

How Does Grace Abound?

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Introduction

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.

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). 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).

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.

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.

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).

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).

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).

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).

- 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.