

Edwin Jacques / General

Grace and Truth of Jesus / John 1:16-17

What does it mean that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ? What does this mean for us today? How do we receive this grace?

Introduction

1. Brief review of [John 1:16-17](#).
2. Share with you some highlights of my own journey of faith, by describing how I understood this verse as a devout Roman Catholic, and how I understand it now.
3. Encourage you to remember that the grace we receive through faith in Jesus Christ is far, far greater than our sin could ever be.

Passage

John 1:16-17 ESV

For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

What is the Law?

The Law is the system of the rules that the Israelites were to live by.

1. **Ceremonial law** — This Sacrificial system of goats and lambs which was required for the forgiveness of sins. [Hebrews 9:22](#) “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”
2. **Moral law** — included the 10 commandments (shall not commit adultery, murder, steal, lie, covet), but of all these, in words of Jesus, [Mark 12:29-31](#) “... “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is

one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'"

Now, I grew up in a very devout Catholic household. I had 12 years of Catholic education. My family went to Mass every Sunday and on all Holy Days of Obligation. I understood the law. I also knew that if I broke too many laws, I'd go to hell. The solution to that is "grace". As a Catholic, grace was favor I received from God for doing good or fulfilling a Catholic ceremony. I'd get grace by going to Mass, and confessing my sins to a priest. As such, "grace" was just another way of earning favor with God.

How did this play out in my life growing up?

Before True Grace

Trying to earn the favor of someone you can never please is miserable. And that misery was modeled all too well in my father. My dad was just openly insulting to my mom and myself. He had high expectations for us, and when we didn't measure up, we'd hear about it. Often he'd talk about how he stayed in a loveless marriage for us, and she was "holding him back." My father could not admit his failings. I still loved him, but the older I became, the more that childish love turned into resentment. By the time I went to college, I couldn't wait to be on my own.

While growing up, I learned a lot about religion. I received religious education in the Catholic school system from first grade through high school. My family went to church every Sunday. From the time I first understood the concept of creation, I believed that there had to be a creator, and I wanted to please Him. As soon as I was old enough, I volunteered to help out at church services as an altar boy and as a reader. I tried my best to be good in the eyes of God.

But even though I knew a lot about religion, I didn't know much about who God was. I knew about Jesus, but I didn't understand Him at all. I knew that I made mistakes. I constantly felt the weight of my guilt, and I could never be sure if I was truly forgiven. I wasn't sure if I'd go to heaven or hell when I died. By the time I started college, I began to wonder if what I believed about

God really even mattered. I read the gospels on my own, trying to arrive at my own understanding of moral truth. With no one to guide me, and seeking to justify myself, I concluded that Jesus was certainly a good man, and that as long as we love our neighbor as ourself, maybe we can just believe and do whatever we want. I decided to try it out.

Given my knowledge, I should have known better. The Bible speaks about people like this, where it is written, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools." ([Romans 1:21-22](#)). I experimented with Scientology, Buddhism, Hinduism, and even Wicca (witchcraft). Each religion I research prescribed self-improvement, which reaffirmed the notion that the moral tenets of all religions were basically the same. I couldn't be more wrong. I was increasing in my foolishness.

After my second year at college, my father lost his lucrative job as a New York City accountant. My college tuition was expensive, so I worked as a software engineer intern in the middle of my third year to help with the costs. Over the summer, I started working with a rich friend of mine named Yat, who had an idea for a business venture in Hong Kong. I joined him in this effort that summer with my parents blessing. I hoped to make a lot of money, and bail my family out of the financial trouble that we were in at the time. With this "loving" goal in mind, I justified deceiving my parents into thinking I had resumed going to school in the Fall, when actually I was still working for Yat, and racking up credit card debt like I was already rich.

Well, Yat's business venture never panned out. After a while, he couldn't pay me anymore. I was getting deeper and deeper into debt just to feed myself. After the Christmas break, my parents discovered the credit card bills. My father was livid. He wasn't making nearly the money that he used to make, so bailing me out was especially painful. I was guilty, and I knew it. I could no longer distance myself from my father because I needed his help. But my Dad was not one for forgiveness or understanding. He yelled at me repeatedly, calling me terrible names. All I could do is cry in shame, and say I was sorry. I had followed my noble goals to help my family and the result was that I hurt my family even more. I could never say sorry enough to appease my father. Every time we spoke, he would bear down on me again, as if I had hurt him

just that day. I craved his forgiveness. My version of love in which the ends justified the means had caused me to hurt my parents. My moral experiment was a failure. I wasn't sure what I was living for anymore, and I thought about suicide.

