The Story of Redemption

God Reaching Out to Restore COMMUNITY
through the cross of Jesus Christ

What Kind of God Do We Serve?

Part 2: The God of Grace

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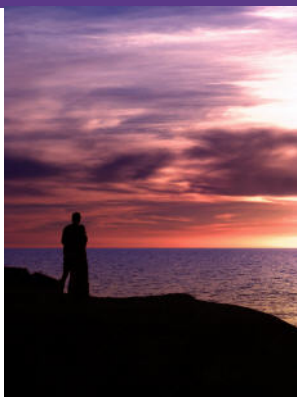


What Kind of God Do We Serve?

Part 2: The God of Grace

When you think of God, what image comes to mind? If you struggle in your understanding of who God is, you are not alone. Events like 9/11, the constant news reports of murder and mayhem, and our own personal tragedies cause us to question who God is. Some see God as an old man in the sky who is either unaware of all the evil things happening here on earth, or he is powerless to stop them. Others believe that God *is* aware and *is* all-powerful, but because he does nothing to prevent tragic events, he must be an uncaring or even a cruel God.

These questions are natural to ask. In fact, Christians of all ages have asked these questions. But the Bible gives much different answers to who God is and what he is doing. Scripture testifies that God is a gracious God. (Grace is an undeserved, free gift.) Through his grace, he seeks to bring healing to our lives and to our world.

1. Did God Give Grace to Adam and Eve?

As we saw in the last part of the story, Adam and Eve destroyed their relationship with God and each other by eating of the forbidden fruit. Because of their disobedience, God punished them by casting them out of the Garden of Eden, symbolizing the loss of community that they suffered. But even as he punished them, God showed himself to be a gracious God by providing clothes for them.

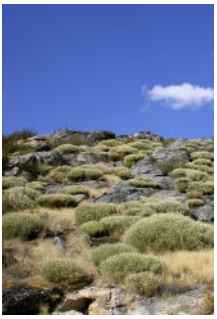
What do these clothes demonstrate? They show us that God still cared about Adam and Eve even though they had been disobedient. Despite their sin, God was not willing to send Adam and Eve out into the world unprotected.

What has God given you to help you survive this world? How has he shown that he cares for you?

Adam and Eve's Sin	Their Punishment	God's Grace
• Not believing God • Trying to be their own gods • Eating the forbidden fruit	• Food was harder to get out of the ground • Childbearing pains increased • Had to leave the Garden of Eden	• He allowed them to live • He gave them clothes

2. Does God Give Grace to Murderers Like Cain?

After Adam and Eve left the Garden, Eve gave birth to two sons: Cain, who was firstborn and a type of farmer, and Abel, who worked with flocks of animals. One day, Abel offered a sacrifice to God from his flocks, while Cain offered to God some of his fruit. For some reason, perhaps because of a difference in their hearts, God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice and not Cain's. This made Cain angry, and his anger would lead him to sin.



Because of his sin, the ground would no longer produce food for Cain.

> *5b So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*
> *6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is*
> *your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be*
> *accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at*
> *your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*
> *8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the*
> *field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his*
> *brother Abel and killed him (Gen. 4:5b-8).*

Ironically, Cain was angry and jealous because he did not have God's approval—and in response, he committed a crime that alienated him from God even further. God was aware of Cain's murderous act, and he confronted him with it.

> *9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"*
> *"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?*
> *10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me*
> *from the ground. 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which*
> *opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the*
> *ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the*
> *earth" (Gen. 4:9-12).*

Cain's Sin	His Punishment	God's Grace
• Being angry at his brother • Murdering his brother Abel	• He was under a curse • The ground would not produce crops for him • He would be a restless wanderer	• He placed a mark on Cain's head so no one would kill him

But again, even when punishing a murderous man like Cain, God showed his gracious nature. When Cain cried out to the Lord, God heard his call.

> *13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. 14 Today you*
> *are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a*
> *restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."*

Much of the pain in the world today is caused by people like Cain.

15 But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him (Gen. 4:13-15).

How could Cain be so angry as to kill his brother? What kind of person must he have been? Unfortunately, he was no different from so many people today who take out their anger and frustrations upon innocent victims. Much of the hurt and pain in the world today is caused by people just like Cain—people like Saddam Hussein, Hitler, child molesters, rapists, and many others. And while we likely would not put ourselves in the same category as the Cains of the world, if we are honest with ourselves, we probably have to admit that sometimes we have been the cause of other people's pain as well.

Despite Cain's terrible crime, God showed mercy and grace to Cain. First, he did not kill him, though he surely deserved it. Second, when Cain cried out that his punishment was too great, God placed a mark on his head so that no one who found him would kill him. Many times we cry out for justice against others, but when we do wrong, like Cain, we cry out for mercy and grace. And often God both hears and answers our call.

