



# The History of Grace

By

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Grace existed before time and space. Its history is a door of understanding for those who believe it.

Grace began long before you and I, our parents and their parents were born. In fact, Grace began before the world was born.

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”Ephesians 1:4

God made His Choice of those who would belong to Him before He created the world. He chose you and me before we were born. Why would God do that? Grace! Grace and Love motivate God to do the wonderful things He does for His children. God knew we would start our lives as sinners. He knew we would live our lives as sinners, choosing to follow the god of this world rather than the God of Heaven. Yet, He still chose us. Why? Grace.

The Greek word for Grace is *charis*. It means “a favor done without expectation of return, unmerited favor.” The word comes from *chairō*, “to rejoice.” Grace brings joy to the receiver. God’s Choice of us from before the creation of the world had the result of bringing each of us extreme joy and pleasure! That’s what Grace does.

## IN THE BEGINNING

God has always desired to bring joy to the human race. The pain, suffering, agony and death that infect our world today was not part of God's plan. It's not what He had in mind for us.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”Genesis 1:27-31

God wanted people to “be fruitful and increase in number.” He wanted us to “fill the earth and subdue it.” He wanted us to “rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” He gave us “every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it.” That's what God's Grace had in store for us: loving relationships, power, glory, and great food! God wanted us to enjoy our lives. He wanted us to be happy. He gave the first

couple a phenomenal start to life and a fantastic future. That's what God's Grace did.

God also gave people a free will to choose their way in life. They chose disobedience. They chose to have more than God had given them. Their choice plunged the entire human race into pain, misery and death. So what then of God's Grace?

## GRACE TO THE RESCUE

God was not One to be surprised. He knew what the first humans would do with their paradise and free will. He knew they would choose the wrong way. He knew the danger they would face. God's Grace to the rescue!

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”Genesis 3:15

God would send His One and Only Son to die for the sins of the human race and crush the head of God's enemy, Satan. That unbelievable Gift came from God's Grace. He did not want people to remain in their sin and misery. He did not want them to die in their pain and agony and spend eternity in darkness and despair. His Grace cried out within Him for their salvation and eternal joy! God carried out a new plan.

Eve gave birth to the first person to be born on earth. She named him Cain and proclaimed, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man." Eve rejoiced at seeing the provision of God's Hand. He had promised salvation through her offspring and Cain was proof to her that God was going to do what He had promised.

What Adam and Eve did not know was how deep the new sin nature ran in the blood of their children. Cain and his younger brother, Abel, grew up. They each chose one of the occupations God had given to their father, Adam. Cain became a farmer. Abel became a shephard. The time came for them to give God an offering from what they had earned through their labor.

"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor."Genesis 4:3-4

Why did God react this way? Both brothers brought offerings to God. Why was God pleased with one and not the other?

Abel brought "fat portions" from some of the "firstborn" of his flock. Cain brought "some of the fruits" of the soil. Abel offered the best he had to God because he was deeply thankful for what God had done for him. Cain offered just enough to "get by." Lots of people do that today. They do just enough in life to "get by." Even Christians do that. They don't get too involved in service to God or others. They don't go too far out of their way

to worship God. They just do what they think will “get by.” Cain was that way. He had an “attitude” problem. He had a “commitment” problem. He just wanted to “get by.” Abel, on the other hand, was deeply committed to God. He gave God his best. He brought God the “fat portions” from some of the “firstborn” of his flock. Abel demonstrated his dedication to God and thankfulness for what he had. Abel did not hold back anything from God. Cain did. Cain was selfish. He wanted the best of his crop for himself. He knew God existed. He knew God was there. He knew he should give God something. The difference is what was in his heart. Cain wanted to keep the best for himself. He would still give God something, but not his best. Cain was not some awful, wicked, unusually terrible person. He was just a selfish human being. He was an example of what sin had done to the human nature and character.

Think about it for a minute. Cain and Abel had all they had because of God’s Grace. God allowed Adam and Eve to live and reproduce because of God’s Grace. Cain and Abel’s very lives were based on God’s Grace. The air they breathed was because of God’s Grace. The water they drank was because of God’s Grace. The food they ate was because of God’s Grace. The blood that coursed through their bodies and kept them alive was because of God’s Grace. The strength they had in their muscles and bones was because of God’s Grace. The fruits of the soil that Cain harvested were because of God’s Grace. The sheep that Abel tended were because of God’s Grace. All they had in life was because of God’s Grace. The least they could give God was their best.

God reacted the way He should have given His Holiness and Righteousness.

