

THE GRACE OF GOD
EPH. 2:8-9

In the December issue (2001) of the Reader's Digest, there was an article about Muhammad Ali, former heavyweight boxing champion. The interview was scheduled to take place on 9/11/01, and it did take place, but was on a delayed basis because of the terrible events that were unfolding that morning. The interview covered many things involving the life of Ali, and one of the first dealt with his religion (as he had years before converted to Mohammedanism). The question was asked, "What does your faith mean to you?" Ali replied, [It] means [a] ticket to heaven. One day we are all going to die, and God's going to judge us, [our] good and bad deeds. [If the] bad outweighs the good, we will go to hell; if the good outweighs the bad, we go to heaven."

What he believes is certainly his business, but that is not what the Bible teaches. Christianity teaches that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23); that none can be saved by their own righteousness alone (Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). To think that the good can somehow outweigh the bad is not to understand the nature of sin, just how bad it is in the eyes of a perfect, all-holy God. Christianity teaches that the grace factor must enter the picture to accomplish salvation. Grace is what makes the difference.

I. What is Grace?

A. Grace is God's unmerited favor.

1. It is where favor is not deserved, but it has been granted.
2. The grace of God is his free and everlasting love and favor.
3. Simply put, grace means that God gives us salvation from our sins although we don't in any way deserve it.

B. The work God did to redeem man is grace.

C. What all is involved in that?

1. Salvation from sin made possible (Eph. 2:8).
2. We cannot be saved w/o God's grace (Titus 2:11).
3. Man has never deserved salvation and there is not one thing that he can do to obligate God to pay him salvation (Rom. 5:8). We neither deserve or earn salvation.
4. Romans 6:23; 3:24; 5:15
5. You cannot purchase grace, it is a gift.
6. God does not owe us anything. he is not obligated to us in any way, no matter what works we may do. Whatever we receive from Him, any time, now or judgment day, will be a matter of free and undeserving gift to us. He will NOT be paying a debt He owes to us.

D. Grace can only be received, it cannot be achieved, i.e. earned.

1. I Cor. 1:4
2. Eph. 3:7
3. II Cor. 8:1—bestowed (given – ASV)
4. Rom. 4:4
5. Rom. 11:6—works which merit justification and commands which one must obey to be saved, are distinct matters.

E. Grace is essential for our salvation.

1. It is clear that the scriptures teach that one cannot be saved w/o obedience to the gospel of Christ, and yet at the same time it just as emphatically teaches that we are saved by the grace of God.
 - a. Heb. 5:8,9
 - b. Romans 5:1,2
2. Luke 17:10
3. We all know that we cannot be saved w/o obeying the will of the Lord, yet that in no way

