**2 Graces**

There is a grace that is merited and a grace that is unmerited. The word is used 155 times in the New Testament but it often overlooked by English readers because the original Greek word “grace” is often translated “favor”. By context you know when it is merited or unmerited favor. Consider first some of the unmerited favor passages. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8), “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). Salvation by God’s grace is unmerited, it is out of his own goodness and love for us.

But also there is a favor we can grow in and earn before God, in fact we are commanded to do so. Jesus did, and commands us to do also. “And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor(grace) with God and men.” (Luke 2:52). When people saw Jesus’ behavior, it not only gained man’s favor, but God’s. We can do the same.

“If you love those who love you, what credit/grace is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit/grace is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. (Luke 6:32-35). Why will “your reward be great” if you continue to love those who don’t love you back? Because this gains God’s favor.

“For this finds favor/grace, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor/grace with God.” (1 Peter 2:19-20). Now that Peter has taught you how you can gain God’s favor, Peter says to grow in this favor/grace. “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” (2Pet. 3:18).

 God loved me when I was terrible. Now let me love others when they are terrible. God is kind to the unkind. Now it’s my turn to be kind to the unkind. This is not to grow into some kind of petty self-righteousness, no. But because God was merciful to me, he has caused me to be merciful to others, even when they don’t deserve it. God is honored when I imitate him. Dan Peters