

Student 3: Low Merit

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“Our worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God’s grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the needs of God’s grace.” (Jerry Bridges, *The discipline of Grace; God’s Role and Our Role in the Pursuit of holiness*).

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What this essay will concentrate on is ‘grace’ and its implications on the Adventist Church today. It will touch on religious tradition been explained in protestant Christianity to sustain grace. It will be supported with quotes, verses and stories from the Bible both Old and New Testament, which will help, gives clarification of the theme of Grace.

In the beginning, God introduces grace in the story of Noah. Noah is also known as a prophet of God was commanded by God to build an Ark. As we learn in the Bible, in the book of Genesis chapters six to nine of the wickedness of men and all flesh is corrupted. The Lord promised flood but also keeps his covenant with Noah because of his righteousness.

SDA Church thinks the grace of the Lord is evidence in his love for his people meaning that those who have faith in the Lord and live according to the will of the Lord. God will show his grace on them, at the same time the flood demonstrates the grace of God in all things by sending the flood he washed away and cleanse the earth of all humanities corruptions.

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Throughout the story of Noah, the grace of the Lord is merciful in saving Noah and his family on the other hand, his grace can be obtained by those who believe and have faith as in the Protestant Christianity emphasis is on the conversion of a person that truly brings the grace of God on that person.

Again, the Old Testament in the book of Genesis chapter 4 dictates the story of Cain and Abel where God demonstrates his grace in the dealing of anger and jealousy. Yet how can a tragic story of two brothers with such different attributes and values show the grace of God but in the way, they are received by God. For example their offerings to the same od was a show of gratitude and respect to God, where Cain being a tiller of the ground offered his fruits and as for Abel chose and selected his firstlings and the fattest of his flock for his offering was accepted by God. Therefore, the grace beheld by Abel as he gave his best sheep and all for the Lord, whereas Cain gave whatever he got his hands on. And because of this grace that was on Abel jealousy stirred in the heart of Cain and blinded his eyes from God and slew his brother Abel.

The Lord asks Cain in Genesis chapter four verse nine “where is thy brother?” and he said “I know not: am I my brother’s keeper?” where we know that God already knows the answer to the question but was a reminder to Cain of the innocent blood he had shed. Nevertheless the Lord’s grace was upon Cain as well as we see that Cain was not punished in death but rather given a second chance to repent of his actions, yet his punishment was to bear the mark on his forehead. This is a show of the grace of God as we learn in the Protestant Christianity that conversion can take place at any time but where the actual person needs to have a change of heart is when grace is received. Religious tradition in different faiths can see the same story but have a different meaning of how grace is gained or obtained. Such is mentioned in the Catholic Church holds that it is because of the action of Christ and the Holy Spirit in transforming into divine life what is subjected to his power that the sacraments confer the grace they signify, which they say that the power of Christ and the Spirit acts in and through each sacrament and yet depends on the individual person if they are worthy to receive this grace (Wikipedia, Catholic Theology).

We learn from the stories and accounts above about grace but the SDA Church would say that nothing is so more as evidence then Jesus himself who becomes the grace in the New Testament.

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Matthew chapter 8 tells the healings of the sick and ill, the chasing away of the evil spirits and the calming of the storm where Jesus himself is the grace and performs these actions of grace so that all may know him in the true son of the living God. Each of these actions has a purpose in it where each form of grace of God is performed in different situations and in different concepts, but is all in the grace of God. It is clear that with grace a great sense of faith is needs to be established in the individual in order for God's grace to be able to be magnified.

We learn in the parable of the olive trees the need for us to let go of the things that will hinder our faith in God and abstain from his grace, if it wasn't for the trimming of the bad branches of the olive tree, the infested part would have damaged the whole tree. Another of these parables is the lost sheep where God emphasises the importance of one soul as greater in the eyes of the Lord, in this parable the shepherd leaves his flock to go and find the lost sheep, which he does and returns it to the flock. With both of these parables, the grace God teaches us the importance of relationships, of compassion, of integrity and of faith, which is evidence of his grace when we are obedient.

Jesus Christ himself is that grace, his sacrifice for us is the pinnacle of all things pertaining grace, he himself spoke upon the cross as he was nailed to the cross and blood dripped from his flesh asked the father to forgive them, for they do not knoweth what they do. What a great exemplar of grace at the peak of his death he showed his grace on us by dying for the remission of our sins. Through that atonement of Christ, we are given a second chance to repent and covenant with our God, as did the Israelites, the Hebrews and the Jews before us.

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In Revelation chapters 1 to 3, the grace of God is at the end of the world. Revelation describes the things that will happen to those who don't take the Lord seriously and the things that we must do to prepare ourselves for his second coming. He states in Revelation that he will come like a thief in the night and that he that overcomes shall gain eternal salvation of his grace. His grace at the end of the world reminds us to overcome our tribulations, our weaknesses and to retain our names in the book of life. God's grace is upon us every hour and minute of our being, it is how we want his grace in the end that will determine what you need to do to accomplish his commandments. As he says in

Revelations chapter 3 verses 21-22, 'behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any men hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him and sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.' Wm. Paul young emphasises on grace as he quotes "Grace doesn't depend on suffering to exist, but where there is suffering you will find grace in many facets and colours" (Wm. Paul Young, *The Shag: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity*).

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Therefore, in conclusion for the SDA Church the grace of God is apparent in his mercy and his love for us. We are his children and his grace resides in us when we are obeying his commandments and not only in obeying but is there for us to strive for as in the many different appearances of grace in the Bible is described in the above. God shows his grace at all things whether it was to reward or punish his grace was with the people when they are here in trials and tribulations and in his own suffering; we have his grace upon us to repent and faith in him.

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