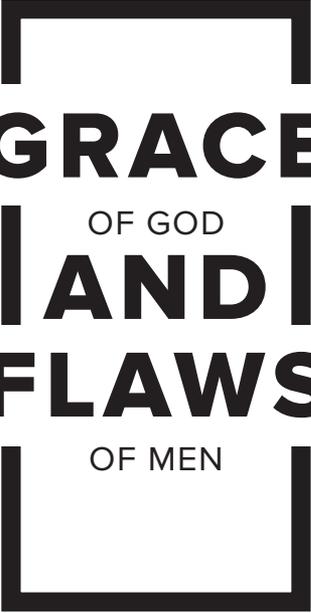


ANAND MAHADEVAN



**GRACE**  
OF GOD  
**AND**  
**FLAWS**  
OF MEN

LifeWay | INDIA

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**Grace of God  
and Flaws of Men (Half title)**

Anand Mahadevan

*To my dearest Aji, Varun and Varsha,*

*Life with you is more precious than this book or anything else that I  
may accomplish by the grace of God.*

*Thank you for loving me despite my many flaws and failures.*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*It is my joy to set aside 50% of the author royalties earned from this book to the Aruna Project.*

*My wife's work in counseling minor girls rescued from sex trafficking in Mumbai brought us face to face with the unimaginable pain and anguish that these women endure.*

*The Aruna Project aims to bring and sustain freedom through employment marked by holistic care to sexually exploited women in India. It shines like a beacon of hope amidst the dark and vicious horrors of sex trafficking.*

*For more information log on to: [www.arunaproject.com](http://www.arunaproject.com)*

## FOREWORD

RAVI ZACHARIAS

There is an incredible encounter in the first book of the Bible. It recounts a moment of reunion between Jacob, the younger, and his older brother, Esau. Years had gone by since the betrayal by Jacob. He had stolen the blessing that belonged to his older brother. It is a story of trying to accelerate the march of history by taking a promise of God, but manipulating the moment of that fulfillment. So often in life, it is not so much blatant evil that traps us; it is the seduction of a veneer of goodness over self-serving ways. Such was this story.

So much so that when the moment of the face to face meeting comes, the guilty one is fearful of seeing the face of the one who could be ruthless with him. Yet, that is not what happens. The one who was wronged looks at the one that wronged him and forgives him. That amazing act evoked a one-line response that said it all: the one forgiven, says, "I see in your face, the face of God, now that you have received me favourably."

Every time I read that passage in Genesis 33, I ask myself the question- "what if the same attitude prevailed today in the Middle East?" What a different world we would be living in. Instead, we witness and live with the logic of unforgiveness.

Why is that so? Forgiveness is costly. Somebody has to bear the pain of betrayal and the giving up of the gnawing desire to avenge. That demands a greater strength of love and grace over the urge to hate and punish. If the one betrayed carries that pain, the one who

betrays can walk free. But in a sense they never walk totally free, because the resultant obligation and inner impelling to love the forgiver is the completion of the story. That is why love is often symbolized by a ring, a circle, and the surrender of the heart.

Anand Mahadevan has done a masterful job in bringing the great truth of grace over weakness and purpose over disarray. This is the greatest truth in the Bible and its pages are full of that truth repeated in story after story. Any broken life in need of healing needs to read this book. Any healed life that has received such grace will read this because the truths have been experienced firsthand and will revel in the treasure that is unearthed here.

The book of Genesis is the book of our beginning and in a sense the book of all beginnings. We see the story of humankind and the brokenness that came when we violated the simple injunction “do not play God.” Once we violated that single law, we have needed thousands of laws to tame our rebellious heart. Then there came one who was in the truest sense, God. Yet He became man and died as a reprobate. The unfolding drama of redemption is the narrative in the Bible, from Adam’s fall to Jesus’ triumph.

Years ago, I remember speaking in San Juan, Puerto Rico. As I sat in the pastor’s office, I couldn’t get my eyes off a picture with a little girl holding Jesus’ hand and staring at the nail-marks. The words under the picture were in Spanish. I asked the pastor, what those words said. He said, the little girl is asking Jesus, “What happened to Your Hands?” It caused my own heart to pause momentarily. Why those nail-pierced hands?

As you read this book on the grace of God and the flaws of men, you will soon see the horror of what had happened to those hands,

marveling as to its once beautiful creation but yet sadly pondering as to the cause of its horrific degradation. Those hands tell the story of the hands of humanity and the hand of God in our flaws and our rescue. The truth behind these truths is the unique story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the message of grace and forgiveness. Jesus Christ did not come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people live. That cannot come from within us. That comes from the Giver of Life and the Source of Ultimate Grace.

