

Rom. 14:19
So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32
And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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WHAT IS GOD'S GRACE TO ME?

By Jim Stauffer

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph. 2:8–9)
"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1–2)

Since we are saved by grace through faith and justified by our faith which has allowed us into this grace, it is very important I understand God's grace.

It is crucial to our understanding of grace to fully comprehend what the Bible speaks of when it says God and Christ are the givers of grace (**1 Cor.1:4; Jas. 1:17**).

Paul explains who the grace of God is and what He has done for us, *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."* (**Titus 2:11–14**) In this text he explains Jesus appeared as the grace of God. God's gracious act was giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. But the passage tells us He first taught us how to live in this present world. He then went to the cross to redeem us by way of His precious blood (**1 Pet. 1:18,19**).

That redemption is achieved in the forgiveness of sins that Paul says translates me *....into the kingdom of His dear Son* (**Col. 1:13,14**). What I need to know then is how to obtain this redemption, the forgiveness of sins. That is the first thing taught by the apostles following the ascension of Christ into heaven. Peter told the Jews who had called for His crucifixion to, *repent and be baptized every one of you for the*

remission of sins....(Acts 2:38). This, we come to understand is *....obedience to the faith...(Rom. 1:5)* and obeying the author of our salvation (**Heb. 5:9**).

What we are dispelling here is any theory some may have that God bestows His grace on an elect few that He has long ago chosen and withholds it from all others. As Paul told Titus, *...the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men...*, that is He has made it available to all men. But as he said in **Rom. 5**, we must have faith to access this grace wherein lies the salvation God has offered to all.

To be further noted that faith will lead us to obey God as all the faithful in history did (**Heb. 11**). And we must realize the same man who obeys God retains the free will to reject Him when deceived by Satan. (**Gal. 5:4**)

God's grace is there for the believer who will obey the commandments of God. Will you?

Sound Doctrine Produces Sound Churches

Demanding Sound Doctrine
Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."—2 Timothy 4:1-4.

A local church is going to be about as strong and sound as the preaching it receives and is willing to

endure and support. Paul's solemn charge to Timothy had a sense of urgency about it. Preach the word now, while brethren will endure it, or face a time when they will not.

For several years this writer has been paying particular attention as seasoned brethren (preachers and otherwise) express their concerns about the churches of today. The one dominant concern seems to be the caliber of preaching coming from our pulpits of late. As one old soldier of the cross expressed it to me, "I am getting tired of going to gospel meetings and hearing 'fluff'." He went on to explain what he meant by "fluff." Preaching that contained very little real Bible teaching.

Brethren, strong congregations cannot be built and maintained on "fluff." Did you ever buy cotton candy? Then you know what "fluff" is. I remember, as a youngster, that I would spend my dime on a huge stick of it at the county fair. It was spun and displayed so as to make me think that I was getting a lot more for my money than I was. I soon learned that I had bought mostly fluff — very little candy inflated with a lot of air.

The sad thing about it all is that many churches had rather have "fluff" than real spiritual food. As long as churches demand it, there will be those who are willing to be paid to spin it out for them.

Sermons and classes with real doctrinal content are held in disfavor by many of today's churches. The demand is for more "relevant"(?) matters. Themes more suited for psychologists and sociologists are replacing basic Bible topics. Topics that address so-called "real problems" and "real life concerns" of "today's Christian" are replacing those that deal with what the Book says about man's basic spiritual problem, sin; and his real basic needs — conviction of sin and the salvation of his soul. Lectures aimed more at enhancing man's present happiness and welfare than ensuring his eternal well being are by far the most widely received. Preachers that entertain and make brethren feel good about themselves, rather than producing godly sorrow leading to repentance or any real depth of scriptural knowledge, are given the most favored status among brethren.

Sermons that really teach the Bible are considered, "uninteresting", "too-structured" and even "crude" by some. All too often preachers who resort to such are asked to find some place else to do their preaching. We have observed a rash of this lately.

Subjects more suitable for a civic club seminar than for a gospel meeting are commonly announced. Sunday after Sunday, if what I hear is accurate, talks that would be welcomed in any denominational church in town are passed off as gospel sermons. Unfortunately, as the title of the old country song put it, "What Lola Wants Lola Gets?"

So, all too often, preachers and elders bow to the pressure of those who want this "fluff." We know a good preacher, who is capable of making Bible studies interesting, who began a study of Isaiah (with its emphasis on the Messianic prophecies) for a college-age class. There was so much opposition to it by some members of the class that the elders saw fit to set up an alternate class — so that those who wanted to could study something more "interesting" and "relevant." As my daddy used to say, "Now isn't that a pretty come off?"

A congregation constantly fed on "fluff" will not develop an appetite for sound doctrine. Any who may have had an appetite will soon lose it. Without a desire for sound doctrine churches are vulnerable to all kinds of fables.

Neither motivational hype nor emotional manipulation is gospel preaching. Such may produce increased activity of a sort. It may even build and inspire audiences after a fashion. It may enhance the speaker's standing with brethren as a dynamic speaker. But, it will not produce a well-grounded faith based upon a "thus saith the Lord."

