

Monday, June 20, 2011 - God's Grace Provides

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found: was blind, but now I see...”

"Amazing Grace" is a hymn written by English poet John Newton that was published in 1779. Containing a message that forgiveness and redemption are possible regardless of the sins people commit, it is one of the most recognizable songs in the English-speaking world.

The word grace is defined as "unmerited favor". We cannot be saved without the grace of God. **Romans 6:23** states, **“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** There is nothing that so indicates that marvelous grace as the fact that **“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)**. God, in other words, is willing to save man in spite of the fact that we have sinned against Him.

Grace is not merely a part of the plan of redemption, but it is the silver cord that runs through every facet of the work of redemption.

Titus 2:11-12 tells us, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.”** The universal love of God is stressed here. All souls belong to him (**Acts 17:26-28**), he loves the whole world (**John 3:16**), he desires that all men be saved (**1 Tim. 2:4**) and that none should perish (**2 Peter 3:8**).

God's grace is nothing new. The scriptures tell us:

- Our God is "the God of all grace" in **1 Peter 5:10**
- His word, the Bible, is called "the word of His grace" in **Acts 20:32**
- We are "justified by His grace" according to **Titus 3:7**, and by it we "stand" (**1 Peter 5:12**)
- Jesus Christ is the gift of His grace (**Romans 5:15**)
- "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (**John 1:17**)
- He is "full of grace and truth (**John 1:14**)
- The message we preach is "the gospel of the grace of God" (**Acts 20:24**)

It is truly regrettable and tragic that something so wonderful as the grace of our loving God should be so grossly misunderstood and perverted by the religious world. There are those that suggest God, in the end, will save everyone, regardless of how they have lived, because of the depth of His love.

God, however, instructs us differently in His Word. His love for man is tremendous, and He would have all men to be saved (**2 Pet. 3:9**), but that does not mean that His grace is without limitations. For example, God's grace **will not**:

- Save those who refuse it. **Rev. 21:8** The unbelieving **“...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone...”**
- Save those disobedient to it. **2 Thess. 1:8** tells us that the Lord Jesus will one day take **“vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
- Save the rebellious and unappreciative. **Heb. 10:26-27** - **“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.”**

But, for those who accept it and live faithfully by it, the grace of God will save us from eternal damnation (**Acts 20:32**).

What does the grace of God provide? So many things that mankind cannot fathom. This week we attempt to look at just a few...

❖ *What does the grace of God provide?*

1. **Jesus** - The writer of Hebrews made clear that Christ (by whom the grace of God is offered to men, **John 3:16**) is the author of eternal salvation not to those who say, "I'm saved by the grace of God, so there is nothing for me to do," but to those who obey him. Christ is not only the author of eternal salvation, he is our perfect example. **Heb. 5:8-9** states "**Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.**"

1.1. The offering of Jesus was a necessary act of the Divine Nature. It offered a pardon for the ungodly, which did not deserve it, while (a) being just in the condemnation of sin and (b) making the sinner hate the sin.

1.2. God's grace is in Christ. Paul tells Timothy in **2 Tim. 2:1**, "**You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**" Therefore, God's favor is not with men outside of Christ.

1.3. God's grace provides the blood of Christ:

1.3.1. In the blood of Christ you find Remission of sins

1.3.1.1. The shedding of Christ's blood is required.

1.3.1.2. **1 John 1:7** tells us "**...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**"

1.3.1.3. **Eph. 1:7** - **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace**

1.3.2. In the blood of Christ you find Reconciliation

1.3.2.1. **Rom. 5:10** tells us man is reconciled through the blood of Christ. **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

1.3.2.2. The word "enemies" expresses man's hostile attitude to God, indicating that until this change of attitude takes place, men are exposed to the wrath of God.

1.3.2.3. Only the blood of Christ can pardon sin that produces wrath, and thereby makes peace (**Col. 1:20**).

1.3.3. In the blood of Christ you find Redemption

1.3.3.1. The blood of Christ is the basis of redemption for it is the price paid for man's iniquity. **Col. 1:13** - "**He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**"

2. **The Gospel**

2.1. When Adam and Eve transgressed the law of God, sin and death became realities with which men in all following generations would have to live (**Rom. 5:12**). Since all men have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (**Rom. 3:23**), and since men do not have the wisdom and strength to direct their own steps (**Jer. 10:23**), then without God providing the gospel, which is God's power unto salvation (**Rom. 1:16**), all men would be helplessly lost.