This book unwraps that beautiful gift, written by a man who knows in the depths of his soul that grace, and tells it in gentle yet penetrating terms. You will be blessed as you engage the wonder of God's plan of redemption.

I have known Anand for some years now and am personally so grateful that he is putting his thoughts down in writing. I pray this is just the first of numerous volumes that he will write. We all need to hear from him. He is a living example of how "the hound of heaven" pursues with His grace till that love is told and retold for generations - and told in life and word how beautiful is the message of Jesus for a world in desperate need of that truth. Reconciliation is the need of the hour around the world. It can never happen until it begins with the individual heart before God. He has already made the first move, and dare I say, repeated moves. He that hath ears let him hear. You will hear that voice in the pages that follow.

**Ravi Zacharias**

**Speaker and Author**

## PREFACE

Imagine you had to craft one title by which the entire world would remember you for the next thousand years. What would be communicated by this one title? I guess you would desire to articulate nothing less than the very essence of your being. This is exactly what God did. For roughly 1500 years, from the time of Moses to the time of Jesus, Scripture used one title - a lot - to communicate God to the world.

**“The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and  
the God of Jacob.”**

God used this title for the first time to explain Himself better to Moses. After He told Moses that His name was “I AM WHO I AM (Exodus 3:14), He revealed and explained Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. (Exodus 3:15)

For centuries thereafter, this is primarily how people related to the LORD - as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Even after Jesus’ death and resurrection, Peter also identified God as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. (Acts 3:13) This entire book is an exposition of this one title.

Why did God choose to reveal Himself to the world primarily as the God of these three men? What was He communicating through this? Yes, God was revealing that His faithfulness is everlasting; it runs from one generation to another.

He is a promise-keeping God, a covenant-fulfilling God. This is His character. There is also a second insight that this book explores. Hebrews 11 tells us that these three men were heroes of faith. Is this what God was trying to communicate - that He was the God of three faith heroes? I think not.

The faith of these three men was inspiring at various points in their lives. But that's not the entire story. Not only did these three start their walk with God as messed up men, they also did some utterly despicable things well into their walks with God. The word "despicable" means deserving hatred and contempt. I assure you that as we explore the lives of these three men, there are going to be many moments where you will despise them. That's how dreadfully they failed at different points of time. This book will be brutally honest in its expository study of their many appalling failures.

Abraham pretty much sold his wife to another man for his personal safety and ended up making a lot of wealth in that process. Isaac, too, lied like his father and deceived many people into believing that his beautiful wife Rebekah was his sister, thus exposing her to the attention of other men. Jacob was a cheat and a crook. The literal meaning of the word, Jacob, is trickster or conman. And guess who gave him the name? His parents.

The Bible doesn't hide the flaws of these men. It describes them vividly, in full sordid detail. So, in proclaiming Himself as the God of these three men, God is not just pointing to us as to their eventual faith, but more so to the process through which such inspiring faith was formed in their hearts. This process basically involved two things - their failures and His faithfulness. So, why is a holy God identifying Himself with three very sinful men? It's pretty simple really. God is

telling the world He is the God of transformation. God is showing the world that He can take a man who sells his wife for money and turn him into transformed man who goes on to become the father of the faith. (Romans 4:11) There is more to this.

Because God identifies Himself through His sovereign names, the LORD and I AM, with these three men (Exodus 3:14-15), we have to infer that God is NOT ashamed to be called the God of these three men. God desires the world to see these three men in all their flaws, and God also wants the world to see their transformation. In seeing this, we find His power for our own transformation too. This is why this book is titled *Grace of God and Flaws of Men*.

Each chapter of this book will study the flaws, failures and frustrations of these three men. But as we uncover each imperfection, it is not the ugliness of their sin, but the beauty of God's grace that will be more obvious. In each chapter, we will dive into the abominable depths of the sins of men, only to come back up with the dazzling riches of the Gospel of grace.

**This is the central theme of this book: when sin reigns darkest, grace shines brightest.**

In our time and world, grace is a very generic word. The true meaning of this word has been diluted and even perverted through false teachings like hyper-grace. So allow me to unpack the specific meaning of grace I have in mind every time I use the word in this book. Men and women have done every evil to deserve the just wrath and punishment of a holy God. We have done nothing that could earn His forgiveness and healing, not to mention His blessing.

