Is It Possible To Be Overly-Dependent On Grace?

Intro: In one way it would be impossible to be “overly-dependent” on grace. In other ways, there are some brethren today who are “overly-dependent” on grace.

I. TWO ASPECTS OF BEING OVERLY DEPENDENT

A. Impossible to be overly dependent
   1. Impossible to be saved without God’s grace.
   2. All have sinned:
      a. Rom. 3:23 “23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”
      b. Gal. 3:22 “22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”
   3. Sin separates us from God and brings the death penalty.
      a. Isa. 59:1-2 “1 Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”
      b. Rom. 6:23 “23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
      c. Jam. 1:15 “15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”
   4. Man cannot remove sin on his own.
      a. Man must rely upon the grace of God.
      b. Thus, from this standpoint, there is no way that man can be overly dependent on God’s grace.

B. Those overly dependent
   1. Some have advocated 100% grace and nothing from man.
      a. Randy Mayeux speaking at the 21st Annual Youth Minister’s Seminar, sponsored by Lubbock Christian University Oct. 16-19, 1989, stated, “I have preached and believed, I believe deeply that the New Testament teaches that salvation is a free gift of God period. You are saved by grace alone.”
      b. Rubel Shelly proclaimed, “It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation” (3).
      c. Denny Boultinghouse wrote, “Are we saved 100% by the grace of God? Yes ... Our salvation is completely by grace. We contribute nothing to our salvation.”
   2. Peter speaks of “the true grace of God” (1 Pet. 5:11).
      a. If there is a “the true grace of God,” then there must also of necessity be a false grace.
      b. 100% grace is seen to be a false grace.

C. Some have proclaimed that the Lord’s church does not know anything about grace and never preaches on it.
   1. Some seem to think that unless the one in the pulpit is constantly saying the word grace, that there is no teaching on the subject.
   2. Understanding “the true grace of God” will show their lack of understanding grace.
II. MEANING OF GRACE

A. Words:
1. Generally translated from the Hebrew hen (or chen).
   a. Chen means “grace, graciousness, or kindness.”
   b. It is often translated “favor” (in the KJV and NKJV)
2. The Greek word is charis and means “favor, graciousness, or goodwill.”
3. Both words express the graciousness or merciful behavior of a more powerful person toward another.

B. Often defined (rightly or wrongly) as “unmerited favor.”
1. Sometimes the word gift is used in describing it.
2. Tyndale states, “The gift of God as expressed in his actions of extending mercy, loving-kindness, and salvation to people” (550).

C. In discussing the grace of God, we are discussing the graciousness, kindness, or goodwill expressed by God’s gift to man.

III. TRUE GRACE

A. Old Testament examples
1. The first time the word appears (not the concept) regards Noah.
   a. Gen. 6:8 “8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”
   b. Context:
      (1) God has decided to destroy man.
      (2) Gen. 6:5 “5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
      (3) Gen. 6:11 “11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.”
   c. Why did Noah find grace? Gen. 6:9 “9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”
   d. God gave Noah instructions to build an ark to the saving of his family.
      (1) Gen. 6:22 “22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.”
      (2) This led to the saving of Noah and his family.
   e. If:
      (1) Noah had not been living that just and perfect life before God, he would not have been offered God’s grace.
      (2) Noah had not done all that God commanded him, he would not have received God’s grace.
2. The land of Canaan and Jericho.
   a. God gave (an act of grace) Canaan to the Israelites.
   b. The first city was Jericho.
   c. They shut up the city; Jos. 6:1 “1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.”
   d. God gave Jericho to them
      (1) Jos. 6:2 “2 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.”
      (2) This is an act of God’s grace.
e. God’s grace instructed them to compass the city for seven days, and on the
seventh day the walls would fall down flat and the people would be able to take
the city.

f. Thus, by God’s grace Israel was given the city but only after they did as God
instructed.

B. Physical example

1. God gives grace to man from a physical standpoint.

2. Mat. 5:45 “45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to
rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

3. Even though God provides the needed sun and rain, man must still work to eat;
   2 Th. 3:10-12 “10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not
   work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly,
   working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord
   Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

C. Tit. 2:11-13 “11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that,
   denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13
   Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”

1. This is the grace that brings about salvation (spiritual, not physical).
   a. This grace has appeared to every person.
   b. Even as God instructed Noah and Joshua, this grace of God also instructs us.