- obligate the Lord to save.
4. God owes us nothing, but His great love prompted Him to offer us the privilege of being saved by Him.
 5. Grace involves a giver, a gift, and a receiver. John 3:16 has all of that. God (giver) gave His Son (gift), for mankind (receiver).
 6. It is clear to see that salvation by grace has two sides. The Divine side and the human side.
 - a. The Divine side has to do with what God has done for man that he could never do for self
 - b. The human side takes into account that man can do certain things and that, therefore, God expects him to do them.
- F. What is it that we so often have difficulty understanding and accepting the concept of the grace of God?
1. We have a natural tendency to expect what we deserve.
 - a. “That’s not fair!”
 - b. We are quick to insist on getting what we have coming.
 - c. May work in relationship with mankind, but not with God, when you are talking about the need for forgiveness.
 - d. We do not want what we deserve when we stand before God!
 2. We sometimes don’t comprehend the depth of our own sin.
 - a. We may make a “few mistakes” but that is about it.
 - b. Bible describes being w/o God’s grace as being “dead in sin,” and dead people can’t do anything to help themselves.
 - c. Grace is our only hope.
 3. We are often sensitive to our own guilt. (Opposite of #2.)
 - a. Difficult for us to believe that anyone who knows everything about us could possibly extend any grace to us.
 - b. We know we don’t deserve it.
 - c. If we deserved it, it would not be grace!
- II. What do we do to receive Grace?
- A. Is salvation free if man does anything?
 1. Because God requires us to do certain things to receive His grace, does not mean that we earn it.
 2. Grace reigns thru righteousness (Rom. 5:21) but righteousness entails the doing of the will of God (I John 3:7).
 - B. We cannot receive the free gift of salvation by obeying the works of the law of Moses (Rom. 3:20), or by any meritorious works devised by man (Eph. 2:8f).
 - C. Through the grace of God salvation is offered to all (Titus 2:11). This does not mean that all men will be saved, even though by the grace of God, Jesus tasted of death for all (Heb. 2:9).
 1. We know that God, “...Matt. 5:45...” What if the farmer decided that all he needs is the sun w/o any work; no sowing, no weeding, just let the sun do it all, then every person, evil or good, could have a crop—not just the farmer.
 2. Grace does not reign in every man’s life just because it was given for all any more than all men can have a crop because the sun shines on the evil and the good.
 - D. We must have faith to have access to this grace.
 1. Romans 5:1,2
 2. Rom. 5:8—God did for us what we could not do for ourselves.
 3. Rom. 4:16—where faith is, grace is implied.
 4. Eph. 2:8—grace(God’s part), faith(Man’s part), not of yourselves (Not earned, not a right through your own-selves), it is a gift of God (Unmerited favor), not of works (works stemming from their own righteousness and/or power). Lest any man should boast (of his own accomplishments, works or merit).

- E. God's grace saves us through faith
 - 1. Titus 2:11—appeared to all,
 - 2. Why then, are all men not saved?
 - a. II Pet. 3:9–
 - b. Matt. 11:28—Jesus invites.
 - 3. Simply because lack of faith
 - a. Heb. 5:8,9
 - b. Matt. 7:21ff
 - 4. Occasionally someone will say, “I do not know how much of my salvation depends on grace and how much of it depends on works.”
 - a. It all depends on grace if one is thinking about his deserving any of it.
 - b. But God has done and is doing his part.
 - c. Therefore my salvation now depends on what I do.
 - d. If I continue in trusting obedience to God he will keep me saved by his marvelous grace.
 - 5. Grace benefits only those who are obedient to the gospel of Christ
- F. We must accept God's grace. This is where faith comes in.
 - 1. In order for us to benefit from God's freely given natural gifts, we must do or work something in order to appropriate their blessing to self. The same is true of grace.
 - 2. When we mention faith, we are talking about trust that is expressed in acts of obedience in doing what God said do, like God said to do it.
 - a. Noah—Gen. 6:8... Heb. 11:7
 - b. Joshua 6:2-5...gave them the city...did they earn it by marching, blowing trumpets, etc...
- G. Grace does not override man's will, nor violate his responsibility.
 - 1. Gal. 2:21; 5:4
 - 2. II Cor. 6:1—conditions of grace must be met, or it is empty and worthless in so far as the disobedient one is concerned.
 - a. The Corinthians had believed and had been baptized, thus they “had received the grace..”
 - b. ...but the freedom to choose good or evil still remained, and if they chose evil, they would frustrate the end for which the grace was given.
 - 3. Keep in mind that, in doing what God said he is simply taking hold of the free gift of salvation.
- H. Grace is in Christ Jesus.
 - 1. II Tim. 2:1
 - 2. Romans 3:24
 - 3. How do we get into Christ?
 - 4. To be saved by grace means that it is necessary for one to become a Christian and to be a Christian, one must be in Christ.
 - 5. Salvation by grace is biblically associated with being “raised” with Christ (Eph. 2:5,6)
- I. One other thing: The grace of God is never on the pages of the Bible used as an encouragement to laxness in living the Christian life. (Romans 6:1).

Con: We learn the story of the Savior's love; we accept it by faith with all the heart; we turn away from our sins in genuine repentance; we confess his holy name, we are buried with Him by baptism into death; we rise to walk in newness of life. All this wondrous scene is the grace of God. Why not obey His will and accept his grace today?