

Sunday, March 20, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD 2022 (10)

The Grace of God (1)

What is Grace?

Having addressed some qualities associated with our relationship with God (knowing God and trusting God, how He blesses us and is a God who keeps His promises, and have devoted the past few lessons to the subject of sin – that which separates us from God (identifying sin, addressing the wisdom of this world and noting attitudes – both proper and improper – toward sins), we now turn our attention to what God has done to make it possible for us to draw closer to Him. We will begin by examining the grace of God.

I. What is grace?

- a. Defined -the typical definition of grace is unmerited favor. In other words, granting favor (approval or blessing) though it is not deserved. And that is certainly descriptive of God’s grace toward us.
- b. Ephesians 2:8-9. Grace is God’s part in our salvation. Faith is our part.
- c. Grace can also be descriptive of qualities that invite a favorable reaction –
 - i. “A kind, affectionate, pleasing nature and inclining disposition” (Bullinger)
 - ii. Colossians 4:6 – let your speech always be with grace;
 - iii. Luke 4:22 – they marveled at the gracious words of Jesus (though they did not accept Him).
 - iv. Luke 2:52 – as Jesus grew, He grew in *favor* with God and man
- d. Grace can also be our favorable and unearned conduct toward others. We extend goodness to others without expectation of being repaid.
 - i. 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 – the word is found 4 times.
 1. Vs. 1 – the grace of God bestowed on us
 2. Vs. 6-7 - addressing the grace of the Macedonians in helping the needy brethren of Judea. Paul is urging the Corinthians to also abound in this grace.
 3. Vs. 4 – “gift” which is descriptive of what the Macedonians had provided. It is the same Greek word.
 - ii. Luke 6:35, Jesus calls for us to love our enemies, do good, and lend, hoping (expecting) for nothing in return. While not using the word for grace it demonstrates this idea.
- e. As I have noted, grace is the prime factor in the process of salvation. Without grace, faith and obedience are moot. Thus, grace is the essence of the gospel. It is what makes the good news “good”.

II. Digging a little deeper –

- a. We are recipients of God’s grace. Consider:
 - i. Titus 2:11 – the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.
 - ii. Romans 5:1-2 – By His grace we stand
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 12:9 – His grace is sufficient to give us strength
 - iv. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 – His grace gives us consolation and good hope
- b. But does grace mean we do nothing?
 - i. Absolutely NOT! This is a common misnomer today. It is said that if we do anything, we nullify the grace of God. That is contrary to the teachings of scripture. And it puts obedience as the antithesis (opposite) of God’s grace. That is simply not taught in scripture.
 - ii. Multitudes of examples show that grace provokes a response and is the product of obedience.
 1. Consider Noah – Genesis 6:8, Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (same Greek word in LXX). Yet we know that “by faith” Noah moved and prepared an ark

whereby he saved his family (Hebrews 11:7). God's grace was His WARNING Noah of His intentions, giving him instructions as to how to escape that judgment, AND ultimately sustaining him through His judgment. Note Genesis 6:22 – after God gave him instructions we read, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” God's grace prompted an obedient faith.

2. Consider the bronze serpent – Numbers 21:4-9, after Israel (again) complained about what God had provided them (the manna), He sent fiery (poisonous) serpents into the camp and many died. When the people repented and cried to Moses, the Lord instructed him to build a fiery serpent and erect it on a pole. When people were bit by serpents, if they looked at the bronze serpent they would be healed. Jesus actually uses this to allude to His death and our salvation in Him (John 3:14-16).
 3. Consider Jericho – Joshua 6:2 says that the LORD GAVE them the city of Jericho (it was a gift – unmerited favor). BUT to receive that gift, they were given instructions – non-sensical instructions from a military standpoint – march around the city for 7 days (1x days 1-6 & 7x on day 7). When they complied, the priests blew their trumpets and the walls of the city fell outward. The city was given over to the hands of Israel and they took the city. They ACTED in faith and were blessed by God (Hebrews 11:30).
- iii. God's grace provokes us to faith. If we appreciate the grace of God, we WILL respond appropriately. It is an obedient faith – the very thing James taught in James 2:14-26.
 - iv. What about Romans 4:4, *Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt*? Or what about Ephesians 2:8-9? Saved by grace through faith, “*not of works, lest anyone should boast*”?
 1. This text is emphasizing works of merit (where one EARNs something). Notice that the word “*wages*” is used – a word that indicates something one earns by working for it, or a reward one receives. See 1 Timothy 5:18 – *the laborer is worthy of his wages*.
 2. There is NOTHING we can do to merit (deserve or earn) salvation – EVER! But that does NOT mean we do nothing or that if we act it nullifies grace. Even advocates of “faith only” call for action (just not being baptized). They tell you to repent, confess and “say the sinner's prayer”, etc. Romans 10:9-10 – is confessing the Lord an action? Is believing there an action? (NOTE: Both words are verbs, and in vs. 10 both words are present tense).
 3. Ephesians 2:9 rightly points out that in the end, no matter what we do, or HOW MUCH we do, we cannot brag about it – because we have not earned it.
- c. How is grace abused?
- i. There are many ways that the Biblical concept of grace is abused. Consider the following:
 - ii. All will be saved – some contend that all will be saved.
 1. Honestly, if we do NOTHING ourselves to be saved, then this is the ONLY viable option. Titus 2:11 tells us that the grace of God has appeared to all man.
 2. But far too many passages of scripture contradict that.
 - a. John 3:16 calls says, “whoever believes” indicating not all will believe. In fact, that is developed as the conversation progresses (John 3:18-19)
 - b. Matthew 7:13-14 – there is a broad way that leads to destruction, and a narrow way that leads to life.
 - c. Matthew 7:21-23 – not everyone who says “Lord, Lord...”
 - iii. Cheap grace –