“The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.”Genesis 4:4-5

God was pleased with what Abel brought to Him. Abel owed God everything and brought Him the best of his flock. God was not pleased with what Cain brought to Him. Cain owed God everything but kept the best for himself. God didn't appreciate that. God gave His best to the human race and wanted their best in return. God gave us His best out of a Heart of Love. God made us to love and enjoy Him. He loves us with all His Heart. He wanted us to return that love. Abel did. Cain didn't. That's why God looked favorably on Abel's offering and why He didn't on Cain's.

Genesis doesn't say but we can assume Abel was happy with how God reacted to his offering. It's always pleasant to know that someone we love is pleased with a gift we give them.

We do know how Cain reacted and it wasn't good.

“So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.”Genesis 4:5

The Hebrew word for “very angry” is *harahl*. It is translated in other parts of the Old Testament as “angry, burned, very angry, flared, furious, and rage.” Cain was hot! He should have been upset with his own selfishness. He should have been angry with his poor behavior. He should have been

embarrassed by his lack of commitment to God. But he wasn't. He was angry with God and with his brother. How dare God not look favorably on his offering!

Cain became so angry about this that "his face was downcast." The Hebrew word for "face" is *paneh*. The word meant more than just the physical features of someone's face. It included the "look" of someone as it expressed the affections or emotions of the mind. The word for "downcast" is *napal*. It carries the idea of something that "collapsed, fell down, was cast down." Cain felt very deep emotions when God did not look favorably on his offering but did on Abel's. Cain's anger and bitterness showed all over his face. God saw it.

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?'" Genesis 4:6

God still had a personal relationship with the human race, even after sin entered between them. God loved people and showed His Grace towards them. His Grace made sure they wouldn't live forever in their sin. God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and kept them out so they couldn't eat the fruit from the tree of life and live forever separated from God. Everything God did for the human race came from His Heart of Love and Grace.

God did not want to see Cain suffer. God wanted Cain to enjoy his relationship with God. It was just a matter of Cain doing what was right. The right thing for Cain was to be thankful and give God his best. God wanted Cain to really love Him and be totally dedicated and committed to loving and serving Him. God knew that Cain was selfish. God knew Cain could never be happy until he put selfishness behind him and gave himself completely to God. That's what God was asking Cain to do by doing "what is right." God's question is rhetorical. Of course God would accept Cain's offering if Cain did what was right. That's all God was asking. God was ready to forgive Cain his selfishness and give him another chance to offer God the firstfruits of his harvest.

But God knew there was another side to the sin of selfishness. It can get much worse. He warned Cain of what could happen.

"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."Genesis 4:7

The other side of the sin of selfishness is it gets worse. It's a monster lurking in the hearts of every human being. We all have the creature of selfishness living inside us. It's like an animal crouching at the door, waiting to jump and have its way with us.

The picture we have of Cain's dilemma reminds me of what Peter wrote in his first letter.

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”<sup>1</sup> Peter 5:8

Sin is directly from the devil. He was the first sinner. He is the god of sin. Paul called Satan “the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.” (Ephesians 2:2-3) This is what Cain was dealing with. It's the first example we have of how a member of the human race dealt with the strong pull of sin in their lives. Selfishness gives life to anger and bitterness. We can do what is right or we can give in to the monster of sin and gratify the cravings of our sinful nature, following its desires and thoughts.

God told Cain he “must master” sin. The Hebrew word is *masal*. It means “rule, govern, master, have dominion.” Cain did not have to just give in to the sinful emotions he was having. God told Cain to “master” those emotions; much like Peter telling believers to be “self-controlled and alert.” Cain needed to control his “self” and be alert to the sin that wanted to control him. God knew that sin is a hungry animal that grows and grows, devouring everything in its path, unless it is mastered.

God would not have told Cain to master sin if he did not have the ability to do it. God's Grace was sufficient for Cain. Cain could have called out to God for help and forgiveness and God would have been right there to give it to him. God would have given Cain the strength to deal with the anger, bitterness and jealousy. Cain could have governed and controlled his emotions if he had really wanted to. But remember that Cain was not committed to God in the first place. Cain's dedication was to himself, not God. Cain had no desire to do what was right. This was the first recorded test of man versus sin following the Fall and man failed miserably.

“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.”Genesis 4:8

Cain did not do what God suggested. Cain did not do what was right. Cain let the anger fester into bitterness. He let bitterness become pride and jealousy. He let pride and jealousy grow into hatred. Hatred gave birth to conspiracy, lying and premeditated murder. Cain did not “accidentally” kill his brother. He thought about it, planned it in detail and then carried it out. Cain went to Abel with the intent to get his brother away from their parents and other siblings. He didn't want anyone else to know what he was going to do because he knew they would try to stop him. Cain planned to kill his brother and get away with it. What Cain apparently forgot was that God sees everything. Cain took Abel out to a field on some premise of talking with his brother or doing something together. He lied to his brother. Lying is part of the ugly process of sin.

