

GRACE

8/26/07

What do you think of when you hear the word “grace”? Most Christians associate it with their salvation...that it embodies God’s love and mercy for us that He would send His Son to die for us, to give us eternal life. “Grace” today seems to be used as a doctrinal teaching in and of itself, and somehow the mere mention of God’s grace is expected to elicit gratefulness from us, a sort of humble appreciation for God’s goodness in sending Jesus to die for our sins. Grace seems to start, and stop, at the cross of Calvary. This acceptance of God’s grace is somehow supposed to be the driving force to propel us forward to live good lives for God, since He was so “gracious” to do so much for us. Grace seems to be the catch-phrase to sum up our Christian existence, purpose, our goals. A sort of suspended-animation state-of-being...”saved by grace”.

When I began my journey through the scriptures, when God started opening up His truths to me, I began to see something more. Not that the above definition of “grace” is wrong, but just that this current view of grace is not sufficient enough to cover *all* of God’s plans and purposes. I began to see the gospel—the good news of man’s salvation—in a two-fold manner: the gospel of the grace of God and the gospel of the glories of Christ. The gospel of the grace of God pertaining to Jesus’ death on the cross as Passover Lamb, which gives us our spiritual birth...and the gospel of the glories of Christ, which is everything from that point onward that pertains to the salvation of the soul. So really, I had it pretty much compartmentalized into two separate things—grace vs. glory.

I even got tired of saying the word “grace”. I got tired of hearing the word “grace”. I felt that it was so overused, and yet so misunderstood in modern Christianity. “Grace is a done deal, we don’t need to visit it any more People!” “Grace, grace, grace, grace, grace...CHEAP grace is more like it”. Christians use it as an excuse...an excuse to sin without any accountability. An excuse to live with blinders on and to be content with status quo of Christian life.

Forgive me God, I was wrong. Yes, Christians today misunderstand what God’s purpose for them is. Man’s purpose is to rule and reign—Genesis 1:26. Christians have been redeemed in order to have the

opportunity to rule and reign with Christ in that coming day. That is our purpose that is continually before us—it is our “hope”, that is the anchor of our soul. Yes, Christians today misuse and overuse the word “grace”. It is not a free ticket to heaven. IT IS NOT A FREE TICKET TO HEAVEN. But here’s where I was wrong...grace not only makes possible the salvation of our spirit—the gospel of the grace of God—but it also makes possible the salvation of our soul—the gospel of the glories of Christ. Grace encompasses everything we do, and everything that God does, and has done, for us. And that is what I want to share with you today—a clearer understanding of what “grace” means, as we see it revealed throughout the scriptures.

Simply put--

- The Greek word “grace” is the word “charis”, which comes from the word “chairō”—to rejoice. It can mean kindness or favor.
 - That’s it. That’s what that word means.

However, we know that understanding how God would have us understand it takes a bit more work than just looking up the word in the dictionary (Greek or otherwise).

- Here’s a key in understanding how to view “grace”...it isn’t a doctrinal teaching or “law”...it is a description of a characteristic of God. It is His kindness towards us in giving us everything we need to achieve everything He wants us to achieve. It is His favor towards us, wretched creatures that we are, to enable us to reach the goal HE has set up for us.

We’ll start with a passage that gives much more depth to the idea of “grace”--

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

- The grace of God brings salvation. THE GRACE OF GOD BRINGS SALVATION. That's a huge statement and we can stop right there with that definition if we needed to. But which salvation? You'll remember that both our spirit and our soul need saving. Our spirit is saved through faith in Jesus as our Passover Lamb—this is the free gift, a salvation that cannot be lost. It is received by faith, and faith alone. But our soul is saved through faithful obedience—faith with works—a salvation yet future, that will be revealed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those that work out their salvation by allowing God's Spirit, through His Word, to cleanse them and transform them, will receive the salvation of their soul and the inheritance in the heavenly kingdom. These are the ones who will rule and reign with Christ. Now back to the verse, "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men..." Which salvation?

- **Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

- Clearly here we see that God's grace has saved us—this is referencing our spiritual birth because it is based on faith only—our works have no part in that.

- **1 Peter 1:13-15** Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.

- The is clearly saying that we are to DO something—work—while we fix our hope on the grace that will come at the revelation of Jesus Christ...a time that is yet future. This is referencing the salvation of our soul.

So we've got a past aspect of grace—saved by grace—and a future aspect of grace—we *will* be saved by grace.

Back to Titus--

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

- This passage is just one long sentence, so let's break it down and see what it says:
 1. The grace of God brings salvation to all men.
 2. The grace of God is instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly.
 - The "us" is Christians—and God's grace instructs us – the word "instructs" is the Greek word "paideuo", which means to educate or bring up a child. So God's grace educates us to deny ungodliness, deny worldly desires, and to live sensibly. The idea here is the bringing up of a child to maturity... and remember that maturity is the bringing of our faith to its goal, which results in the salvation of our soul-
 - **1Peter 5:10** But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal (age-lasting) glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect (mature), establish, strengthen, settle you.
 3. The grace of God instructs us to live righteously and godly in the present age.
 - It is the grace of God that makes righteous living—a life of faithful obedience—possible.
 - Why do we need to live righteously and godly in this present age?
 - **1 Cor 6:9** Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

- Christ Jesus gave Himself for US—He, God Himself—purchased us with His own blood. He paid the price on the cross for our first death—He tasted death so that we wouldn't have to. He brought us out of death and into life...into the family of God so that we might partake of all of those promises that the descendants of Abraham receive. But it doesn't stop there!
- So that He might redeem us AND purify us!
 - **Ephesians 5:25-27** **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. IN THAT COMING DAY!**
 - **James 4:4-8** **...do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? (remember our Titus passage says that the grace of God instructs us to deny worldly desires) Or do you not think that Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded (literally, "double-souled").**

I really hope that you are seeing a much bigger picture of God's grace, and that it doesn't just stagnate with the salvation that we presently possess. There is SO much more to it!

Acts 20:32 **And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

- What is the word of God's grace able to do? Build us up and give the inheritance *to those who are sanctified*. Remember that sanctification is the process of cleansing—it's the "growing up" in the faith, transforming into the image of Christ.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

- Because we have been justified by faith and now have peace with God (spiritually saved), we can stand in this grace and exult in hope of the glory of God!

Hebrews 4:14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

- It is God's grace that gave Jesus to die on that cross in our place...it is God's grace that helps us in this present age to live righteously...it is God's grace that carries us through in our times of need...it is God's grace that makes the whole salvation of the soul possible—a salvation that will result in God's people (those who have been cleansed and purified) taking the throne with His Son Jesus, ultimately bringing about the very purpose of man.

Now please be aware that God's grace is free to us, but we must take it and use it and apply it. It is possible for us, a redeemed people, to come short of God's grace. That is to say, we can be standing within full reach of God's grace, with full access to God's grace, yet not be receiving and using God's grace. It is like so much of what we see about God...His love, His mercy, His kindness, His strength, His wisdom, His truths...they are (HE IS) there, HIS SPIRIT, is always available to us. We just need to choose to take it, to walk in it, to live by it. And to do that, we MUST deny our flesh and live by the Spirit.

- **Hebrews 12:14-17** Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

I want to read a rather large section of scripture...and I know that with lengthy passages there is the tendency to lose concentration and fade in and out of hearing. Please listen attentively to this, and follow Peter's thoughts all the way through. It, like our Titus passage, sums up "grace" quite nicely—and will hopefully give you a much more Technicolor view of this amazing "grace".

1 Peter 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look. **THEREFORE**, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.