judge us with the same judgment that we judge others. We actually may dictate a part of our own judgment by how we judge and condemn others. Please turn with me to Matthew 18. Jesus taught this concept and warning through a famous parable.

Matthew 18:23 *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.*

24) *And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.*

25) *But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.*

- 26) *The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*
- 27) *Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*
- 28) *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence [denarii]: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.*
- 29) *And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*
- 30) *And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.*
- 31) *So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.*
- 32) *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:*
- 33) *Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?*
- 34) *And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.*
- 35) *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

At the time of Jesus, one denarius was a day's wage for a common laborer. So the debt that the fellow servant owed the unforgiving servant was the wages of 100 days (not a small amount of money). Using the current minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, the daily wage would have been approximately \$58.00. So, the debt would have been 100 days of wages or \$5,800.00

However, one talent was worth 6,000 denarii. The other larger debt was 10,000 talents, which is equal to 600,000 denarii, or 600,000 days of wages (that's over 1,900 years of wages). The 10,000 talents based on today's minimum wage would \$34,800,000.

So the unforgiving servant was forgiven almost \$35,000,000 by the king, but then he would not forgive his fellow servant of a debt of \$5,800. Brethren, does this describe us? Do we find ourselves doing the same thing?

We have found favor in the sight of God the Father, the Most High God, the most powerful being in the universe, the King of All Creation. What is that worth to us? What debt do we have to God the Father and to Jesus Christ that they are giving us eternal life – a debt that is limitless that we can never repay? How do we respond to others who have mistreated us, who have done things against us, who have insulted us, who have disappointed us, who have hurt us deeply? Do we forgive them?

Brethren, how we handle our forgiveness with others has direct consequences on our own judgment, even though we have found favor with our Heavenly Father. As firstfruits of salvation, we are being judged now.

The fifth point concerning grace is:

5. There are specific reasons for our trials and tests while under grace

Brethren, so many of us are having severe trials and tribulations, whether it be health problems, physical problems, job problems, family problems, financial problems, or emotional problems. The question we always ask is: Why? Why me?

Please turn with me to 1 Peter 5. Peter tells us that suffering is a part of being a follower of Jesus Christ and a follower of God the Father.

1 Peter 5:10 *But the God [God the Father] of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

So brethren, part of our calling, part of the favor shown to us by God the Father is that we will need to suffer. That seeming contradiction is at the heart of our spiritual growth and maturity in patience, in gentleness, in understanding, in compassion, and in Godly love.

Please turn with me to 1 Peter 4, where the Apostle Peter tells us to rejoice in our sufferings and our trials.

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14) If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. 15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16) Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Have we ever stopped and thought that our sufferings actually glorify God the Father? How do we view our trials and tests in our lives? Do we view them in that way?

Please turn with me to Job 1, and we'll read a story about a righteous man that had many bad and very unpleasant things happen to him, all which were allowed by God the Father.

Job 1:6 *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

7) And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

8) And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9) Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10) Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11) But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee

to thy face.

12) And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. (KJV)

So Satan went out and killed all of Job's children, his servants and all of his livestock and cattle. But Job never cursed Yehovah. He instead praised Yehovah.

Job 2:1 *Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.*

2) And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

3) And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

4) And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

5) But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

6) And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

7) So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. (KJV)

Again, Job never cursed Yehovah. In the end, Job realized his shortcomings. God the Father allowed terrible events and diseases to afflict Job. There was a spiritual war going on around Job that he could not see. In the end, Job's trials came to an end, and he was restored in every way to the way he was before, and then some.

Brethren, when we are deep in a trial, when really bad things are happening to us, are we rejoicing? Are we thankful to our Heavenly Father? Do we contemplate the spiritual war going on around us and concerning us? Do we think that Job knew that God the Father and Satan had actually had conversations specifically about him? Have we ever thought that God the Father and Satan may have had or maybe having right now conversations specifically about us, individually and collectively?

Always remember, there is a purpose for our suffering. It is part of our calling and part of our present life as a future son of our Heavenly Father, to whom God the Father has shown and given favor to in this lifetime.