2. We are to deny:
   a. Ungodliness
   b. Worldly lust

3. We are to live:
   a. Soberly
   b. Righteously
   c. Godly

4. We are to look for the coming of Christ.

5. Grace is extended, but man must do his part (even as with Noah and Joshua).

D. 1 Peter

1. Peter begins and ends the letter speaking of God’s grace.
   a. 1 Pet. 1:2 “2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of
      the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace,
      be multiplied.”
   b. 1 Pet. 5:12 “12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly,
      exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”

2. Notice 5 things Peter mentions regarding this true grace.
   a. It is from God.
      (1) 1 Pet. 4:10 “10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to
          another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
      (2) 1 Pet. 5:10 “10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ
          Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”
   b. It was foretold by the Old Testament prophets; 1 Pet. 1:10 “10 Of which salvation the
      prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto
      you:”
c. Only given to those who humble themselves under God; 1 Pet. 5:5 “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

d. It is given in manifold ways.
   (1) 1 Pet. 4:10 “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
   (2) 1 Pet. 5:12 “By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”

e. It will have its consummation in the revelation of Christ as the last day; 1 Pet. 1:13 “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”

3. The entire book is an epistle on the grace of God and man’s response to it.

a. Chapter 1:
   (1) It begins by discussing our salvation.
   (2) We are to control our minds; 1 Pet. 1:13
   (3) We are to be holy; 1 Pet. 1:15-16
   (4) We love the brethren but we are to make sure we love each other sincerely; 1 Pet. 1:22
      (a) Love the brethren is from philadelphia.
      (b) Love one other is from agapao.

b. Chapter 2:
   (1) We are to live pure lives, putting away; 1 Pet. 2:1
      (a) Malice
      (b) Guile
      (c) Hypocrisies
      (d) Envies
      (e) Evil speaking
      (f) Abstain from fleshly lust; 1 Pet. 2:11
   (2) Desire God’s Word like newborn babies desire milk; 1 Pet. 2:2
   (3) He discusses the people of God—the church; 1 Pet. 2:5-10
   (4) Respect government; 1 Pet. 2:13-17
   (5) Respect all men; 1 Pet. 2:17
   (6) Master slave relations which we can apply to employer/employee relations; 1 Pet. 2:18-20
   (7) During the chapter, he is setting forth many of the attributes of our Lord and that He is our sinless example.

c. Chapter 3:
   (1) Husband wife relationships and responsibilities; 1 Pet. 3:1-7
   (2) Responsibilities to others; 1 Pet. 3:8-14
      (a) Gentile
      (b) Kind
      (c) Not vindictive
      (d) Speak properly
   (3) Always prepared to give a defense of our hope; 1 Pet. 3:15
(4) Suffering for the cause of Christ  
(a) 1 Pet. 3:16-17  
(b) Phi. 1:29 “29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;”

(5) Christ and His suffering and baptism saves us; 1 Pet. 3:18-22

d. Chapter 4:  
(1) It allows us to suffer which will cause us to cease from sin; 1 Pet. 4:1-6  
(2) Christian duties; 1 Pet. 4:7-11  
(a) Sober mindedness  
(b) Prayer  
(c) Love  
(d) Hospitality  
(e) Using our abilities  
(3) Returns to one of the themes: suffering; 1 Pet. 4:12-19  
(a) Suffering is to be expected for those living the Christian life  
(b) We can rejoice because we are sharing in Christ’s sufferings.  
(c) Do not allow them to prevent us from doing good.