Cain hated his brother. He hated Abel so much he wanted him out of his life forever. No one had ever died before but Cain wanted that for Abel with all his scheming heart. It became Cain's constant thought and desire. He chewed on it over and over in his mind. He thought about it when he walked. He thought about it when he sat. He thought about it when he ate. He thought about it when he worked. He thought about it when he was around other members of the family. The destruction of his brother was all he could think about. God told Cain to master the sin or it would rule him. Cain did not obey God. He let sin jump him, have him and rule him.

What happens next is one of the most awful moments in human history. Brother kills brother.

“And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”Genesis 4:7

Cain's attack on his brother went down in history as the first act of savagery, the first violent crime, the first act of hatred against another human being. Cain will forever be remembered for the terrible thing he did to his younger brother.

Cain is not spoken of well in the Bible. Here are the only three places outside of Genesis where Cain is mentioned.

“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.”Hebrews 11:4

“Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous.”<sup>1</sup> John 3:12

“Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.”John 1:11

John closes the book on Cain. He puts away forever any thought that Cain might have made a slight mistake or judgment in error in what he did to Abel. “And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous.” Cain approached God with an unrighteous heart. His intentions, even at a time of supposed worship and sacrifice, were evil. He only cared about himself, not God, and certainly not others. Cain’s heart, mind and actions showed just how deep the sin nature ran within the human race. Adam and Eve had given birth to a monster; a monster that lurks in the life of every human being born to woman.

Have you ever wondered where Cain learned to kill? Did he go to school for it? Did he study under a master of murder? Did he read a best-selling book about killing? No! Murder lived in Cain’s heart from the moment of his birth.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”Matthew 15:19

The potential for every kind of evil dwells in the heart of every child. Adam and Eve knew that only too well. They watched as one child, Abel, grew up to follow in their footsteps and love God with all his heart. They watched as another child, Cain, grew up to be selfish, prideful, hateful and become a murderer. Why one child righteous and one child evil? Is it just the luck of the draw? Is there some special “evil seed” in some children and not in others? No. We’re all alike. Everyone is born dead in transgressions and sins. Everyone gratifies the cravings of their sinful nature and follows its desires and thoughts. So, why the difference between Cain and Abel?

We are in a spiritual battle. God and Satan do battle over the souls of men and women, boys and girls every day. I’m sure a battle was raging over Cain and Abel. God told Cain that sin was crouching at his door. He told Cain that sin desired to have him. God told Cain to master it. Cain did not and killed his brother. What is sin that it would crouch like an animal and seek ways to rule our lives? Satan is behind all sin. He is the one who wants to have us.

Remember what we read in 1 John? “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother.” Cain belonged to the “evil one.” Who is that? It’s one of the names used for Satan. He is the evil one. He is also called a “murderer.” Look at what Jesus told some Jews about Satan.

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” John 8:44

Satan was a murderer from the beginning. He is the father of lies. Satan was behind what Cain did to his brother. Satan took the sin nature that flowed through Cain's heart and mind and lied to him. He told Cain that he was better than Abel. He told Cain to keep the best of the fruits of his labor for himself. Why waste it on God? God will take whatever you give Him and be glad for it. When God did not look with approval on Cain's offering, Satan continued to lie. He told Cain that it was Abel's fault. Satan's lie might have gone something like this. "Abel, Abel, Abel, that's all anybody in your family talks about. Precious little Abel. Abel has the best sheep. Abel loves God. Abel's so good. Blah, blah, blah. Cain, if Abel wasn't around, everyone would be talking about how good you are and what wonderful offerings you make to God. You'd be everyone's favorite if it just wasn't for your stupid brother, Abel." Whatever Satan said to Cain, the lies worked. Cain followed in his spiritual father's footsteps and committed murder.

It's no wonder that Satan's desire would be to have Cain murder Abel. Satan was still smarting from the thrashing God had given him. God had prophesied that the offspring of the woman would "crush" his head. Satan did all he could to ruin the chances of that happening. He came up with a plan to have one offspring kill the other. That way, one offspring would be dead and the other would at such odds with God that he couldn't possibly be the one God would use to "crush" Satan's head. The plan might have worked, except for one thing: God's Amazing Grace!

Though God punished Cain severely, he did not kill him. God cursed Cain and banished him to a life of wandering in a land that would not yield crops for him. Cain was afraid someone might kill him. God's Grace, based on His Righteousness and Justice, protected Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived a long life, but God never used Cain nor any of his descendants in His plan of redemption. Cain's life became a waste, much like the land he wandered. His children, which were many, became the people of great wickedness that God wiped from the face of the earth in the Great Flood.

