

WHAT IS GRACE?

Let's say that someone did you very wrong, making you very angry. You decided to kill this person. You are caught and there is no doubt that you are guilty of murder. You go before the judge for sentencing. He tells you that the price, or punishment, for such a crime is death. So for **justice** you should go to prison then eventually die by execution. But the judge decides to give you **mercy** by allowing you to serve time, the rest of your time on earth, in a comfortable minimum-security prison. Then he decides to make one last offer to you. He tells you that he himself will pay for your crime. You will be forgiven and pardoned, and be able to live a free life if you will just accept his payment as payment in full for your crime and you will do your best to avoid any future crime. You will also have to believe in him and trust that his payment will truly save you from the eternal punishment you deserve. So the judge agrees to sacrifice his life to pay the punishment for your crime. You do not deserve this but he takes the death penalty for you. He died so you could be free. This is **grace**!

Justice is "getting what you deserve."

Mercy is "not getting what you deserve."

Grace is "getting what you do not deserve."

This is what Jesus Christ, our Judge and Savior, did for you and me. Sin is anything that we do that goes against God's will. Everyone has sinned, therefore we are all sinners, we have all broken God's laws, and we deserve **justice** to pay for our sin. The price for sin, any sin, is death - *physical death* which separates us from life on earth, and *spiritual death* which separates us from our relationship with God. Although God hates sin, He gives each of us **mercy**. He keeps giving us another chance and lets us live a while longer. All of our sins are against God's will and none of us deserve to live, because of our sins against God. But due to God's **grace**, he will forgive us if we worship Him and accept the gift of His Son - Jesus Christ. It was God's plan to come to earth in the human form of Jesus (fully human but still fully God) to be the ultimate sacrifice for our sin. Jesus willingly gave His life in order to pay for our sin. His gruesome death was a sacrifice for our sin. The spilt blood of a perfect, sinless, holy individual was the only sufficient substitute for us. He substituted Himself for the payment of our sin so we would not have to pay the price of our own sin on our own. Therefore we would not have to endure everlasting spiritual death - eternal separation from God. Those who do not accept Jesus will eventually be judged by Jesus after their physical death. Since they never truly accepted Jesus' sacrificial payment for their sin, they will have to pay for their sin on their own. They will have to endure separation from God forever in hell.

Although God will forgive us of our sin, often we still have to live with the consequences of our sins. We will all eventually experience physical death too, but believers will no longer have to worry about spiritual death. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ... (see John 3:16) to die in our place. All you have to do to be saved from hell (eternal separation from God) is to truly **believe** in God and Jesus with all your heart, mind and soul; **believe** that Jesus died for you to pay the penalty for your sin; **believe** that Jesus conquered death by being resurrected, ascending into heaven and living today; then **ask** Jesus for forgiveness of your past sin; and **repent** of your sin (turn away from sinning). This is what it takes to become a true Christian. Although Christians try not to sin, we are all human and will occasionally sin from time to time. Our desire to do sinful things lessens as we grow in our spiritual maturity. We will only experience sinless perfection after we are raised from the dead (as Jesus was) and allowed to live with Jesus in His heavenly kingdom. Until then, we must live with our imperfections and learn to accept God's love, mercy and grace.