

# Living in the Kingdom

## Lesson 11: Grace and Merit

*God Shares His Life with Us*



CCC 35, 1722,  
1998, 2001

CCC 1995  
2 Pet 1:4

CCC 1998

Rom 8:24, Eph  
2:5-8, 1 Cor 15:2,  
Rom 5:9-10,  
1 Cor 3:12-15,  
Rom 13:11

CCC 1987-90  
CCC 1995-99  
CCC 1810-11  
2 Cor 5:17

CCC 2005

CCC 2000-2001  
Rom 2:4

Acts 9

CCC 1997,  
CCC 1999-2000  
CCC 1266, 1830

CCC 2003  
1 Cor 14

1. In order for us to enter into a relationship with Him, God gives Himself to us. He not only revealed Himself (order of Revelation) He gave Himself (order of Grace), providing supernatural means for us to live the life of beatitude He made us for.
2. Jesus came to forgive us our sins, make possible a relationship with God and open the way to heaven (justification). He also came to transform us into God's image and likeness and make us partakers of God's own nature (sanctification).
3. The supernatural life: We cannot attain salvation or know God on our own. We are unfit for life in heaven, just as we are unfit to breathe and live on planet Mars. God had to make this supernatural life possible by giving our soul new, supernatural powers: *grace*, which surpasses the power of human intellect and will.
4. Salvation is not only the forgiveness of sins received at one point in time, but the restoration of man to God's image over a whole lifetime.
5. Grace is *favor*, the *free and undeserved help* that God gives us to respond to his call to become His adoptive children. Grace is a participation in the Trinitarian life of God. We are saved by grace alone. Grace justifies us by leading us to conversion and cleansing us from our sin. It transforms and sanctifies us and enables us to grow in the virtues. Grace makes of us a new creation.
6. Since it belongs to the supernatural order, *grace escapes our experience* and cannot be known except by faith. We cannot rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved.
7. **Actual grace:** God's interventions, at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification. The preparation of man for the reception of grace is already a work of grace. Every impulse towards God is the prompting of grace: "God's kindness leads to repentance."
8. E.g.: Saul's experience on the road to Damascus prompted him towards God but was not enough for salvation. He had to respond to the grace of conversion, gain sanctifying grace (beginning with baptism) and grow in it for the rest of his life.
9. **Sanctifying grace:** A habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects us and enable us to live with God and to act by his love. The free gift that God makes of his life by the Holy Spirit to heal us of sin and to make us grow in holiness. First received in baptism, it increases faith, hope and love and sustains the moral life.
10. **Charisms** are special graces given for the edification of the church. E.g.: gift of healing, prophecy, praying in tongues. Charisms are at the service of charity which builds up the Church.

<p>CCC 2001-2002 CCC 2672 Eph 4:7 Rom 2:14-15</p> <p>CCC 1127-29 CCC 1972 1 Cor 6:11</p> <p>Gen 3:22-24, CCC 399, Rom 3:23, Rom 6:3-4, Jn 3:3-5, Tit 3:5, Mt 5:48, Phil 1:6</p> <p>Mt 7:21, CCC 678, 1861-64 Jn 20:22-23, CCC 1468</p> <p>CCC 2006-11 Rom 2:6</p> <p>CCC 2012-16 Mt 5:48 Rom 8:28-30</p>	<p>11. How do we receive grace? "Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift." The longing for truth and goodness that we have is already (actual) grace. Grace always demands man's free response. Grace is the Holy Spirit working in us. We can receive Him through prayer, which is a means of grace.</p> <p>12. <b>Sacramental grace:</b> Humans are a union of matter and spirit. In the OT, God communicated with his people through physical signs: tabernacle/temple, animal sacrifices, water, bread, wine, incense. The Incarnation of Jesus is the pinnacle of the divine meeting the human. In the Church, grace is received primarily through visible signs that effect what they signify and give us an infusion of God's power: the 7 sacraments. Through baptism we first receive sanctifying grace.</p> <p>13. Growing in grace: Mankind lost sanctifying grace at the fall. We regain it at baptism, being ingrafted into the life of Christ, born again, and washed by the bath of regeneration. Yet the work of grace is not finished: we must become perfect as God is perfect. We must constantly grow in grace, cooperating with the work of God in us.</p> <p>14. Through grave (mortal) sin we can lose sanctifying grace and heaven, even if we have once "accepted Jesus as Savior" and been baptized: "Not everyone who says 'Lord, Lord' will come into the kingdom." The sacrament of reconciliation restores sanctifying grace.</p> <p>15. <b>Merit:</b> Man has no right to merit from God; we have received everything from him. But God has chosen to associate man with His work of grace, as man freely responds and collaborates with God's actions. As children of God, we can receive merit thanks to His generosity. The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness: "<i>You are glorified in the assembly of your Holy Ones, for in crowning their merits you are crowning your own gifts.</i>"</p> <p>16. The <b>Universal Call to Holiness:</b> God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son, and so all Christians are called to holiness, to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."</p> <p>17. Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. We hope for the grace of final perseverance and God's reward for our good works accomplished with his grace in communion with Jesus.</p>
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### Questions for Discussion (Lessons 10 and 11)

1. What does the doctrine of justification teach us about how to read Scripture as one, single book?
2. Why is receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior by faith not enough for salvation?
3. How do my good works fit into the idea that grace is a free gift of God?
4. What are ways to persevere at what God has begun in me?
5. When have I seen the power of God's grace manifested?
6. Do I have to accept God's grace? What part does my free will have?
7. Why is sanctifying (or sacramental) grace not something to which we have an automatic right?
8. In what way should I feel God's grace working in me?
9. How would our view of life's disappointments change if we saw everything in life as gift of grace?