“The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.’”Genesis 6:5-7

What was God to do? Abel was dead and Cain was cursed for life. How would God carry out His master plan to redeem the human race? Was He at a loss? Had Satan won? Hardly.

“Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, ‘God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.’ Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.”Genesis 4:25-26

God had not forgotten the human race! God was not without power to fulfill His master plan of redemption! Satan had not defeated God! God was well-prepared for the spiritual battle that unfolded. God gave Adam and Eve another son. This is the son God would use to bring forth the Great Redeemer.

“Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi .... the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” Luke 3:23-38

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the One Who crushes the head of Satan, came from the direct lineage of Seth, the son of Adam and Eve. Even when Adam and Eve faced their darkest hours, Abel dead and Cain banished, they trusted God's Word. God had promised a Savior and they believed He would deliver. And deliver He did!

## What's in a Name?

Names in the Bible are important. They give us insight to what was happening spiritually at the time a child was named or a person's name was changed. Here are a few examples from our study. The name "Adam" is the Hebrew *adham*, in Genesis 1:26, and *ha-adham*, in Genesis 2:5. It is similar in spelling to the Hebrew word for "ground," which is *ha-adhamah*.

"God formed *ha-adham*, from the dust of the *ha-adhamah*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and *ha-adham* became a living being." Genesis 2:7

Adam gave his wife two names: *ishshah*, (woman), before the Fall into sin and *hawwah*, (life), after the Fall. The Greek word for *hawwah* is Eua. The Latin word is Eva. The English word is Eve.

"The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called '*ishshah*,' for she was taken out of man.'" Genesis 2:23

"Adam named his wife *hawwah*, because she would become the mother of all the living." Genesis 3:20

Now we come to the names for Adam and Eve's sons. Eve was very excited when she gave birth to her first son. She believed it was part of God's promise to bring a Redeemer through her offspring.

“She said, ‘With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.’”Genesis 4:1

The name Cain comes from the Hebrew word *kanah*, which means “get, acquire.” Eve believed she had “gotten” the promised offspring from the Lord. We can feel her joy and anticipation as she held that little baby, the first child ever born on earth, and praised God for giving him to her.

But something happened between the first and second sons. Adam and Eve named their second child “Abel.” The Hebrew is *hebhel*. It means “in pause, nothingness, vanity.” It is such a departure from the joy of naming Cain. What happened?

One thought is that Adam and Eve were disappointed in what they found in their first child, Cain. Cain was the first person born with a sin nature. He did what pleased Cain. He was selfish, prideful, disobedient and all the other things we’ve seen in children. Cain’s behavior may have given his parents cause for concern about God’s promise of a Redeemer. When the second son was born, Adam and Eve named him *hebhel*. They may have seen vanity and passed that insight along through Abel’s name.

Next is the name Seth. It is the Hebrew word *sheth*. It means “the appointed one, the compensation.” Eve realized God was granting her a special gift to replace her great loss.

“Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, ‘God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.’”Genesis 4:25

Seth became the lineage through which God would introduce the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. It’s interesting to note that when Moses listed a written account of Adam’s line in Genesis 5, he makes no mention of Cain or Abel. Adam’s line begins with Seth.

Seth named his first son *Enosh*. The word means “mortal.” Seth apparently understood his frailty and mortality. Seth knew he needed God. He named his son “mortal” and “at that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.” The words “call on” mean the full worship of and commitment to God. This is in stark contrast to Cain and his children who built a city for protection and developed an earthly kingdom. The godly line leading to salvation began with the understanding of man’s mortality and need for God’s Grace. Seth and his children praised, prayed to and trusted the Almighty God for a heavenly kingdom.

The history of God’s Grace is one of love, concern and attention to detail. God is in control of all things. Nothing has ever thrown Him. Nothing has ever confused Him. Nothing has set Him back from completing His plan to redeem the human race. Satan will always oppose God, but God will always win. That is God’s Grace in action. The history of God’s Grace has

been repeated time and time again. You and I are living out the promise of God's Grace right now. Remember the words of Paul:

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”Ephesians 2:6-7

“Lord, thank you for your Grace and Kindness toward us. We are so blessed to know you and be part of the Body of Christ. Help us enjoy your Grace and share it with our friends today. Encourage us to call on Your Grace in times of trouble. Guide us to depend on your Grace when sin tries to have its way in our hearts and minds. We love you. Thank you for loving us! In Jesus precious Name we pray, Amen.”

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