Brethren, our preaching must follow the pattern that Paul outlined to Timothy. In form, it must have a well-rounded combination of convincing (reproving — KJV), rebuking and exhorting (or encouraging). In substance, it must have teaching (doctrine) at the base. It is no accident that Paul, in the preceding chapter, shows the Scriptures to be profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (**2 Timothy 3:16**).

Book, chapter, and verse preaching/teaching that quotes or reads scriptures and then makes clear applications of the reading seldom sweeps folks along on clouds of ecstasy. Nor does it flow quite as smoothly as Dale Carnegie trained orations. Nor is it likely to make folks jump up and down with uncontrollable joy nor roll in the aisles with laughter. It will likely cause them to mostly sit and ponder on the validity of the message — comparing it with the Scriptures before them. Once convicted of the validity of the message, they will then be motivated to act with both an intelligent and emotional response to the great message preached. They are then moved by the power of the gospel preached more than the charismatic personal power of the preacher/teacher or dynamic qualities of his delivery.

We need preachers who will preach it just like Paul and other inspired men wrote it. Preachers who will preach the word in season and out, without regard to whether churches will endure and support it. We need churches who not only endure sound doctrine, but demand it of those they support in local work, in gospel meetings and throughout the world. Unless we have this we will continue seeing churches

slide toward religious error and philosophical foolishness and away from the sound doctrine based on "what saith the Scriptures."

The Lure of the Fashionable (Or, Duplicating Gruesome Reality)

One index of the reign of sin is the lure of the fashionable. It is remarkable how powerful worldly fashion is to those who are given to this dimension of human appetite. When you do something, without any mature motive or reason - simply because others are doing it, you are captive to the influence of fashion.

I thought about this a few days ago, as a result of something I observed. I came to an intersection and noticed an automobile next to me riddled with bullet holes. It appeared to me that the vehicle had been through a fierce gun battle. There was a sense of alarm at first, so I looked inside the car - only to witness normal occupants who seemed to be in good health. I concluded the necessary auto body work had not been done yet, but I was still alarmed at what had happened to the owners.

A few days later I drove into a parking lot at the grocery store, and here was another vehicle with a dozen or so bullet holes in the driver's door. This caused me to think about the crime rate, the violence that must be growing in my community. What times we must live in, to see automobiles torn up and obviously penetrated by bullets! Terrible!

Then I went to auto parts store to buy an air filter for my truck. While waiting for the employee to find the part, I noticed a display of FAKE BULLET HOLE decals! I caught myself just before uttering the verbal expression of astonishment common in my grandmother's generation: "Of all the thangs!!"

I suppose the explanation is - if you can't get your vehicle shot, you can buy these decals to make it look like you've been shot!! Then I went to Wal-Mart yesterday, and the guy in front of me was wearing a shirt with bullet holes and blood (imprinted on the shirt to duplicate gruesome reality.)

It provoked me to think about what strange things people will do, simply because others do it. This is the lure of fashion, also seen in tattoos and body-piercing. I suppose an argument can be made in favor of custom and convention, or private opinion where no sin is involved. You can study that.

But it may be personally useful for us to stop and inquire of ourselves, before duplicating fashion: Why am I doing this? What good will be accomplished? What message will I send? What influence will I have? Would Jesus do this? Based on His revelation of Himself, what would God's judgment be? Will a mind and conscience, directed by the example of Christ and the teachings of

the Bible desire to give the appearance of violence?

Without any doubt, Christians must guard against the impulse and habit of conforming to the world. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* - Rom. 12:1,2

**by Warren E. Berkley; taken from THE BEACON
- Electronic Edition**

Tell Me What the Bible Says About Christmas

This is at one and the same time the easiest and the hardest question on earth to answer. The reasons for the paradox are simple.

Why is it easy? Because EVERYTHING the scriptures say about Christmas is found in the next parenthetical: (). That's it! EVERYTHING God said about Christmas in one short sentence! But, Clee, you say, there's nothing there! And that's because there is nothing in the Bible about Christmas. It's a totally man-made holiday. There is absolutely nothing in the scripture about celebrating the birth of Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem. The Good Lord spent precious time and resources making sure the details of His birth were preserved for us. Why? Because God thought they were IMPORTANT! We should study and know them. God was keeping promises made to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and David, indeed all of us, by sending His Son into the world. But giving us this sacred history is not setting up a sacred season of the year. Paul, Peter or John never mention a celebration like this nor do we read of the first century Christians keeping it in the Book of Acts or the Epistles. Therefore it should be treated as any other man made tradition - completely optional. You are not a better Christian for keeping it nor are you less of a Christian for ignoring it. (Read Colossians 2)

Why is it hard to answer? Well, by nature I am not confrontational and the emotional responses of those who were taught growing up - as I was - that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth can get almost violent. I kid you not! My wife was once called everything but 'Satan's Mistress' for not keeping the tradition! We all can be better people than that!

Cleveland Reddinger

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

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BIBLE CLASSES

SUNDAY MORNING

STUDY OF AUTHORITY - TEACHER
BILL MILLER

WEDNESDAY EVENING

THE BOOK OF JOB - TEACHER
JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY MORNING SERMON:

BIBLICAL BAPTISM



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10