



Quick Backdrop

You've probably heard the name Martin Luther. And you may know that it was 500 years ago, October 31, 1517, that he made public his 95 Theses, forging a reformation that launched the Protestant movement. One of the biggest biblical concepts that the church had been ignoring at that time was the idea that our relationship with God is a free gift of grace, not a relationship that we have to work for. So, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, let's look at the very words of Scripture that inspired Luther on how to have a relationship with God.

1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)

As you read the passages below, look for two words: *grace* and *gift*. To help notice them, you may want to draw a gift box around the word "gift" (or other words like "give") and circle the word "grace."

1 Corinthians 1:4-6 (NIV)

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

2 Corinthians 9:13-15 (NIV)

¹³ Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Ephesians 1:4-6 (NIV)

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 2:6-10 (NIV)

⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ 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. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

After you've read (and marked up) the passages, make a few notes about what you learn regarding the connection between "grace" and "gift." Answer questions like: How is it given? Who gives it? To whom is it given?

2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

The connection between "give" and "grace" is a major theme of these verses. And these are just a sliver of the many verses in the Bible that make this connection. So why is this important? Take a minute to ask God that very question. Spend a few minutes praying about these verses and journal in the space below anything God teaches you about the connection between "give" and "grace."

3 PUTTING INTO PRACTICE (God, Change Me!)

Experiencing God's grace is easier than you think. If you want it, you got it. And if you feel like you're taking advantage of God by accepting His free gift, well, you are. And that's what God loves.

Finish your time by reading James 4:6-8 from your Bible or Bible app. After you've read the verses, spend some time experiencing God's grace.