But one man — Christ Jesus — did everything to earn God’s full and ultimate blessings. But at the end of His life, Christ gave all of God’s blessing that He earned by His righteous life to us, and He took the punishment for all of our sins upon Himself. He was cursed for our sins; we were blessed with His righteousness.

This is grace - that God would ask His beloved Son to take the cross for us, and that Christ would joyfully obey, and that the Holy Spirit would then apply the truth, beauty and power of the Gospel into our hearts and through it, forgive us and transform us. As this grace rises above every sin, every chapter in this book also holds forth a simple hope: God doesn’t merely forgive us, but also transforms us. If God has indeed forgiven us, He will also certainly transform us.

As we study the flaws of these three men, I have a few simple goals. First, I do want to gently lead us to look at our flaws. We are going to put these three men under the microscope to uncover every one of their failings. As we do that, I hope you too grow in your self-awareness and also see and acknowledge more of your flaws. Second, having helped us see our flaws, I hope to turn our eyes to Christ Jesus, who died and rose again to make us perfect. I hope you are drawn to worship Jesus as you read this book. I would also encourage you to reflect on the beauty of Jesus and to worship and adore Him for a few minutes at least after every chapter. Please

don't rush through this book. Pause and pray through it whenever the Holy Spirit grips your heart with the beauty and power of this grace. This is my second objective. Worshiping Jesus is always a transformative experience. This is my third goal in this book. I hope to help us experience the transforming grace of Christ that slowly but surely heals all of our flaws.

For pastors, preachers and teachers, I hope this book will help you discover more gripping and more beautiful ways of preaching Jesus and His Gospel of grace from the Old Testament. And if you are an explorer, not yet a follower of Jesus, but curious about Him and the Christian faith, or if you are a new follower of Christ, this book will help you make sense of the Old Testament. It is designed to help you see the grand story of the Bible -- the story of Jesus -- through every smaller story of these three men in the Old Testament.

# ABRAHAM

## CHAPTER 1

## CALLING

Abraham was special. His calling was unique. Of all the people on the face of the earth, God chose one man, Abraham, through whom to build a new nation for Himself. It was an incredible calling.

When God called Abraham, he was no better than any other man. In his time, people had lost all revelation of the one true God, were worshiping man-made idols and were contriving their own notions of God. Like all the men and women of his time, Abraham too had no revelation of God or a relationship with Him. He too worshiped man-made idols. (Joshua 24:2) To be sure, Abraham had done nothing to deserve God's call. There was no piety in him that brought him any closer to God. It was God's pleasure to choose Abraham for His sovereign purposes. Abraham showed great faith in obeying God's call. But he also made one fatal error. We see that in Abraham's first encounter with God.....in his calling.

*The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your  
country, your  
people and your father's household to the land  
I will show you.*

*I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.”*

*So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.*

Genesis 12:1-5 NIV

God called Abraham. And along with that call, He also gave Abraham some specific instructions. He said to Abraham, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.’ The calling of God also entailed a “leaving.” God tells Abraham to leave his father’s household. Did Abraham obey God’s instructions? Yes and no. Yes, he left his father’s household showing great faith. But he sinned by taking Lot along. At the very first step in his calling, Abraham makes his first mistake. Some Bible commentators may disagree with the interpretation that Abraham sinned in taking Lot along. They would point out, and rightly so, that nowhere in the Bible is Abraham explicitly condemned for taking Lot along. I am however inclined to interpret Lot accompanying

Abraham as a violation of God's specific instruction to "*Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.*" (Genesis 12:1) Abraham was commanded to leave his father's household behind. Lot was very much a part of his father's household. Moreover, as we shall see later in this chapter, Abraham and Lot eventually parted ways, and God continued His covenant of blessing only to Abraham, not Lot. Because the providence of God eventually separated Abraham and Lot, I am inclined to interpret that they were never meant to journey together. Abraham was initially commanded to leave Lot behind when he left his father's household to follow God. This might seem like a small oversight. But Abraham, as I am going to unfold for us, messed up God's calling on his life by taking Lot along. This was a great call. This was a pure call, but Abraham corrupted it. Why was taking Lot along such a big mistake? What's the big deal about it? God called Abraham with a promise that He would make Abraham into a great nation. The call and plan of God was to create a new nation. But why did God want to create a new nation?