How has God been gracious to you when you have made mistakes?

3. Does God Give Grace to Good People Like Noah?

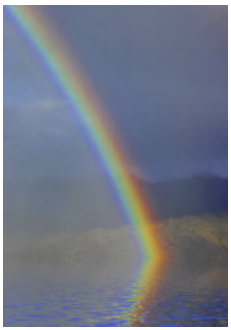
Adam and Eve would have other sons and daughters after Cain and Abel, and mankind soon began to grow and multiply. Unfortunately, within a few generations all of the world would become evil and disobedient to God except for one man, Noah, and his family.

9 This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. 10 Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. 13 So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. 14 So make yourself an ark . . . 17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens . . ." (Gen. 6:9-14, 17).

God sent a flood to destroy the world because of humanity's wickedness--but he graciously spared Noah and his family.

Because of the world's wickedness, God decided to destroy them. The Lord sent rain upon the earth for 40 days and nights, and the earth was covered in water and all living things except those on the ark were wiped out. But the "Lord remembered Noah," and he sent a wind across the sea, and the waters receded.



As a sign of his covenant of grace, God put a rainbow in the sky.

> *15 Then God said to Noah, 16 "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. 17 Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it."*
> *18 So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives . . . .*
>
> *20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. 21 The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done" (Gen. 8:15-18, 20-21).*

God cannot remain in fellowship with those who, like the people of Noah's time, have hearts that are evil. God destroyed that world and people because they had rejected him. And yet, God showed love and grace to Noah, and he vowed to never again destroy the world in the same way. As a sign of this covenant of grace, God put a rainbow in the sky. If we, like Noah, turn to God, he will show us love and grace as well.

Noah's World's Sin	**Their Punishment**	**God's Grace**
• They were corrupt and full of violence	• They were destroyed by the flood	• He saved Noah and his family • He made a covenant with Noah

Do you think today's world is any different than that of Noah's time? If you had lived in Noah's time, do you think God would have spared you?

4. Does God Give Grace to This Confused World?

After the flood, Noah's family and descendants began to multiply. However, rather than spreading out and subduing all of the earth as God had commanded, they decided to gather together in one place.

> *3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build*

ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:3-4).

In their pride they decided to build a tower that reached the heavens, but the tower was not so great to God. He "comes down" from heaven to examine the people.

6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." 8 So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel (Gen. 11:6-9a).

The whole story speaks of humanity's pathetic and misguided attempts to "reach heaven" by themselves and become their own god. Note that they:

- Used brick and tar, rather than stone and mortar. These inferior building supplies show that their efforts were doomed.
- Wanted to build a name for themselves rather than try to glorify the name of God. Ironically, they ended up with a name: Babel, a word which indicates that they were "confused."
- Built the tower so that they wouldn't be scattered—but that is exactly what happened, for God confused their languages and scattered them. Community was again lost that day due to sin.

By trying to build a tower to heaven, the people of Babel showed their "confusion."

Throughout this lesson we have seen that each time after sin and punishment, God gives grace to his people. But in the Tower of Babel, where is the grace? For that answer, we must wait until the next part of the story.

People of Babel's Sin	Their Punishment	God's Grace
• They tried to make a name for themselves • They tried to build a tower to heaven	• God confused their languages • God scattered them over all the earth	• ?

How do people today try to build a name for themselves? What about you? Are you living for your glory or for God's? What have you learned about God in this study?

In the next part of the story, we will learn about a promise that God makes to Abraham. In this promise, God shows his grace to Abraham—and all humanity. The *Story of Redemption* continues.

QUESTIONS:

Fill in the Blank.

1. Grace is an undeserved, _____ _____.

Matching.

2. _____ Adam and Eve

3. _____ Cain.

4. _____ Noah's world.

5. _____ The people of the Tower of Babel.
   a. Were destroyed because it was full of corruption and violence.
   b. Sinned by not believing God.
   c. Sinned through anger, jealousy and violence.
   d. Sinned through pride.

Multiple Choice.

6. _____ God gave all of the following "gracious gifts" to Adam and Eve EXCEPT:
   a. Clothes b. Eternal life c. Food d. Letting them continue to live

7. _____ God gave all of the following "gracious gifts" to Cain EXCEPTt:
   a. A mark on his forehead.
   b. A promise that if anyone killed him, they would receive vengeance seven times worse.
   c. A promise that if he tilled the ground, crops would now come up more easily.

8. _____ God gave all of the following "gracious gifts" to Noah's world EXCEPT:
   a. The continuation of all of the species of animals, birds, etc.
   b. The salvation of those who still loved and obeyed God and the salvation of all of his family.
   c. A promise not to ever destroy the world again.
   d. A promise not to ever destroy the earth again by water.

For questions and/or to receive part 3 in the *Story of Redemption*, contact:

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