1. A term coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer – a German Lutheran preacher who opposed Hitler and was executed in 1945. He wrote a book entitled, “The Cost of Discipleship” in which he spoke of “cheap grace” vs. “costly grace.” “Cheap grace” is appealing to the grace of God without a willingness to pay the price he demands. He described it as, “*cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, [baptism](#) without church discipline. [Communion](#) without [confession](#). Cheap grace is grace without [discipleship](#), grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.*”¹
 2. He expressed his concerns that the church had become more secularized and willing to accommodate the demands of society in its practice and teachings. Thus, the true sacrifice of the Christian faith is watered down.
 3. This is the “come as you are” mentality that says you do not have to repent of your sinful condition to be saved – ungodly relationships can remain, sinful behaviors do not need to be addressed, etc.
 4. That is NOT the grace of God. God’s grace is COSTLY – it cost Jesus His life and it will cost us ours too (cf. Matthew 10:32-39).
- iv. Once saved, always saved –
1. A form of cheap grace – the doctrine that says that once you surrender to Christ (e.g. accept Him as your Savior), you cannot be lost. This declares it is impossible to forfeit your salvation no matter what you do or how you live.
 2. The Bible teaches clearly that we can forfeit our salvation – Galatians 5:4, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Peter 2:20-22, Hebrews 10:26-31, 4:1, 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:27, etc.
 3. Of course, advocates of this doctrine, if one abandons their faith, might say that he was never saved in the first place. That is a subjective view.
 4. God’s grace is not a ticket to live any way you want to live.
- v. License to sin –
1. Tied to the previous point, and a potential problem as Paul wrote about God’s grace in Romans, some reason that because of the grace of God they can continue in their sinful practice. In fact, they contend that God’s grace is so great they can do whatever they want (cf. Romans 5: 20-21)
 2. But consider Romans 6:1-2, we do NOT have permission to keep sinning. We must never forget that in becoming Christians we put to death the old man – we are NOT to resurrect him. Romans 6:6 tells us we should no longer be slaves of sin.
 3. 1 John 3:6-9 tells us that we cannot continue to live in sin and be pleasing to God.
 4. God’s grace is offered to us, but we are expected to change!
- vi. Works can counter grace –
1. There are some who believe that their righteous deeds will earn them salvation.
 2. Catholicism teaches a salvation largely based upon works. If you sin, you confess to the priest, he imposes actions that when you do that you are forgiven (that is often what the rosary and quoting the Lord’s prayer are about).
 3. Some believe that as long as their good works outweigh their sins they will be saved.
 4. Among brethren, while we deny we believe this, do we act as if our works will merit our salvation? Do we think of our salvation as a check list? (I do this, and this and this; and I don’t do this, and this, and this and therefore God has to save me). Some in doing their works, “go through the motions” but their heart is not in it.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Cost_of_Discipleship

5. Understand, we MUST obey God, but we CANNOT ever earn our salvation. Luke 17:10 - we are still unprofitable. Ephesians 2:8-9 – *“not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*
6. This is about a mindset – what is the motives behind your obedience? Is it, “I have to do this” or “I love God, so I WILL do what He says” (1 John 4:17-19). John 14:15, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”*; 1 John 5:3, *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*
7. When we TRULY appreciate the grace of God, obedience is not an issue!

And thus, we can see what grace is and is not. Grace is God’s gift of salvation offered to us. It is something to be fully appreciated. But exactly how has He manifested His grace and how should we respond to that grace? In coming lessons, we will address this. For now, let me simply encourage you to receive His grace on His terms, by obeying the gospel and resolving to faithfully serve Him. How are you doing in this? Think about it!

III. The Grace of God

- a. Titus 2:11 – the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men... it is available to everyone.
- b. Demonstrated in Jesus – 2 Corinthians 8:9, John 1:14-17, Hebrews 2:9, Titus 3:4-7, Eph 2:4-5, Colossians 2:11-13
- c. Demonstrated in others – Acts 11:23 – Barnabas was sent to Antioch he saw the grace of God – exactly what this involved we do not know. At minimum, it was clear that they had obeyed the gospel and were living the gospel.
- d. Other examples of God's grace
 - i. His word (the gospel of grace) The gospel of Grace – Acts 20:24, 20:32, 14:3, Colossians 1:5-6
 - ii. The church
 - iii. Prayer – access to God through Jesus
 - iv. His chastening -

IV. How should I respond to the grace of God?

- a. Titus 2:11-14
- b. I serve God by grace – Hebrews 12:28
- c. I ought to be thankful – Thanksgiving is the appropriate response to grace. 9 times in the NKJV, the word for grace is translated “thanks”. – 2 Timothy 1:3, 2 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Corinthians 15:57
- d. I ought to submit to Him in obedience –
- e. I must show grace to others – 1 John 4:9-11, etc. We have previously addressed this.
- f. How do we know what we need to do? Standards of godliness – consider how when brethren treat each other the way they should.
- g. 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 – by the grace of God, “I am what I am”
- h. Realize that we can fall from grace – Galatians 5:4