God wanted to create a new nation because there was a lot of wickedness in the world. In Abraham's time, people were not seeking the one true God. They were worshiping idols. God wanted to create a new people who were devoted to him, a people who would not worship idols, a people who were unique. God's long-term plan was to create this unique nation and as this nation prospered, all the peoples of the world would look at this nation and say – wow! They would see the flourishing of this nation and give up their idols and come to worship the God of this nation, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. God's plan was to bless all nations through

this one nation--to call...one new nation--He was beginning through Abraham. We see that in verse 3. God says – “...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” God wanted a new start. God wanted the old things gone. He wanted a new unique and glorious nation that would draw all other people back to God. This was God’s call on Abraham’s life, and this is also God’s call on each of our lives as followers of Jesus.

Just as God called Abraham and his descendants to be a unique nation and people devoted to God, He has called us also as followers of Jesus to be a unique people. Why are we to be unique? Our uniqueness is meant to attract people to Christ Jesus. We are called to be unique in the way we engage with money, wealth, success, careers, relationships, sexuality and everything else on the face of this earth. At work, we do want to celebrate our careers as a gift from God and as a service to God and people. But we do not want to be consumed by it. People should see us rising to high places, being successful in our careers, but people must see us freely worshiping God...not enslaved to our careers. People must see that as successful as we are, our primary identity is not our careers, but Jesus. After work, we play. Followers of Jesus have more reason to rejoice, more reason to have fun together than anyone else. In fact, we have eternal reasons to party. Our play and our parties here and now should point to the great, ultimate and eternal party that is coming soon. And so, after our parties here and now, our joy doesn’t go away in the morning, because we drink of Jesus. No matter what the circumstances are, we experience within us the joy to party every day of our lives. And, when people see our joy, they see us as unique. That draws people to Jesus.

Similarly, we want to celebrate sexuality as a high gift of God

within marriage. Followers of Jesus are not prudish about sex, nor are we permissive. Our enjoyment of sexuality is radically different. We see sex as a joyful giving of ourselves to our respective spouses; sex is not for our own gratification alone. So it is with money too. In both prosperity and poverty, we give richly and generously, showing the world that we are not mastered by money...showing the world that we give because God gave us His Son. Careers, sex, money, power...we are called to be a unique people in the way we handle all of these things. We place all of these things in secondary importance; Christ Jesus is always our first love. This uniqueness must draw people to Jesus.

This then was the call of God to Abraham. This is the call of God on our lives too. God's call on Abraham was to bless all the nations and God's call on our lives as followers of Jesus is to bless all people around us. But...Just as there was a "leaving" that God commanded Abraham to, there is a 'leaving' that God expects from us also. Just as Abraham should have left Lot behind, we are called to leave our old sinful, messed up, wicked nature behind. But just as Abraham took Lot along, we also often tend to take our old sinful natures along.

When we believe in Jesus, God wants to give us a clean break. He wants to give us a fresh start. But we don't want that. We want the calling and the blessings that come along with God's call on our lives, but we often don't want to do the leaving. We still want to cling onto our old, sinful nature. But why do we cling to our sins? The answer is very simple. We don't leave our sins behind because we love our sins. We love the pleasures and the fleeting joys we derive from our sins. That's why we don't leave them behind. Such is our depravity.

That's how messed up we are. And what are these sins that we cling to? We have many. And at the base, beneath every sin that we cling on to, ultimately lies the sin of self-centeredness. We love ourselves more than we love God. We love ourselves more than we love other people. That's the most basic sin. This is our old identity. When God calls us, we do need to leave this self-centeredness behind as we pursue Him. He is always ready to empower us to do so.

Abraham invited Lot along when God had expressly forbidden him from taking anyone from his old household. What were the consequences of this? Two consequences flowed out from Abraham's disobedience. First, as Abraham and Lot prospered and became very wealthy in the new land, their servants ended up fighting with each other. There was a lot of ill will and a lot of pain because of Abraham's disobedience. Eventually, the two men parted ways. Now, it was God's plan all along that Abraham be set apart. God wanted to create a new nation only through Abraham, not Lot. The second consequence is even graver. After they parted ways, Lot goes to a very sinful city, Sodom. As we know, God destroyed Sodom because of the wickedness in the city. Lot, his wife and their two daughters had to flee the city. However, his wife looked back, perhaps out of a longing for that old city, and she was destroyed too. His sons-in-law had refused to go along with them. So only Lot and his two daughters escaped God's wrath on Sodom and Gomorrah.

