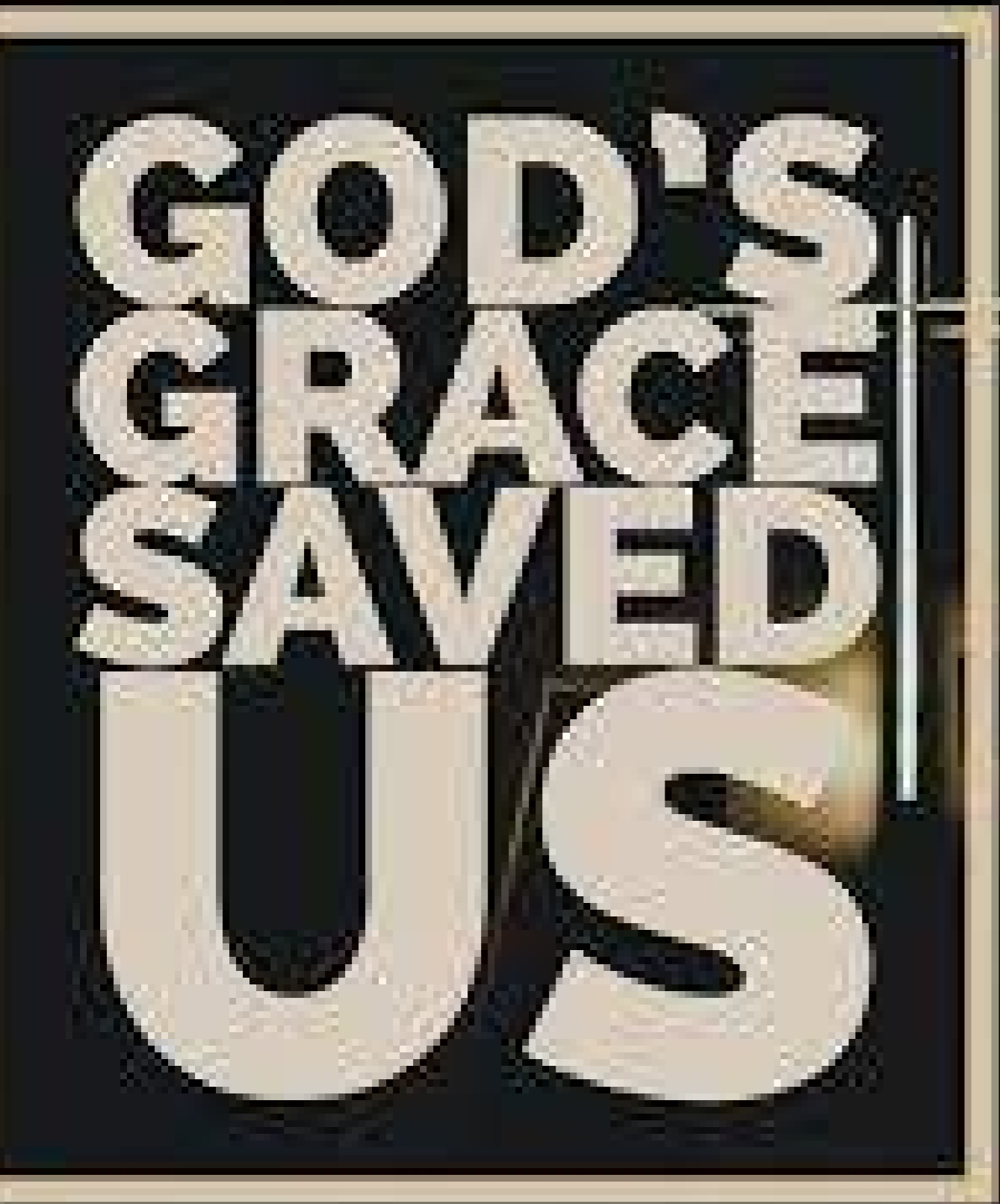




***“Gratianon tollit naturam, sed perficit”***

‘Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it’  
(St. Thomas Aquinas c. 1224-1274)

# Grace vs Nature

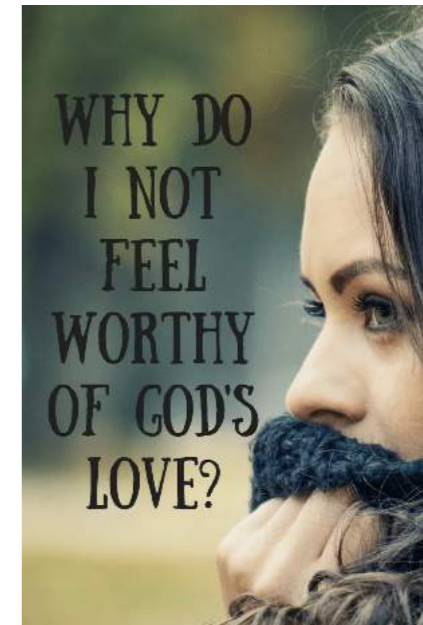


## What is grace? What role does it play in my life?

*Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons [daughters]. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life. The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom. Sanctifying grace is the gratuitous gift of his life that God makes to us; it is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. (CCC, nos. 2021-2023).*

## The Significance of God's Grace

At the Annunciation the Angel Gabriel's greeting, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you." All those who have come to Christ are described with words like forgiven, free, befriended and sanctified. That is our condition – that is what is true of us. But most of us would agree with we sometimes we don't live that way. In other words, our conduct is not always consistent with our condition. We struggle to adopt that mindset and we struggle to live out those truths about our identity in the normal relationships of life.