e. Chapter 5:  
(1) Admonition to those overseeing the Lord’s church; 1 Pet. 5:1-4  
(a) Deals with the organization of the church.  
(b) Their responsibilities and reward of they serve faithfully.  
(2) Our need to be humble; 1 Pet. 5:5-7  
(a) Toward all.  
(b) Especially toward God  
(3) Our real enemy; 1 Pet. 5:8-11  
(a) Our obligation to resist him  
(b) Necessity of sober mindedness to resist him.  
(c) Submit to God  
(4) Conclusion; 1 Pet. 5:10 “10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”  
(a) God’s grace demonstrated.  
(b) It includes our suffering for Christ.  
(c) Being made perfect (means to “put a thing in its appropriate condition, to establish, set up, equip, arrange, prepare, mend”)  
(d) Established (means “to stand fast”)  
(e) Strengthened  
(f) Settled (means “to lay the foundation of anything”)

4. True grace includes all these subjects.  
   a. When brethren preach and teach on these subjects, they are preaching on God’s grace.  
   b. They might not ever mention the word grace itself, but that is what they are preaching on.
E. 2 Corinthians 12

1. “A man” (probably Paul) was caught up into “the third heaven” or “into paradise.”
   a. He “heard unspeakable words.”
   b. 2 Cor. 12:1-4 “1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

2. The thorn in the flesh.
   a. The reason it was given to him; 2 Cor. 12:7 “7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”
   b. Paul’s request; 2 Cor. 12:8 “8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”

3. God’s response:
   a. 2 Cor. 12:9 “9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
   b. What is God’s grace and what is it being sufficient mean?
      (1) Sufficient
         (a) It has to do with being adequate or having need of nothing more.
         (b) Thayer defines it as, “to be possessed of unfailing strength; to be strong, to suffice, to be enough.”
         (c) He states regarding its usage here: “my grace is sufficient for thee, sc. [namely, to wit] to enable thee to bear the evil manfully; there is, therefore, no reason why thou shouldst ask for its removal” (73).
      (2) Guy N. Woods wrote, “Had the Lord granted the apostle’s request, and miraculously removed the problem, relief for the moment would have been realized; but, had Paul been faced with a similar weakness the next day, the next week or the next month, he would have exhibited similar dependence, and thus would have required another miracle to correct it. As it was, he not only attained through God’s response to his petition power to cope with the current problem, but with any similar one that might later assail him. Thus, through his weakness, with God’s help, he became strong” (52).

4. Paul’s response; 2 Cor. 12:9-10 “9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

5. God grace allowed this thorn to remain to help Paul learn and grow.
   a. If God removed it, then when some other difficulty came along, Paul might not have been able to withstand that difficulty.
   b. God was helping Paul grow and become strong.

6. Here is a beautiful aspect of God’s grace.
   a. Those who are overly dependent on false grace never understand.
b. Like 1 Peter, when we face difficulties and persecutions, those problems are actually the grace of God being demonstrated for our ultimate good.

F. Ephesians 2

1. God’s grace (mercy) saved man from sin.
2. Man’s former condition; Eph. 2:1-3 “1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”
   a. Dead
      (1) We were dead because of the way in which we lived.
      (2) We are not born dead in sins.
   b. Result is we were by nature (defined by Thayer as “a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature” 660) children of wrath.
3. What God has done for us; Eph. 2:4-8 “4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
   a. It is not something we could do for ourselves.
      (1) Eph. 2:9-10 “9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
   b. The gift God gives is salvation.
      (1) Grammatically “gift of God” must refer to the salvation that comes by God’s grace.
         (a) It cannot refer to faith.
         (b) It’s reference to faith is to try and justify the erroneous faith only doctrine.
      (2) While a gift, we must still labor for it; obey.
         (a) John 6:27 “27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”
         (b) Heb. 5:9 “9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”
   c. Man has his part in salvation to receive God’s grace.
      (1) We are saved by grace through faith.
      (2) Textual discrepancy here:
         (a) Textus Receptus has the definite article (the), while others do not have it.
         (b) If authentic (as I believe it is), then it is saying that we are saved by grace through the Word of God (which is consistent with the totality of the Scriptures).
(c) If the definite article (*the*) is not a part of the text, then Paul is saying we are saved by grace coupled with the entirety of man’s response to God.

(i) 2 Cor. 5:7 "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:"

(ii) 1 Pet. 1:9 "Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of your souls."

d. Notice the parallel: Eph. 5:26 "26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,"

(1) "Saved" in 2:8 is the same as "cleanse" in 5:26.

