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Charis: God's Scandalous Grace For Us



Synopsis

“We often think that grace enters the Bible when Jesus appeared. However, Preston shows us that within the pages of the confusing, sometimes bizarre, and often war-filled pages of the Old Testament, there is heaps and heaps of grace. And the more we look, the more grace we see—”grace that melts our hearts in worship of our God who shows His overwhelming, mind-blowing, over-the-top amazing grace from Eden to the New Jerusalem.” •Dan Kimball, Leadership, Mission and Teaching at Vintage Faith Church, and author of *Adventures in Churchland*

“A book on grace with the power to liberate us from the weight of works and requirements and do-goodisms that have plagued Christians for far too long. Every page is bursting with freedom. Finally, a grace-filled book on grace!” •Jonathan Merritt, author of *Jesus Is Better Than You Imagined*

Preston Sprinkle writes a book on grace that is long overdue. Christians love to talk about grace and we name our churches Grace, but grace like God’s is in desperately short supply. Sprinkle frees us to live in God’s grace as Jesus embodied it. That kind of grace is unnerving, and for the most part, unprecedented in the Christianity most of us know. *Charis* is a must-read for every pastor, student, leader ... and anyone who has walked through the doors of a church and felt inadequate, judged, unworthy, or unspiritual. Preston brilliantly reminds us that God no longer sees you as the failed one, the messed up one. Because the kind of grace Sprinkle writes about changes it all, and God only sees you as precious and priceless. So much so that like a tattoo, your name is written on the hands of God. This is what makes *Charis* a game changer for all of us.” •Palmer Chinchin, PhD, cultural artist and author of *True Religion* and *The Barefoot Tribe*

A Look at Grace from a Most Surprising Perspective “The Old Testament’s Grace. We want to domesticate it, calm it down, and stuff it into a blue blazer and a pair of khakis. But biblical grace—or *charis*—doesn’t like to settle down. Grace is a dangerous topic because the Bible is a dangerous book.” *Charis* flows from the Preston Sprinkle’s half dozen years teaching the Old Testament to college students. You might think that would produce a book about judgment—but no way. He shows how every character, every event, every single page from the Old Testament bleeds with grace.” Take a journey into *Charis*—where harlots are hugged, enemies are enjoyed, and really bad people receive really good things from a Creator who stubbornly delights in undelightful people—like us.

Preston Sprinkle (PhD, MDiv) is the director of Eternity Bible College’s extension site in Boise, Idaho. He co-authored the New York Times bestselling *Erasing Hell* with Francis Chan and is the author of the recently published *Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence*. He resides in Idaho with his wife and four children.

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Customer Reviews

Is another book on grace really what the church needs? Grace has become what Preston calls a "Christianese buzzword" for Christians. Something that he wrote elsewhere, "is often buried in a pile of religious bumper stickers trying to keep the gospel strapped in a pew." And he's right. We say it before meals, we name our daughters after it, we ask our professors for it, we try do dance or sing with it, and we sometimes bestow it on our friends and welcome them into our "good graces". Yet that's the difference between our human, finite understanding of grace and God's divinely infinite, radical, and "stubborn delight in His enemies" (24). Enter "Charis". At the very heart of "Charis" is a full understanding of the biblical story of God. Beginning in Genesis 1 and 2, Preston walks through the Bible, highlighting key figures and events, and forms a biblical theology of grace ("Charis" in Greek). Most of his time is spent chugging the Old Testament, leaving relatively very little time to sip the New Testament like a fine wine. But his hard work pays off. Instead of reading the Old Testament morally--or looking at character studies of Old Testament people as examples to follow--Sprinkle reads the Old Testament theologically. In all of it's blood, overbearing laws, steamy sensuality, and crazy prophets cooking their food over dung, the Old Testament showcases a God

who deepest desire is a relationship with sinful human beings (Sprinkle's main example being famed killer Jeffrey Dahmer) even though we, like the Israelites at Mount Sinai, commit "adultery on our wedding night" (72).

Preston Sprinkle wants to remind us that "God loves you because of God." Sprinkle's new book *Charis: God's Scandalous Grace* looks at the biblical principle of grace, bringing the focus on God, and away from who we are and what we've done. Grace goes beyond the tame uses of it we often hear. It's not merely leniency or acceptance, it's "God's aggressive pursuit of, and stubborn delight in, freakishly foul people." Too often, modern Christians present a cleaned-up version of grace. It's easy to forget that there is no sin, no history, outside of the reach of grace. Sprinkle points out that the twelve disciples were a motley crew. "Jesus planted the first church on earth with a group of hoodlums who wouldn't be let inside the doors of most churches today." We might be "willing to put up with social outcasts and misfits, but this isn't grace. It's tolerance." Jesus takes the misfits and "doesn't give them a bowl of soup and shuffle them out of the church. He gives them responsibility--the hallmark of genuine value--and trusts in the God who uses the weak to shame the strong." Not only does God love us in spite of us, he gives us authority and power! Throughout the Bible, God uses sinful, broken people to accomplish his purposes. Indeed, the family line of Jesus is full of the unlovely: harlot, murderer, "down-and-out immigrant," whore, deceiver, and more. Whatever pain, sin, and flaw we have, Jesus is bigger and he loves us and wants "to enter our pain. To forgive us. To save us. To enjoy us." God wants to enjoy me. That's a hard thing to imagine, especially when I don't particularly enjoy me. And he wants to use me, even when I feel useless.

Why do we need one more book on grace? It's a fair question. In *Charis: God's Scandalous Grace for Us* (David C. Cook, 2014), author Preston Sprinkle gives a convincing though incomplete answer. Preston Sprinkle is best known for co-authoring with Francis Chan *Erasing Hell* (2011). This time around, Sprinkle goes solo, painting a handful of biblical portraits mostly from the Old Testament, each one an example of the relentless pursuit of God's grace (Gk. *charis*). It is through these pictures of grace that Sprinkle targets his objective: Rich, poor, successful, homeless, healthy, disabled, black, white, brown, young, old, famous, abused, pervert, or priest -- whoever you are and whatever you have done or have not accomplished -- if you are human, then you are cherished and prized and honored and enjoyed as the pinnacle of creation by a Creator who breeds *charis* (p. 38). Too often, we don't take the time to plumb the height and depth of grace. Too quickly -- Sprinkle maintains -- we move on to other aspects of salvation without marveling in this,

God's grace is to all of us, the undeserving. His observation is a fair one. Dwelling upon grace can be an important remedy for those who have grown up in a legalistic setting where working out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12) leaves believers with the nagging feeling that they will never quite measure up. Sprinkle, though a PhD in Bible from the University of Aberdeen, wears his learning lightly. With language that is picturesque but not ornate, gritty yet not vulgar, he refuses to Photoshop the blemishes of OT characters like Samson, Rahab, Abraham, and David. His point is that God's grace reaches us as we really are and not as we pretend to be. We cannot earn grace.

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