

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

August
23
2015

GOD'S GRACE AS GIVEN TO MAN

Jim Stauffer

Defining God's Grace;

We generally define grace as "unmerited favor" or similar terminology. Grace is extended to mankind by God without any rightful demand on the part of man. And it is imperative we understand God's grace is offered to **all** men. God's grace is offered in the person of Christ and as the gift of salvation to all men. **Titus 2:11** *For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men. (cf. Rom. 5:1,2)* God, according to the apostle Paul desires *all men to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4)*

Obedience Does Not Equal Merit:

We have identified grace as unmerited or unearned, but that does not render man uninvolved in the reception of God's grace. **Eph. 2:8** *for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not of works, that no man should glory.* This text teaches we are saved by grace (*God's part of salvation*) through faith (*man's part of salvation*). Faith is a condition for man to receive grace. Faith is a condition for man to be saved. Faith leads man to obedience to the conditions of God's grace. Example after example is given in **Hebrews 11** of men who were led by faith to obey God. This meets perfectly with the promise of salvation brought about by Christ. **Heb. 5:8** *though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation.* Some then argue our obedience to the commands of God indicates we earn His grace or salvation. Do we believe Jesus would lead someone astray regarding the grace of God? A rich young ruler came to Jesus asking what he must do to have eternal life. Jesus first listed the commandments of the Law of Moses (the law of God in effect at the time) as needing to be obeyed. When the young man said he had always kept these commandments, Jesus then told him to sell his assets and give the money to the poor. Jesus told him he had to do these things to be pleasing to God, thus receive His grace; salvation. An Old Testament example that sets forth this principle is the obedience of Naaman to the instruction of Elisha to dip seven times in the Jordan River to be cleansed of leprosy. It is important for us to understand he was not clean until he

had completed all seven dips in the river. God has dealt with man in this manner consistently throughout history, regardless of the dispensation, age or covenant in effect at the time. The Hebrew writer makes it clear the Israelites failed to enter the Land of Canaan because their faith was weak and they disobeyed His commandment. **Heb. 3:12** *Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: 13 but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* Now notice what a lack of faith led to. **Heb. 3:18** *And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient?*

Refusing God's Grace - Falling From Grace:

Another erroneous concept concerning grace is that it is given by God to specific individuals. This is called by Calvinists, Irresistible Grace. It is therefore concluded man cannot resist or refuse the grace of God. But **James 4:6** says, *God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.* He further commands us, *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you. (James 4:10)* Clearly the grace of God is available to all but only if they accept it by being in word and deed as He commands. Attached to this erroneous concept is the idea that not only is God's grace irresistible but also when we receive it we can never lose it. Read the following verses and explain to yourself how anyone acquainted with Scripture and looking at it in an unbiased way could believe that. **Heb. 6:4** *For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Gal. 5:4* *Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace.* In both of these passages the writer of the Scripture is speaking of those who have received the grace of God. They were **once enlightened**. Those who have fallen from grace must have received it to fall away from it.

How Will Your Epitaph Read?

(Author unknown)

Two of America's famous founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, wrote their own epitaphs. In case you've forgotten, epitaphs are the words one has inscribed on their tomb or gravestone. Epitaphs are intended to sum up the high points of one's life or to express noble sentiments summing up what one has accomplished in life. Mr. Jefferson's read: "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, & Father of the University of Virginia." On the other hand, Mr. Franklin's waxed more philosophical: "The body of B. Franklin, Printer: Like the Cover of an Old Book, Its Contents torn Out, And Stript of its Lettering and Gilding, Lies Here, Food for Worms. But the Work shall not be Lost; For it will (as he Believ'd) Appear once More, In a New and More Elegant Edition, Revised and Corrected, By the Author." If you had to write your own epitaph, what words would you chose? How would you have it read? Would it be truthful? If your friends saw your epitaph, would they recognize you, or would they think they were at the wrong grave site? Let's look at some epitaphs in the Bible.

1) Dishonorable epitaphs. God's book is full of epitaphs. One of the greatest qualities of God's book is how the Holy Spirit always presents the truth in a direct, frank, and unvarnished manner. Thus, many of the Bible's epitaphs sum up ungodly lives in an unequivocal manner. We would do well to read such epitaphs, study the lives that produced them, and take heed for *"they were written for our admonition"* (1 Cor. 10:11). Consider and contemplate these epitaphs:

Rehoboam: *"And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD."* (2 Chron. 12:14)

Uzziah: *"his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God"* (2 Chron. 26:16).

Ahab: *"there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD"* (1 Kgs. 21:25).

2) Honorable epitaphs. On the other hand, let us consider some epitaphs we would do well to strive to imitate and covet as our own:

Abel: *"he obtained witness that he was righteous"* (Heb. 11:4).

Enoch: *"he had this testimony, that he pleased God."* (Heb. 11:5)

Abraham: *"he was called the friend of God."* (Jas. 2:23)

A virtuous wife: *"Strength and honor are her clothing;*

She shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.' (Prov. 31:25-29)

Hezekiah: *"he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered."* (2 Chron 31:20-21)

Paul: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."* (2 Tim. 4:7)

Our lives are a living epitaph. Whether or not we ever take up a pen to write them, our epitaphs are being written today. What does yours say? Is it honorable or dishonorable? Over that, only you have control!

Gossip: Easy, Enjoyable Sinning

"Did you hear the one about? . . ." Thus begins the stand-up comic into his humorous routine. Too often our own conversations begin the same way. But the end result is not nearly so funny. In the process we have gossiped about our brethren, our neighbors, perhaps our co-workers, maybe even our own family. Gossip, defined as idle talk about the affairs of others, is a genuine problem for God's people. Think about gossip. . .