Encountered by Grace

By my fourth year in college, my roommate, Brian, was involved in a Christian group called the Christian Bible Fellowship, also known as CBF. He had been going to Bible studies, and reading the Bible daily. I knew I was missing something in my life, so when he invited me to come to a CBF meeting, I gladly took him up on the offer. The people in CBF really seemed to care about one another in a way I had never seen before. Usually, I suspected people of being selfish and superficial, but not in CBF. They didn't care about what I or anyone else did or looked like, they were just happy to be with each other to learn about God and enjoy some good, clean fun. I didn't understand much of what they were teaching, but I knew love when I saw it. As Jesus said to his followers, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." ([John 13:35](#)) From that point on, I knew where I'd be going on Friday nights.

Paul Carter, the group leader, invited me to meet with him to talk once a week at a local coffee shop. He was a father of five, and his job was to tell people about Jesus and the Bible. Being estranged from my father, I cherished the time he devoted to me. We began to read through the gospel of John together. I was amazed that Paul could read the Bible and explain it in a way that made literal sense. I was used to reading it the way someone would read poetry, reading into it whatever I wanted to see. I was a bit skeptical at first, wondering if reasonable people could actually order their life according to the Bible. I asked Paul, "Is all of it really true?" "Yes", he replied, study it more and see for myself. I took up the challenge. I joined a Bible study that met during the week, and got a ride on Sundays to a Christian church in the area.

I learned about Jesus, but more importantly, I began to learn about who He was. I learned why He had to die on the cross, and how His death paid the penalty for the sins of all those who love him, once and for all. As it says in the Bible, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God." ([1 Peter 3:18](#)). He had to die for us to express

the magnitude of his love for us. As Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." ([John 15:13](#)).

That resonated with me. God was more than just a cosmic judge, just waiting to see me screw up so he could banish me to hell. No, He is my perfect Father, full of wisdom, and gracious to forgive me. I knew I could trust Him because he gave up His life to pay the price for my sin. As it says in the Bible, "... **God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**" ([Romans 5:8](#)). No matter what my earthly father thought of me, I knew where I stood with God. This is the picture of **grace — unmerited divine favor. Favor we could never earn. Favor given to us entirely from God's own goodness.** [1 John 4:9-10](#) "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I read the Bible with the benefit of teachers like Paul Carter, my pastor, and fellow college students who had believed in Jesus for years. I had finally found the truth and forgiveness I had been looking for my whole life.

Grace Upon Grace

Since placed my trust in God and His word, my life changed dramatically. My purpose is now to please God, not myself or anyone else. He changed my heart, in a way that self-discipline never could. As it says in the Bible, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

No where was this more evident than in my attitude towards my father. Before I knew Jesus, my response to my father for not loving or forgiving me was to withhold my love for him and to cling to my own bitterness. I was on my way towards becoming like him. After I understood that Jesus loved me while I was still caught up in my own sin, I knew that just as Jesus forgives and loves me, I needed to forgive and love my father. God opened my eyes to see the good that my father hoped to accomplish, though he had gone far, far astray. Everybody has a story. I did everything I knew how to share with my father the grace and truth that God had shown me. Our relationship was

rocky until shortly before his death. I had the blessing of reading the word of God to him for days and praying at his bedside before he died.

My father confessed faith in Christ before his death. He said he believed the words of the apostle Paul, who wrote in the book of Romans ([Ro 10:9](#)), "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you shall be saved."

My father confessed that his own mistakes, his sins, are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. Shortly before my father died, as he labored to breath, with tears in his eyes and mine, I read him this passage from the gospel of [John 15:1-3](#):

[Jesus said,] "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

After reading this, I reminded my father that he did all he knew how to prepare his children for their future on earth. In the same way, Jesus was preparing a place in heaven for His children. After hearing this, my father was able to rest again. I stayed with him in the room. An hour later, he gave up his spirit.

I mourned the loss of my father. Though I'll miss the closeness we began to enjoy just before he died, I hope my father and I will have an eternity to develop our relationship in heaven.

Power Perfected in Weakness

I have had many failings over the years, as my wife and children could tell you. I had hoped to grow enough spiritually so that I could get over this whole sin thing. But that's not how it works. Yet, the more I know, the more I see how I fall short. Jesus said in [John 14:15](#) ""If you love me, you will keep my commandments." So when I sin, does that mean I don't love God? Not quite. [1 John 4:10](#) "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." God knows that we're sinners.

He's not surprised. But my sin *forces* me to lean completely upon God for my hope, not my performance.

[Romans 6:1-2](#) "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" But we must be encouraged that God's grace upon grace abounds far beyond our sin.

[Hebrews 12:2](#) "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Read Gentle and Lowly quote.

AMEN.

Communion: A Picture of Grace

As we come to the table, this morning to remember to death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ — and the grace upon grace given to us... unmerited favor given to us entirely out of God's own goodness, remember that He endured that cross, bled out and died for the joy set before him. The joy drawing His people near to Himself and comforting them.

John 1:16-17 *ESV*

For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8 *ESV*

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.