2.2. The new covenant - the gospel of God's grace - replaced the law that God gave through Moses (**Hebrews 8:8-13**).

2.3. Peter teaches, in **1 Peter 1:10-12**, that what the prophets had in mind when they "prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" was indeed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- 2.4. This gospel, which the grace of God gave us, teaches us to live for the Lord (**Tit. 2:11-12**).
- 2.5. **1 Peter 1:22-25 - Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever. Now this is the word, which by the gospel was preached to you."**
3. **Strength (Power for living)**
- 3.1. Grace frees us from the past. **Phil. 3:13 - Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead**
- 3.2. God forgives and forgets (**Heb. 8:12**). Grace helps us to get over preoccupation with the past and past sins.
- 3.3. The heart that serves best is the heart that overflows with an awareness of God's grace (**1 Cor. 15:9-10**) **"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"**
- 3.4. Grace provides the strength to persevere and prevail. Paul tells us in **2 Cor. 12:7-9**, **"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."** Whatever the "thorn in the flesh" may have been, it must have been a great trial for Paul. We need to learn that often strength is generated, not in spite of the thorn but because of the thorn.
4. **Abundant life** - When the Son of God came into the world it was suffering from spiritual malnutrition. Men were trying to feed their spirit on the husks of human philosophy, traditions and legalistic observances of the Law of Moses. All of these had failed. In the midst of man's moral and spiritual bankruptcy, Jesus announced, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (**John 10:10**). The life of which Jesus spoke was eternal life. But His grace in providing the abundant life manifests itself in this life as well as many ways. Christ is the Water of Life (**John 4:10**). He is the Bread of Life (**John 6:33-35**). He is the True Vine, through which the branches (disciples) derive their nourishment (**John 15:1**). This abundant life provides children of God with many blessings such as:
- 4.1. Faith - **"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4)**
- 4.2. Forgiveness – **"bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Col. 3:13)**
- 4.3. Fellowship - The lives of men never will be spiritually satisfying outside of fellowship with God and His children (**1 John 1:3**).
- 4.4. Joy and peace - Real joy and peace in this life comes only by learning to live above circumstances (**Phil. 1:12-18**). The abundant life provides victory over things that may have been intended to discourage us. Paul learned to live above all the circumstances of life for the glory of God. If only we could learn that lesson today. Circumstances come and go. We can live through and above them due to the abundant life as revealed in the grace of God.

4.5. Hope - **“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18).**

5. The Lord’s church

5.1. **Ephesians 3:1-11.** This passage plainly sets forth the fact that the grace of God made possible:

5.1.1. Paul’s apostleship

5.1.2. Which involved his being a minister of the gospel of Christ

5.1.3. Which gospel made necessary his special work among the Gentiles

5.1.4. God’s plan certainly involved the church. This was according to God’s eternal purpose.

5.1.5. The very existence and work of the church came about as a direct result of the grace of God.

5.2. Salvation which is in the church, proves that the church was provided by the grace of God (**2 Tim. 2:10**)

5.2.1. We are saved by grace (**Eph. 2:8**)

5.2.2. The grace of God brings salvation (**Tit. 2:11**)

5.2.3. Salvation is in Christ (**2 Tim. 2:10**), which is in his body (**Eph. 5:23, 28-30**), which is the church (**Eph. 1:22-23**). To be in Christ is to be in his church which he purchased with his blood (**Acts 20:28**) which was shed by the grace of God.

The grace of God has provided for us a blueprint in the scriptures that show how we might have eternal life.

God’s grace is conditional. The principle is illustrated by the example of Noah, who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (**Genesis 6:8**); and yet, as the writer of Hebrews shows, the patriarch and his family were saved by preparing an ark in obedience to God’s instruction (**Gen. 6:13-22**). Jehovah proffered the grace. Noah, by faith, obeyed the Lord, and so was blessed. While God extends grace, human beings must be willing to “receive” the favor (**2 Corinthians 6:1**).

Grace is accessed at the point of obedience to the Gospel. Eternal life is the result of grace. One experiences that “life” when he is raised from the water of immersion (**Romans 6:4**). Heaven’s grace plan system includes obedience.

Christ **“saves us, through the washing of regeneration [acknowledged to be a reference to baptism], and the renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5)**. Obedience and grace do not stand in opposition to one another.

May we always desire to obey God rather than listen to man.