(2) "The faith" in 2:8 is the same as "the Word" in 5:26.

(3) The cleansing or saved is accomplished by “the washing of water” (5:26)

(a) The washing of water refers to baptism.

(b) Water is the element; Acts 8:38-39 "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

(c) Baptism is a cleansing; Acts 22:16 "16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

e. Totality of New Testament teaching regarding salvation.

(1) Tit. 3:5 "5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"

(a) God’s grace (mercy) saves us.

(b) It comes by:

(i) Washing of the new birth (water baptism)

(ii) Renewing of the Spirit (Spirit using the Word of God to bring about spiritual life in man.

(2) New birth of water and Spirit; John 3:3, 5 "5 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

(a) Water is clearly water baptism.

(b) The Spirit is giving life in that new birth process but He is doing it by the Word of God.

(i) The Scriptures is the instrument the Spirit uses in effecting a moral change.

a) Eph. 6:17 "17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

b) Rom. 10:17 "17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

(ii) Spirit begets us through the Word of Truth.

a) Jam. 1:18, 21 "18 Of his own will will he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. 19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. 21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
b) 1 Pet. 1:22-23 “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”

(iii) If Paul could say:

a) 1 Cor. 4:15 “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”
b) Surely the Spirit who inspired him to preach that Gospel could be said to beget them “through the Gospel.”

(iv) Church is sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the Word.

a) Eph. 5:26 “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”
b) Eph. 6:17 “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”

(3) The Great Commission and conversions.

(a) Mat. 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

(i) Make disciples

(ii) Accomplished by baptizing and teaching.

a) Teaching is God’s Word (all that Jesus commanded; the Faith).
b) Baptize in water to bring them into a relationship with God.

(b) Mat. 16:15-16 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

(i) Preach the Gospel.

a) The Gospel is what saves us; 1 Cor. 15:1-4 “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”
b) In the Gospel we see God’s grace; Acts 20:24 “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

(ii) That Word (the Faith) brings people to believe.

(iii) That Word (the Faith) brings them to be baptized to have salvation.

a) Rom. 6:17-18 “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”
b) Rom. 6:3-4 “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

c) Pentecost; Acts 2.
   (i) Peter preached the Gospel (the Faith) to the Jews instilling faith in them; Acts 2:14-36
   (ii) They asked what they needed to do for salvation; Acts 2:37 “37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”
   (iii) Told to repent and be baptized (in water) for remission of sins; Acts 2:38 “38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
   (iv) Those baptized were added to the church
      a) Acts 2:41, 47 “41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.... 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
      b) That is what is sanctified and cleansed; Eph. 5:26 “26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”
      c) That is the grace that saves through faith; Eph. 2:8 “8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

d) Other cases of conversion:
   (i) Samaritans: Acts 8:5-12
   (ii) Ethiopian: Acts 8:26-40
   (iv) Cornelius: Acts 10
   (v) Lydia: Acts 16:13-15
   (vi) Philippian jailor: Acts 16:25-34
   (vii) Corinthians: Acts 18
   (viii) Ephesians: Acts 19:1-7

Conclusion: Those liberal brethren who proclaimed that we have never understood or preached on grace have no idea of “the true grace of God.”

When faithful preachers preach on the salvation of the soul, whether dealing with what God has done or man’s obedient response, he is preaching on God’s grace. When they preach on the church (its uniqueness, terms of entrance, organization, worship, etc.), he is preaching on the grace of God. When preachers instruct men how to live godly lives, they are preaching God’s grace. When we experience suffering and persecution and when preachers preach on these subjects, we are experiencing the grace of God. God’s grace touches every aspect of the Christian life.

It is sad that the denominational world has so perverted the marvelous grace of God in all its multifaceted views. Sadder still is that we have lazy and worldly preachers today in the church who have been infiltrated with this same denominational nonsense. They have brought about a people
who really know nothing about God’s grace and are thus, “overly dependent” on it. While certainly the grace of God saves us, there is much more to God’s grace than simply what God has done for man in sending Christ to save us.

WORKS CITED: