

Sunday, April 17, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD 2022 (13)
The Grace of God (4)
The Wonderful Grace of God – What God Does for Us

Today, we continue our study of the grace of God. Thus far we have defined grace and noted how it relates to our faith and obedience. We have discussed ways that grace can be abused. And in our last lesson we addressed the amazing grace of God. Today, we continue to examine the grace of God by noting some ways we experience His grace.

I. Demonstrated in others –

- i. Acts 4:33 – And great grace was upon them all. As the church was growing, it was evident that God was with them. They were providing for one another, increasing in number and learning from the apostles. We don't know everything that was happening, but we know they were.
- ii. Acts 11:23 – Barnabas was sent to Antioch and saw the grace of God, this time among the Gentiles. At minimum, it was clear that they had obeyed the gospel and were living the gospel.
- iii. Acts 14:3 – Paul and Barnabas on their first “missionary journey” in Iconium, we find they stayed there, and God was with them bearing witness to the word of His grace, with signs and wonders
- iv. 2 Corinthians 8:1, 6 – the churches of Macedonia – because of their gratitude of God's grace, even impoverished, they desired to help others.
- v. The point – God's grace was evident. Its results were visible. In some cases, BACK THEN, it might have involved the miraculous, but it could have been much more. We may not fully grasp everything about how God's grace is manifested, but with observation we know it is there. He has done His part, but in concert with that, we do our part. In a few minutes, I will discuss some ways God's grace may be visibly at work.

II. Ephesians 1:3-14 – He has blessed up with every spiritual blessing

- i. When we think of God's grace, the first thing that comes to mind is our salvation. And that ought to be at the forefront (Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:11, etc.).
- ii. There are many passages where we read into it the grace of God. One stands out because of its richness in describing what God's grace does for us spiritually, especially concerning salvation – Ephesians 1:3-14.
- iii. Ephesians 1:3 – He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Consider what it means to be blessed – we actually addressed this a few weeks ago. It means that God has showered favor on us (which is His grace). But this text gives us some great insight into God's grace, where our salvation is concerned. I encourage you to read through this text and notice everything we have because of His grace. Make it personal and apply it to yourself.
- iv. 1:4-5 – I am chosen, I am predestined – it is all part of God's plan for us. I am among that group that has found and conformed to His instructions. Thus I belong to Him.
- v. 1:4 – I am holy and blameless – because I have obeyed His gospel, my sins have been washed away. I am pure in His sight – not because of anything I have done but because of what He has done.
- vi. 1:5 – I am adopted – I am part of His family. Part of the household of God – Ephesians 2:19. God is my heavenly Father and thus I am His child – 1 John 3:1-2 – we are blessed to be called children of God.
- vii. 1:6 – I am made acceptable in the Beloved – through Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 3:17, 17:5, Colossians 1:13 describes Him as, “the Son of His love”, etc.)
- viii. 1:7 – I am redeemed through His blood – redemption means that a price has been paid for me.
 - a. It is associated with paying a ransom or purchasing freedom.

- b. Considering the bondage of sin (Hebrews 2:15, Romans 6:16-18), the price was paid for me.
- c. Romans 3:24 speaks of our redemption in Christ Jesus.
- d. Hebrews 9:12 notes that with His blood He obtained eternal redemption (for all of us).
- ix. 1:7 – I am forgiven – this is what it is about. 1 John 1:7-9 speaks of our sins being cleansed and forgiven, if we walk in the light.
- x. 1:8-9 – I am aware – I have been given access to HIS wisdom and prudence (insight) – through His word. We can know what He desires for us to do (Ephesians 5:17) We can know that we are saved. And we OUGHT to have confidence in that –
 - a. 1 John 2:3-5 – we can know that we are in Him;
 - b. 1 John 3:14 we can know that we have passed from death to life;
 - c. 1 John 4:13 – we can know that we abide in Him;
 - d. 1 John 5:13 – we can know that we have eternal life.
- xi. 1:10 – I am united in Christ – all things are brought together in Christ. That would include me and my brethren. We know that everything about being in Christ is directed toward unity. Remember the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-21; Ephesians 4:4-6 – there is one body, etc.
- xii. 1:11 – I have an inheritance – we often speak of our eternal inheritance. We live looking for our eternal reward – 1 Peter 1:4, Colossian 1:12, 3:24.
- xiii. 1:12-13 – I can trust Him (because He is faithful)
 - a. We did when we obeyed the gospel – believing in Him (John 3:16, Romans 10:9-10)
 - b. We continue to trust Him - Matthew 11:28-30, 2 Corinthians 1:9-10, cf. 1 Timothy 6:17.
- xiv. 1:14 – I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise – the guarantee of my inheritance. A lesson within itself, which in summary notes that He, the Holy Spirit, has done His part to save us.
 - a. In whatever way he abides within us, we have hope beyond this life. Romans 8:1, 5-6, etc.
 - b. And as always, we must factor in God’s word – the product of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, 16:13, Eph. 6:17 – the “sword of the Spirit” is the word of God; 1 Corinthians 2:13, etc.)
 - c. This does not have to be a miraculous act. In fact, His dwelling within us is manifested by OUR conforming to His word.
- xv. Considering this text, THIS IS the grace of God.

III. Other ways God’s grace is seen

- i. In addition to His grace in saving us there are many other manifestations of God’s grace. Thing about everything spiritual that impacts our lives and relationship with Him. To the spiritually mature, many of these are obvious, but approaching them from this standpoint is worthy of thought and perhaps this will give us even greater appreciation.
- ii. **His love and mercy** – last week we noted both of these as products of or producers of His grace. It was His love that sent Jesus, and His mercy that prompted Him to accept His sacrifice for our sins. We read so much about His love and mercy in scripture.
- iii. **His natural blessings showered upon all mankind** – this world is livable. And it was designed so that if men were to faithfully follow Him, this world would be a much better place.
 - a. Romans 1:20 speaks of His invisible attributes being clearly seen ... so that man is without excuse.
 - b. Matthew 5:45 – in teaching us to love our enemies, Jesus appealed to the love of God for all of us, including His enemies. Seen in this world doing what it does to sustain us.
- iv. **His word (the gospel of grace)**
 - a. One of the most practical manifestations of God’s grace to us today is His word. Because of His word, we know Him. 1 Corinthians 2:9-12
 - b. The gospel of Grace – Acts 20:24– the gospel of the grace of God; 20:32, 14:3, – the word of His grace; etc.
 - c. Colossians 1:5-6 – you knew the grace of God in truth
 - d. John 1:14 – the word became flesh ... full of grace and truth

- e. Titus 2:11-12 – teaching us...
- v. **His longsuffering** –
 - a. Longsuffering is patience, including under trying circumstances or when being provoked. God is continually provoked, but He continues to tolerate and wait. I believe this is so because He still sees hope in SOME.
 - b. Romans 2:4 – do not despise His longsuffering. It is an intended blessing.
 - c. 2 Peter 3:9 – He is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish.
 - d. 1 Timothy 1:14-16 – as Paul recounts his unworthiness (see last week’s lesson), we note that he obtained mercy that Christ Jesus might show longsuffering through Him.
 - e. Isaiah 30:18, in a context where the rebellion of Israel is described as they seek to ally with Egypt to defend them from Assyria, Isaiah rebukes their rebellion and refusal to listen to the LORD’s warnings. But we then read, *Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.*
 - f. We can take consolation that as long as we have breath, God is waiting for us to come back to Him. And when we repent and return, He is there to receive us. We also find hope in this concerning others.
- vi. **His chastening** –
 - a. Hebrews 12:5-11 – the writer encourages these brethren to endure whatever they face noting that it can make them stronger and closer to God in the long run. There are many observations in this text about chastening. Consider whom the Lord loves, He chastens.
 - b. So, what if we are living our lives and we never face real spiritual consequences? While it might just be the time and circumstances we find ourselves in (I do NOT believe that we should be looking for persecutions or trouble), BUT could it be that God is not chastening us because we are NOT in true relationship with Him? Are we, by our lives and decisions, rejected or rebelling against Him. Are we persisting to live in sin, but expecting Him to ignore that (even because of His grace)?
 - c. God’s chastening is His grace because it makes us better.
- vii. **The church** –
 - a. It is my hope that we fully appreciate the church – including the local congregation. I am disturbed by anyone professing to be a Christian who says, “I don’t need the church”. Such is a blinded and often selfish view of one’s faith.
 - b. God, in His eternal wisdom, gave us the church – Ephesians 3:10-11. It is a manifestation of His wisdom. AND it is a POWERFUL gift to help us face a world that is aggressively seeking to tear down your faith.
 - c. It is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23) and a way for us to collectively (together) do His will AND to build each other up – Ephesians 4:11-16, etc. (NOTICE all these verses are in Ephesians, a letter addressing Christ and His church).
 - d. God, in His grace gave us the church – a resource that we CANNOT improve upon when it comes to worship, work and structure.
- viii. **The avenue of prayer** –
 - a. Just as God’s word is how He communicates to us, so prayer is the avenue He has provided for us to directly and personally communicate TO Him. Think about that – God cares enough about His people that He has provided an open line of communication between us.
 - b. 1 Peter 5:7 tells us that He cares for us and desires that we “cast all our cares upon Him.” 1 Peter 3:12 – His ears are open to the prayers of His people.
 - c. Jesus is our mediator – prayer is one of the results of Jesus dying on the cross. 1 Timothy 2:5 tells us that Jesus is our Mediator. John 14:14 – He told His apostles, If you ask anything in My

name...; Ephesians 5:20 we give thanks to God “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”; Colossians 3:17 notes that we give thanks to God through Jesus.

- d. What a privilege to know that God hears us, that Jesus did what was needed to grant us access to Him (Cf. Ephesians 3:12, *in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him*)– AND He answers in the way that is best for us (not always what we want) – 1 John 5:14-15. That is grace.
- ix. ***It could be prospects*** –
 - a. I am a believer that if someone is genuinely searching for the truth, God will see to it that someone finds him, or he finds someone.
 - b. In Acts we read of individuals to whom God sent teachers – Acts 8 – the Eunuch, Acts 10 – Cornelius, etc. Philemon 8-16 describes how Onesimus, an escaped slave found Paul in Rome and became a Christian.
 - c. Paul asked brethren to pray for open doors – Colossians 4:3.
 - d. Other mentions of open doors include Acts 14:27, 1 Corinthians 16:9, Revelation 3:8, etc.
 - e. This is one reason we should always be looking for opportunities and praying for boldness and courage to share our faith with others.
 - f. God’s grace may be leading someone to the truth they are searching for.
- x. ***You never know when God’s favor is shining on you*** – good can happen because He is pleased with you.
 - a. God is able to bless His followers as He sees fit. But we just have no right to demand it.
 - b. When we study providence, we find that God can be working for our best in ways we do not know. Philemon 15 again notes that “perhaps” the events unfolded as they did for God’s purpose.
 - c. I contend that often, it is when we look back and reflect, we can know His grace has been working in us.

In this lesson we can see ways that God’s grace can be working in our lives. While not addressed extensively here, let us know that for God to shower His grace upon us does NOT require miraculous intervention. In many ways, just living our lives may be (or include) God’s grace. And at other times, He may be working in our lives that are very natural and ordinary. All I know is, God has given us tools and a pattern that works and can accomplish His eternal will. That is grace. Do you appreciate His grace? In our next lesson we will address how to respond to His grace. Think about it.