

How Does Grace Abound?

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Introduction

*Acts 4:33-35 ... 33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **abundant grace** was upon them all. 34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales 35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. (NASB95)*

*Romans 5:17 ... 17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the **abundance** of **grace** and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (NASB95)*

*Romans 5:15 ... 15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the **grace** of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, **abound** to the many. (NASB95)*

*Romans 5:20-21 ... 20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, **grace abounded** all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 9:8-9 ... 8 And God is able to make all **grace abound** to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9 as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever." (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 1:7-9 ... 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His **grace** 8 which He **lavished** on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (NASB95)*

Grace

Thomas defines χάρις [charis] as "grace, kindness" [5485]. BDAG say it refers to "(1) a winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction, graciousness, attractiveness, charm, winsomeness; (2) a beneficent disposition toward someone, favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill (almost a technical term in the reciprocity-oriented world dominated by Hellenic influence; (3) practical application of goodwill, (a sign of) favor, gracious deed/gift, benefaction; (4) exceptional effect produced by generosity, favor. Of effects produced by divine

beneficence which go beyond those associated with a specific Christian's status; (5) response to generosity or beneficence, thanks, gratitude." Simply expressed, grace is an expression of the unmerited favor of Almighty God.

Abound

Thomas defines περισσεύω [perisseuō] as "to be over and above, to abound" [4052]. BDAG say it means "(1) to be in abundance, abound: (a) of things; (b) of persons; (2) to cause something to exist in abundance, cause to abound; (a) of things that one greatly increases; (b) of persons who receive something in great abundance."

The word "abound" means to go beyond what is sufficient. God has showered his grace upon us so freely that there is almost more grace than there is the power to use it. It overflows. It super abounds.

Some might complain, "Christianity is boring because it contains so many restrictions." Without doubt, Jesus places restrictions on our behavior. However, Christianity is an abundant religion (John 10:10-11). Yet, we can access the abundance of Christianity only when we accept the restrictions of discipleship.

John 10:10-11 ... 10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 11 "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (NASB95)

In Wisdom

Thomas defines σοφία [sophia] as "skill, wisdom" [4678]. BDAG say it refers to "(1) the capacity to understand and function accordingly, wisdom; (2) personified wisdom, Wisdom..."

Wisdom often has reference to God (Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:10) and Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:2-3).

Romans 11:33 ... 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (NASB95)

Ephesians 3:10 ... 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (NASB95)

1 Corinthians 1:30 ... 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, (NASB95)

Colossians 2:2-3 ... 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (NASB95)

The word can also be used in reference to man. It can describe false wisdom (1 Cor. 1:18-24; James 3:15) or true wisdom (Col. 4:5; James 3:13-17).

1 Corinthians 1:18-24 ... 18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (NASB95)

James 3:15 ... 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. (NASB95)

Colossians 4:5 ... 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. (NASB95)

James 3:13-17 ... 13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (NASB95)

What is wisdom? Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge to the best advantage. It equals understanding. It is knowledge properly used.

In Insight

Thomas defines φρόνησις [phronēsis] as “understanding, practical wisdom” [5428]. BDAG say it refers to “(1) the faculty of thoughtful planning, way of thinking, (frame of) mind; (2) the ability to understand, understanding, insight, intelligence.” This word occurs 2x in the NT (Luke 1:16-17; Eph. 1:7-8).

Insight, or prudence, involves intelligence or right-mindedness. Wisdom involves intellectual knowledge that satisfies the mind. Prudence involves practical knowledge that enables us to handle the everyday problems of living.

*Luke 1:16-17 ... 16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the *attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (NASB95)*

*Ephesians 1:7-8 ... 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and ***insight** (NASB95)*

In Knowledge

The book of Ephesians speaks of the mystery of God's will (Eph. 1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 6:19). To understand the Biblical concept of a mystery, we must distinguish between two basic definitions: (1) something concealed; (2) something incomprehensible.

Ephesians 1:9 ... 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (NASB95)

Ephesians 3:3-4 ... 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, (NASB95)

Ephesians 3:9 ... 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; (NASB95)

Ephesians 6:19 ... 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, (NASB95)

From a Biblical standpoint, the word "mystery" does not refer to something that is incomprehensible. Rather it refers to the hidden information that God has now made known. In one sense, God's final and complete truth was outside of man's comprehension until God revealed it unto man. Down through the ages, men invented all kinds of religions and philosophies in an effort to discover the meaning of life. Yet, final truth was not something that man could discover by himself apart from divine revelation. Before it was hidden. Men could only guess at God's purpose and plan. Yet, now the mystery has been cleared up. Complete truth is revealed through Jesus Christ (John 8:31-32; 14:6).

John 8:31-32 ... 31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (NASB95)

John 14:6 ... 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (NASB95)

The mystery of God's will has been made known through Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:3-5; Col. 1:26-27). The riches of God's grace are beyond compare (Ephesians 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8).

Romans 16:25-26 ... 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the

prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; (NASB95)

Ephesians 3:3-5 ... 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; (NASB95)

Colossians 1:26-27 ... 26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (NASB95)

Ephesians 1:7 ... 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (NASB95)

Ephesians 1:18 ... 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (NASB95)

Ephesians 2:7 ... 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (NASB95)

Ephesians 3:8 ... 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, (NASB95)

Conclusion

God has the answers, and those answers are revealed in the gospel (2 Pet. 1:3). As we properly apply the principles of the gospel to our lives, we are walking in wisdom and prudence. Wisdom involves intellectual knowledge that satisfies the mind. Insight involves practical knowledge that enables us to handle the everyday problems of living. It is not enough to simply know the truth; we must also make proper application of God's word to our daily lives (Titus 2:11-14).

2 Peter 1:2-3 ... 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (NASB95)

Titus 2:11-14 ... 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (NASB95)

Why did the converts to Christ at Ephesus burn their books of magic (Acts 19:19)? Because they applied their knowledge in a wise and prudent way. The Bible is not so much a book of lists as it is a book of principles. If God were to list every conceivable “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not,” the Bible would be too big to pick up, much less comprehend. Even a listing of sins like “the works of the flesh” ends with the phrase, “and such like...” (Gal. 5:19-21).

Acts 19:19 ... 19 And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. (NASB95)

Galatians 5:19-21 ... 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NASB95)

- Gambling, betting on the ponies, or playing the lottery are not mentioned in the Bible. However, Holy Scripture sets forth various principles that would make participation in such activities highly inconsistent with living a faithful Christian life.
- Are movies, television shows, and music CDs mentioned in the Bible? No. However, the Bible sets forth various principles that would cause a faithful Christian to exercise great discretion in their choice of entertainment.
- Are halter tops, shorts and bathing suits mentioned in the Bible? No. However, the Bible does teach about the need for modesty, shamefacedness, and chastity. Wearing such attire in public would be unbecoming of a faithful child of God.
- Are such organizations as the United Way mentioned in the Bible? No. However, since the United Way supports such groups as Planned Parenthood (which promotes abortion) and the Salvation Army (which promotes false doctrine), it would be wrong for a Christian to give to the United Way.

Therefore, God obviously expects us to make proper application of God’s word to our daily lives. If we do so, grace will abound in our daily lives.