

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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The Grace of God That Brings Salvation

By Irvin Himmel

Nothing is more clearly revealed in the Scriptures than our dependence on God's grace for redemption. Paul said to the saints at Ephesus, "by grace are ye saved" (**Eph. 2:5**). Everyone who is permitted to enter heaven will be there by grace.

Today there are teachers, even in the church, who have warped conceptions of grace. Some seem to feel that grace is the big "cover-up" for whatever they want to allow that is not taught in the Bible. There is endless speculation about what grace may do. Having no desire to join the ranks of the conjecturers, I offer the following facts revealed in God's word.

1. Grace does not circumvent Jesus Christ. It is folly to imagine that God's saving grace may somehow take a circuitous

route that by-passes Jesus Christ. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (**John 1:17**). God demonstrated His loving-kindness for sinful man in the gift of His Son. In Christ "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (**Eph. 1:7**). Saving grace is found in Jesus, not out of Him. Paul said to the Corinthian Christians, "I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ" (**1 Cor. 1:4**). The grace that saves comes to man by or through, not apart from, Jesus Christ.

2. Grace does not ignore the Gospel. The good news of justification through Christ is referred to as "the gospel of the grace of God" and "the word of his grace" (**Acts 20:24, 32**). To preach the gospel is to distribute saving grace. The saints at Colosse were reminded of "the hope which is laid up for you in

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heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (**Col. 1:5,6**). It was not until the gospel was preached in Antioch that people turned to the Lord and the grace of God was "seen" in that locality (**Acts 11:19-23**).

3. Grace does not permit access apart from faith. "Access" is that which gives admittance, entrance, or introduction. One must show faith in Jesus Christ in order to gain access into saving grace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (**Rom. 5:1,2**). Since faith comes by hearing God's word (**Rom. 10:17**), one must hear the gospel to enter God's favor. "For by grace are ye saved through faith . . ." (**Eph. 2:8**). God provides salvation through undeserved favor; man accepts that provision of grace by means of faith.

4. Grace does not rule against baptism for the remission of sins. The faith which gives access into grace is active trust-confidence expressed in cheerful obedience. God requires that we show faith by being baptized, and that demonstration of faith is unto the remission of sins. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (**Col. 2:12**). Peter preached repentance and baptism "for the remission of sins" (**Acts 2:38**). But he acknowledged that it is "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" that we shall be saved (**Acts 15:11**). Salvation by grace requires faith, and faith requires baptism unto the forgiveness of sins.

5. Grace does not give license to sin. The law of Moses was given to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Under the law sin abounded. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. . . ." (**Rom. 5:20**). Does this mean that the more men sin, the more grace will be shown? Or, as Paul worded the question, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" He answered,

"God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (**Rom. 6:1,2**). The triumph of God's grace over sin is not to be interpreted as a license for the Christian to indulge in unrighteousness. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (**Rom. 6:12**). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly . . ." (**Tit. 2:11,12**).

6. Grace does not offer unconditional security. Just as our entrance into saving grace is conditioned on our willingness to show faith in Jesus Christ, our remaining in that grace is conditioned on our willingness to continue in faith. The Hebrew writer warns us that one may "fail" or "come short" of the grace of God (**Heb. 2:15**). The Galatians were called "into the grace of Christ" but afterward accepted false teaching that "removed" them (**Gal. 1:6,7**). Paul wrote to them, "ye are fallen from grace" (**Gal. 5:4**). This explodes the theory of once in grace, always in grace.

7. Grace does not save on the basis of human merit. The Bible sometimes uses the word "work" to convey the thought of activity that earns, or effort that deserves reward. In this sense Paul used the word when he wrote, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt" (**Rom. 4:4**). Our salvation is based on faith, not something earned or deserved, "that it might be by grace" (**Rom. 4:16**). This is why boasting is excluded. "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (**Eph. 2:9**). Actions in exercise of faith are sometimes called "works" (**James 2:24**), but they are not in the category of efforts that earn or merit. No man deserves salvation. God's grace saves and shows our inability to reach heaven by our own might, ingenuity, or deserving. God owes us nothing; we owe Him everything.

I have used this negative approach to show some of the revealed limitations which God places on grace. Hopefully, this will point out that God's saving grace is not a mystical catch-all for whatever odds and ends. the speculators in theology may wish to conceal. And let us stay with revelation, giving no honor

to speculation. - **Truth Magazine, December 1973**

What Did It Take?

By Steve Niemeier

When Joshua came up against the city of Jericho he faced a challenge many would step aside from facing. Joshua 6:1 states that Jericho was "securely shut up". No one was able to go in or come out of Jericho because of the children of Israel.

The Lord tells Joshua in verse two that He had given Jericho into Joshua's hand including the king and the mighty men of valor. Now with God all things are possible and we know that so what was God going to do to deliver Jericho?

Not what we would have expected. His plan was for all the people to be involved. It took seven days to fulfill. Not a "shot was fired" and yet the wall around Jericho crumbled and fell flat.

The people while working together faced different duties to perform in God's plan. It took each one doing his or her work to accomplish the plan God had for the wall of Jericho to fall.

That is unity and that is what it took for success according to God's plan.

It still takes that today!