

# SERMON & PRAYER NOTES

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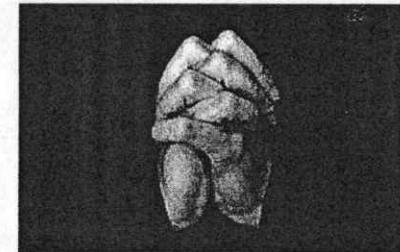
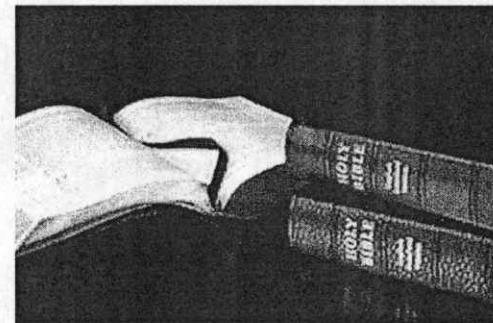
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*Holy Spirit Community Church*  
'Seeking God's will, Sharing God's love'  
DID YOU KNOW THIS IS OUR MISSION STATEMENT?

*Sunday September 29<sup>th</sup> 2024*



**The Bible & Prayer**  
Matthew 6:9-13

*Gary Randle*

Grace The word "grace" in biblical parlance can, like forgiveness, repentance, regeneration, and salvation, mean something as broad as describing the whole of God's activity toward man or as narrow as describing one segment of that activity. An accurate, common definition describes grace as the unmerited favor of God toward man. In the Old Testament, the term that most often is translated "grace," is *hen* [ej]; in the New Testament, it is *charis* [cavri"].

*The Old Testament.* The word *hen* [ej] occurs around sixty times in the Old Testament. There are examples of man's favor to man, but the theological concept of importance to us is the grace of God demonstrated toward man. The term occurs most often in the phrase favor "in your (i.e., God's) sight" or "in the eyes of the Lord." This assumes the notion of God as a watchful master or king, with the one who is finding favor, a servant, an employee, or perhaps a soldier.

The concept first occurs in Genesis 6:8. Noah finds "favor in the eyes of the Lord." The context is that the Lord was grieved at "how great man's wickedness on the earth had become" ( Gen 6:5 ). This statement about the Lord's antipathy toward man is followed by his promise that he will wipe humankind from the face of the earth, that is, completely destroy him, because of his anger at their condition. Noah is then described as having found favor in the eyes of the Lord. The themes of judgment and salvation, in which the vast majority of humankind are condemned to destruction, while God finds favor on a few (Noah and his family), reoccurs often in connection with the idea of grace. Hence, concepts of election, salvation, mercy, and forgiveness are all linked in this first illustration of grace in the Old Testament. Interestingly, the rest of the references to favor in Genesis all describe favor in the eyes of man (e.g., Jacob begging Esau's favor, 32:5 ; Genesis 33:8 Genesis 33:10 Genesis 33:15 ).

Crucial among the Old Testament passages on the unmerited favor of God is the conversation between Moses and God recorded in Exodus 33. There, in the space of six verses, Moses is said to have found favor with God five times, *hen* [ej] being translated either "find favor" or "be pleased with." At the beginning of the chapter, Moses goes into the tent of meeting, while the pillar of cloud stands at the entrance to the tent, and the people of Israel stay outside, worshiping (v. 10). The Lord speaks to Moses "face to face, s a man speaks with his friend." In the passage, the conversation between Moses and the Lord has to do specifically with the favor that God shows to Moses, and Moses requests that God demonstrate that favor toward him. Moses begins by reminding God that he has called Moses to lead these people, but that God has not let him know whom he will send with Moses. The statement echoes the original conversation between Moses and God at the burning bush in chapter 3, where God promises to send Aaron with Moses to help him get the people out of Egypt. Here, the Lord promises only that his "Presence" will go with Moses, and that he will give him rest (v. 14). Moses has just stated that he knows God's name (another echo of chap. 3), and that he has found favor with God; he requests that God teach him his ways, so that he may "know you and continue to find favor with you" (v. 13). Moses demonstrates his humble dependence upon the grace of God by affirming that if God's Presence does not go up with them, he does not want to be sent, because he knows they will fail (v. 15). But he asks the reasonable question, "How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us?" (v. 16). God promises to go with him in the next verse because "I am pleased with you and I know you by name" (v. 17).