IT IS EASY: You won't have to work hard to become an accomplished gossip. No, in fact, the practice is rather like catching the common cold. It takes very little planning, intention, or effort -- it just seems to happen. The ease with which we may be affected by this spiritual malady is the basis of a clear warning: *"A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much"* (Proverbs 20: 18). Association with the gossip is a dangerous practice. The first threat is that he may reveal some secret of ours. But also, our company with him can influence us to join in his sinful practice (1 Cor. 15:33). His disease is contagious. Beware!

We are all susceptible. In Romans chapter one, Paul wrote of the heathens who had chosen to ignore God. They had engaged in gratifying every carnal desire. Among their faults was the sin of being *"whisperers"*. (vs 28) Other versions translate this as *"gossips"*. What we see here is that men, when following the desires of the flesh rather than the will of God, will be prone to gossip.

IT IS ENJOYABLE: The ease with which folks can be made to gossip must surely be connected with the perverted kind of enjoyment it brings to those who participate in it. There is a strange sense of reward that comes from being the first to know -- and tell -- something on another person. Some people get such a charge out of this that they are not above manufacturing some tale. It may not be a complete fabrication. There may be shreds of truth blended together with lots of

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imagination -- anything to arrive at a good 'juicy' bit of gossip. This, most assuredly, is a sin that brings *"pleasure for a season"* (Hebrews 11:25).

Christians of the first century, like us all, demonstrated a propensity for this activity. Paul was concerned that he would find *"whisperings"* (translated *"gossip"* in the NIV) when he returned to Corinth (2 Corinthians 12:20). James bemoaned certain sins of the tongue that *"ought not so to be"* (James 3:10). Self control in such matters is, he said, the ultimate sign of spiritual maturity: *"if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body"* (vs. 3).

This is, we have learned, the kind of thing that everyone can 'enjoy'. It is truly everyone's malady. We all like to be 'in the know', and we love for people to know that we know! So, we gossip; we betray confidences; we spread rumors.

IT IS SIN: Here is the bottom line! Jesus warned, *"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"* (Matthew 12:36,37).

Remember the definition of gossip? It is "idle talk about the affairs of others", and it clearly falls within the realm of things that we will answer for in the judgment. In the **Proverbs** we are warned: *"He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction"* (13:3). And again, *"Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles"* (21: 23).

Recall that we've included this as one of the maladies that affects everyone. This is not just a problem of irreligious folk. A lot of regular 'church-goers' have the problem, too. Of these James says: *"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain"* (James 1:26).

THERE IS A CURE: Take heart! There is a solution for the sin of gossiping. We are promised forgiveness of this sin, just like any other sin, as we comply with the conditions of God's will. And furthermore, we have the confidence that our Father will help us withstand future temptations to commit this common sin. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Cor. 10:13). Our task is to look for that "way to escape", and to avoid this terrible sin of gossip.

"Did you hear the one about? . . ." No! And please don't tell me!

by Greg Gwin

LOVE AND WRATH

Both the love of God and the wrath of God are genuine and real. It is certain that God loves all mankind. Jesus said, *"For God so loved the world...(Jno. 3:16)*. He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,"* that is, *"for the*

ungodly" (Rom. 5:6,8). God chastens those He loves and scourges every son whom He receives (Heb. 12:5,6). He loved Israel with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3).

The wrath of God is as real as His love. It is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). John asked some who came to his baptism: *"O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"* (Lk. 3:7). There is a *"day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"* (Rom. 2:5). Those who turn from God to worship evil will drink of the wine of the wrath of God (Rev. 14:10). God's wrath is fierce (2 Chron. 28:11). Israel provoked God to wrath by their disobedience in the days of Moses (Deut. 9:7,22). Even so, today the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience (Eph. 5:6). This wrath is not vague and so general that its effect is not felt individually. Moses, Uzzah, David, and the remnant of Israel experienced it (Deut. 1:37; 2 Sam 6:7; Neh. 13:18).

Love and wrath do not cancel each other. They are not opposites. Hate is the opposite of love, and pleasure is the opposite of wrath. God loved mankind even though He was displeased with him (Rom. 5:6,8). God is provoked to anger or wrath by those whom He is seeking to save (1 Kgs. 14:15; Jer. 44:6-8). Wrath sometimes brings disciplinary action through love. Many times children provoke their parents to anger, not because the parents do not love them, but rather because they do love them. Fathers are told to *"provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4).

We all have experienced the love of God, and we continue to enjoy its blessings every day. He sends rain upon the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). On the other hand, we surely have given God reason to be displeased and angry with us because of our misconduct. Jesus always did those things that please God (Jno. 8:29), but we sometimes miss the mark and so displease Him. If we wish to receive the benefits of God's love in the sacrifice of His Son, we, too, must do those things that please Him. Then we will not experience the tribulation and anguish that come through the indignation and wrath of God Who loves us, but which are reserved for those who do evil (Rom. 2:5-11). If one who is living in disobedience to God turns from his disobedience to serve God, then he shall save his soul alive (Ezk. 18:27).

God loves us all, but we will experience His wrath if we trample the Son of God underfoot, and count the blood of the covenant by which the saved are sanctified a common thing, and insult the Spirit of grace. He has placed the choice before us (Heb. 10:29).

By Gilbert Alexander

*There'll be no street protests in heaven
Where dwellers there will have known
The truths of our beloved Instructor
No reaping "where you have not first sown."
by Grant Clothier*

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

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WEDNESDAY: SCHEME OF
REDEMPTION - JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY AM SERMON:
RECOGNIZING THE AUTHORITY
OF CHRIST



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10