In the course of their divinely commanded migration, they came to a land called Zoar, which was a hostile city. Afraid of the people there, Lot and his daughters hid in a cave. (Genesis 19) There within the dingy confines of the cave, Lot and his two daughters committed the most abhorrent of sins. This is what happened in that cave. The

older daughter of Lot went to the younger daughter and said: “There are no other men here. We can’t have any children.” So the daughters made a plan. The elder daughter said: “Let’s get our father drunk and I will go sleep with him and have sex with him. I will conceive and have a child through him.” So she got Lot drunk. The father and daughter had sexual intercourse and a child was conceived. The next day the older daughter told the younger daughter: ‘The wine worked. Now you go, get our father drunk again, and you sleep with him tonight. You conceive and you have a baby too’. So both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father. This was repugnant incest. (Genesis 19)

Let’s pause for a moment to reflect on the levels of sexual permissiveness in our culture. We live in cities where people are generally very permissive about sex. Sex outside of marriage, pornography, homosexuality, etc., are not just commonplace, but are also celebrated. But even the most sexually permissive person will not say that sex between a father and a daughter is okay. Everyone would say that a father having sex with his daughter is repulsive and despicable. Two daughters intentionally getting their father drunk on two consecutive nights so that they could sleep with him is loathsome. Lot has to take responsibility for his sin. He was fully responsible for his sin, but Abraham also contributed to it by taking him along with him. Lot may not have been in this cave had Abraham obeyed God’s call and not taken Lot along. God’s call on Abraham was a pure call. But Abraham corrupted it. What happened in that cave was ugly and revolting. We cannot pretend it didn’t happen in Biblical history. However, that night, in the dark confines of that cave, when sin reigned darkest, grace was shining brightest. In that drunken,

incestuous, sexual intercourse between Lot and his elder daughter, grace was conceived. After that night, Lot's elder daughter became pregnant and she bore a son. The name of that son was Moab. And Moab became the father of all Moabites. Years later, out of Moab descended a woman named Ruth. Ruth was the great grandmother of King David. Out of King David's line was born Jesus Christ the Son of God. In other words, the human ancestry of Jesus Christ can be traced all the way back to that despicable, drunken and incestuous night in that cave. That is why I said grace was conceived in the midst of that abominable sin in that cave. That awful night, when sin reigned darkest, grace was shining brightest.

This my dear friends is how the grace of God heals the flaws of men. Think about it. God called Abraham, and Abraham made a mess of it, leading all the way to incest in that cave. How did God respond? Did God reject this people? Did God condemn this people? No. God sent His Son Jesus to redeem His people. God redeems us because we can never save ourselves. That night, as Lot and his oldest daughter yielded to an ugly sin, God offered hope to the world, ensuring the Saviour of the world would descend through that very lineage. What a blessed irony!

In that cave, even as the repugnant sin was being committed, God was setting apart his Son Jesus. Christ Jesus would descend from this act many generations later to be the atoning sacrifice for all of our sins. We don't know what happened to Lot after that act. The Bible doesn't tell us the rest of his story. But about 2000 years later, when Peter, the disciple of Jesus, wrote about Lot, he called Lot righteous three times. (2 Peter 2:7-8) How could this man who committed incest with his daughters be declared righteous except by the blood

of Christ who died as the atoning sacrifice, taking the punishment of this sin and all of our sins upon Himself?

We are all messed up people. We have dark sins. Let's not just think of dark sins as being only sexual in nature. Sure, sexual sins are dark. But all sin is dark. Envy, jealousy, gluttony, seeing someone poor and needy and doing nothing to help – these are all, also, dark sins in God's holy eyes. Please allow me to force us to see the wickedness and flaws of our hearts.

Living in big global cities very often result in developing within us a dangerous level of uninterest in our Lord Jesus. We spend more time during the week not worshiping Jesus than we do worshiping Him. Are we really any better than Lot was that night? In the light of God's great and holy standard, are our sins any less dark? Do our sins grieve and anger the holy heart of God any less? But there is hope. I love the way Tim Keller, the well-known pastor and author from New York, puts it: "We are more wicked than we ever dared believe and yet, at the very same time, we are also more loved than we ever dared hope." If incestuous Lot can find forgiveness and redemption because of the promised Saviour, why would God not forgive us our sins because of what Jesus did for us on the cross?

Consider the power of God's grace. When God said: 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', God didn't just mean that he forgave these men. God also transformed incestuous Lot into righteous Lot. God transformed sinful, messed up Abraham into the father of faith, into the father of so many nations. As we continue to look at the flaws of these three men, this book is going to be an invitation to draw

us to the beauty of God's grace, demonstrated to us in Christ Jesus.