Please turn with me to Genesis 39, and we'll read part of one of my most favorite stories in the Bible, the story of Joseph.

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, but the firstborn of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. Joseph was a cocky and proud teenager, who was favored by his father and despised by his brothers. When Joseph was around 17, his brothers faked his death and sold him to Ishmaelite travelers who took him and sold him to Potiphar in Egypt.

Genesis 39:5 *And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.*

6) *And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.*

7) *And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.*

8) *But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;*

9) *There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (KJV)*

Potiphar's wife continued to entice him, but he righteously rebuffed her each time. Finally, out of spite and anger, she falsely accused him of attempted rape. Here comes the suffering for following our Heavenly Father.

Genesis 39:20 *And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.*

21) *But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*

22) *And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.*

23) *The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper. (KJV)*

So Joseph obeyed Yehovah and did not sin. And his reward for staying true to God the Father and His laws was to be unjustly thrown in prison. Many scholars think that he was thrown in prison when he was around 19 years of age and that he spent around 9 years in the prison when the chief butler and baker were put in the prison. Joseph interpreted their dreams that each had dreamed. Joseph asked the chief butler to remember him when the butler was restored to his former position.

Genesis 40:14 *But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:*

23) *Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.*

Genesis 41:1 *And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. (KJV)*

So two full years more passed by, and Joseph was still in the prison. He had spent approximately 11 years in the prison (all of his twenties – all of his youth). He probably lost

hope many times and had many doubts. But then Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret. The butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and Joseph interpreted the dream and counseled Pharaoh to find a man to coordinate the saving of grain to save Egypt from the coming drought and famine.

Genesis 41:38 *And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?*

39) *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:*

40) *Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.*

41) *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.*
(KJV)

With God the Father's timetable, nothing seems to happen and then everything happens at once. That timetable is exactly opposite of what we want. We want everything to happen now.

But when God the Father said it was time, it was time. And on that day, that special day, Joseph woke up as a prisoner in the bowels of the prison and went to bed that night in Pharaoh's palace second in command of all Egypt!

God the Father used the time that Joseph was in Potiphar's house and in the prison to learn how to rule, how to govern, how to administer and regulate people and supplies. Remember, Joseph ran everything in Potiphar's house, and he ran everything in the prison. God the Father used the time that Joseph was in prison to prepare Joseph to be a patient, wise, and loving ruler.

Would God the Father have used Joseph in this way if Joseph were still a cocky and proud person? How would he have treated his brothers when they came to Egypt?

Brethren, our Heavenly Father tests those to whom He has shown favor to prepare them for whatever position that He has for them. Jesus said in John 14:02 that He is preparing a place for each and every one of us. And each of those places will have different responsibilities and duties and requirements that we are all being uniquely prepared for by the trials and tests that we face, just like in the case of Joseph.

Brethren, maybe we have prayed and prayed and prayed that God the Father would remove a trial from us. Are we prepared for our Heavenly Father to tell us no?

Please turn with me to 2 Corinthians 12. Paul experienced just that.

2 Corinthians 12:7 *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

8) *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

9) *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

10) *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in*

persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.
(KJV)

God the Father apparently never took that thorn in the flesh away from Paul. And Paul just had to accept it. Are we willing to accept our lot in life if God the Father does not answer our prayers? Do we understand and accept that there is a specific reason for that answer?

Brethren, there are specific reasons for our trials and tests while we are under grace.

The sixth point concerning grace is:

6. We can lose our favor with our Heavenly Father

Please turn with me to 2 Peter 1. Brethren, we must be diligent to not get lazy in our relationship with our Heavenly Father, to not get lazy with our Bible study, to not cheapen the invaluable favor that the Father has shown to us, or we may lose it. The Apostle Peter warns us about this in 2 Peter 1:10.

2 Peter 1:10 *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:*

We must be diligent to make our calling, our election, and our favored status with the Father sure.

Please turn with me to Matthew 24, and we'll read another well-known verse about the end time, but this time, with a deeper and more personal meaning.

Matthew 24:12 *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13) But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

The Greek word for love in verse 12 is *agape* Strong's #26, which is the Greek word for the "Godly love" that emanates from God the Father and from Jesus Christ. This Godly love only comes through utilizing the Holy Spirit from the Father.

This verse is not talking about the world. The world does not have *agape*. The world may have *phileo* Strong's #5368 which means "brotherly love", but it does not and cannot have *agape*.

This verse is talking about brethren who have God's Spirit. This is a warning to the brethren who have been called by God the Father, who have found favor with the Father and been given favor by the Father, who have been given the Holy Spirit by the Father. And this warning is that many will allow their Godly love to turn cold.

Please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 5. The Apostle Paul is warning the brethren in Thessalonica that they should continue in the faith and to continue to do good and to not quench the Holy Spirit within them.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*

15) *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

16) *Rejoice evermore.*

17) *Pray without ceasing.*

18) *In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

19) *Quench not the Spirit.*

20) *Despise not prophesyings.*

21) *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

22) *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

23) *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(KJV)

In verse 23, the Greek word for sanctify is *hagiazō* Strong's #37 which means "to make holy, set apart as holy, sanctify."

This is the same Greek verb used in Matthew 6:9 where Jesus prayed "Hallowed be Thy name" concerning our Heavenly Father's name. Just as God the Father's name is made holy and is set apart as holy, we are made holy and we are set apart as holy because of our relationship with our Heavenly Father and because we have found favor with Him.

But if we do not do the actions that Paul stated in verses 14 through 21, and especially if we quench the very Spirit of God the Father within us, we run the real risk that we can lose the favor that the Father has given us.

Please turn with me to Hebrews 6, where we are given an important life and death warning.

Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5) And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6) If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. (KJV)

So there is no alternative or turning back with us. Please turn with me to Romans 6. Brethren, just because we have favor with God the Father does not mean we have license to do anything and act in any way we desire.

Romans 6:1 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

2) *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

Having favor with God the Father does not allow us to sin just so that we can be forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ. That is an abuse of the favor that the Father shows to us.

Brethren, we must not continue in sin. We must not quench God's Spirit. We must not lose the Godly love dwelling in us and exuding from us. Or brethren, we will lose our favor with

God the Father and we will lose our salvation and eternal life.

So brethren, let's review these seven points.

1. The word "grace" means favor in both the Old and New Testaments. In so many occurrences the words "grace" and "favor" are translated from the same word.
2. We have been specifically called into grace by God the Father. We found favor in His sight when He studied us and decided to call us into a relationship with Him.
3. We are saved by grace. Because we have found favor with God the Father, we now have a spiritual relationship and covenant with Him through which He forgives our sins and gives us the potential for eternal life and salvation.
4. Having found favor, we are under judgment now as the first fruits of our Father. The time of our judgment as first fruits is now in this lifetime.
5. There are specific reasons for our trials and tests while we are under grace. Even though we have found favor with our Heavenly Father, He still allows trials and tests in order to prepare us for His future use in this lifetime and in His Kingdom.
6. We can lose our favor with our Heavenly Father. If we neglect our calling, if we become lazy in our relationship with our Father, if we quench the very Holy Spirit within us, we can lose the favor that we have with God the Father.

Brethren, for a final scripture, please turn with me to Romans 6, and we'll read a verse that has been taken out of context by so many.

Romans 6:14 *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

Brethren, this verse tells us that we are no longer under the penalty of death from breaking the Father's laws and commandments because we have received favor in His sight.

Brethren, again we are so blessed to know the truth about God the Father, His identity in the Bible, His deep love for His children, the great plan of salvation that He and His Son have implemented, the great future we have with both of them forever in the future, and the great Kingdom of our Heavenly Father and our eternal part in it.

And we are so blessed to know that we have found favor with God the Father and with Jesus Christ, not as a result of anything we have done, but because the Father has specifically and individually and personally called and chosen each and every one of us. We are saved by that favor or grace that the Father has shown us because He extends His forgiveness of our sins through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

We have found favor in His sight, and that favor allows us to have the opportunity and honor of being saved as part of the firstfruits and to have eternal life as part of our Father's spiritual family and as a special part of His Kingdom forever.

Brethren, may we all forever remain in the grace and favor of our Heavenly Father!