## Some questions to ponder

### Are we filled with God's Grace?



- If I am free, if I am forgiven, if I am God's beloved....
- Then why is that I struggle to live it out?
- Why do I get upset with the people who love me most in life?
- Have you noticed that the people closest to you are the ones that can really frustrate you?



- Why do I get worried when I have seen God take care of me 100 times before?
- If God can provide in the midst of all that, why do I ever worry?
- When we first got married we lived on love! Where has the love gone?



- Why do I spend my time very selfishly instead of helping others around?
- Why do I spend my money so flippantly when I could help the poor?
- Why do I spend time complaining about things I don't like rather than giving thanks for everything that is right?



- In other words, why do I struggle living out what I know to be true?

While those questions could be answered in several different ways, we are going to answer that question in one word: **Grace**.

The significance of **Grace** in the Word of God and the impact of Grace on our lives can help us take the next step in our journey of walking with God and becoming like Jesus with joy.

Titus 2:11-14 shows us how important God's grace is in our lives.

*"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."*

**Grace is necessary** to resist the attacks of **our corrupt nature** and to persevere in good. It is a free gift of God and He gives it to whoever He wishes and as abundantly as He wishes. Grace is the love of God shown to the unlovely; the peace of God given to the restless; the unmerited favour of God.

The gospel of the grace of God is the message everyone needs. The word of grace is proclaimed from every page of the Bible and ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ. The last verse of the Bible summarises the message from Genesis to Revelation: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all" (Revelation 22:21). Through Jesus "we have all received grace upon grace" (John 1:16) - the gratuitous and undomesticated grace of God.

### So how does grace work with our nature?

### Do we all deserve God's Grace or is it only given to selected ones?

Christians live every day by the grace of God. We receive forgiveness according to the riches of God's grace, and grace drives our sanctification. Spiritual growth doesn't happen overnight; we *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 2:18).

**Grace transforms our desires, motivations, and behaviour.**

**What does God's grace in our life mean?** The bible tells us that God is kind and gracious. How do we know if we are living in spirit and grace? Or driven only by our human nature?

**Nature** can be deceiving and conniving, always aiming for one's own benefit.

**Grace** walks in simplicity, turns away from all evil, not deceitful and does everything purely for God.

**Nature** is not willing to be mortified, to be restrained, to be subjected to obedience.

**Grace** learns about self-mortification, resists sensuality, seeks to obey and be disciplined and desires not to command others but to be under God's command.

**Nature** willingly receives honour and respect.

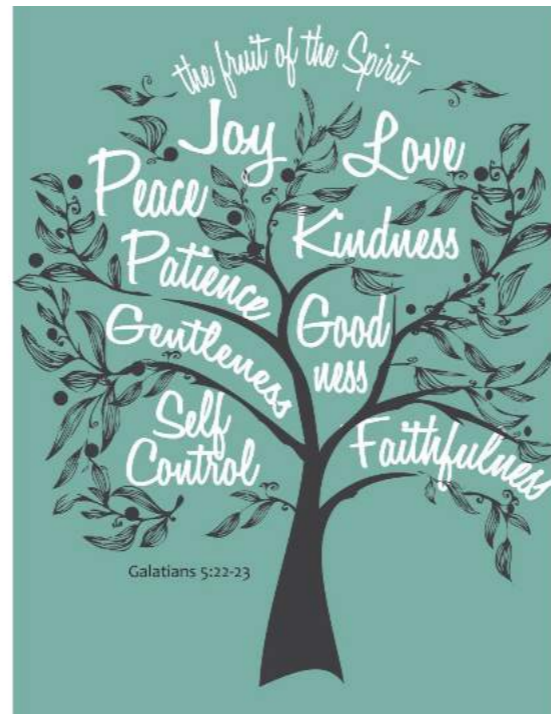
**Grace** faithfully attributes all honour and glory to God.

**Nature** is afraid of shame and contempt.

**Grace** is glad to suffer reproach for the love of Jesus.

**Nature** seeks to have a luxurious lifestyle.

**Grace** delights in that which is plain and humble.



**Nature** inclines to worldly vanities.

**Grace** draws one to God and to all virtues and restrains worldly pursuits and wanderings.

**Nature** tends to gratify the senses.

**Grace** seeks to be comforted in God alone.

**Nature** likes to associate with the rich and powerful, flattering them.

**Grace** loves even the enemies and prefers to associate with the poor and lowly.

**Nature** easily complains about hardships.

**Grace** bears poverty with constancy.

**Nature** likes to be the centre of attraction and attention.

**Grace** avoids vain satisfaction, and gives all glory to God.

**Nature** is covetous, and likes to take rather than to give, and loves to have things exclusive and private.

**Grace** is kind and open hearted, shuns selfishness, is contented with little, and judges it more blessed to give than to receive.

This grace is a supernatural light and a special gift of God and a distinctive mark of the elect which elevates one from earthly things to the love of heavenly things and transforms one from the worldly and carnal to the spiritual. The more one overcome one's nature, and subject it to the spiritual the greater the abundance of grace is infused and reformed according to the image of God. We need to study well the two trees of grace and nature and to cultivate and strengthen the tree of grace, thus weakening the tree of nature. And above all to keep our Divine Guest, the Holy Spirit who alone can direct us on the right path.

**Are we led by grace or by nature?**

The answer can be found in Galatians 5:22-23



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