

Saving Grace

By David Phillips

Introduction

1. Most people are aware that grace is an essential element to the salvation of mankind.
2. Sadly, however, how God's grace is involved in our salvation is a subject sorely misunderstood.
3. Therefore we will consider what the Bible says about God's saving grace and how it affects our salvation as well as our relationship with God.

Discussion

I. What Is Grace?

- A. The basic definition of grace is "good-will, lovingkindness, favor."
 1. In this sense it is used...
 - a. Of the kindness of a master toward his servants,
 - b. Especially of God toward His people.
 2. It "contains the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved."
 3. "The NT writers used 'grace' preeminently of that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses and bids them accept of eternal salvation through Christ, e.g. Ephesians 2:5" (Thayer).
- B. It is this definition of grace which prompts most men to think of the term, "unmerited favor."
 1. In many ways this short definition is accurate.
 2. When God bestows His grace upon us it is not because we have earned it in any way; it is not merited.
 3. In fact, the apostle Paul refuted the idea that salvation can be earned in Romans 4:2-4, "*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.*"
 4. Therefore God's grace is free for those to whom it is given; it is a free gift.

II. Understanding the Meaning of "Free" and "Gift."

- A. Sadly, many have misunderstood what it means for something to be "free" or to be given as a "gift."
 1. In our society "free" has been associated with not having to do anything in order to receive the gift.
 2. For this reason many have come to believe that since God's grace is a free gift we do not have to do anything in order to receive it; it is automatic.
 3. The scriptures teach us, however, that even when something is free there are certain things that we must do in order to receive it. These are called "contingencies."
 4. That is to say, a gift, even though free, can be contingent upon our doing something.
- B. To illustrate let us consider Ecclesiastes 3:12-13.
 1. "*I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor -- it is the gift of God.*"
 2. We will notice that God has given man a gift: to "*eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor.*"
 - a. God has blessed man with the ability to work.
 - b. God has blessed man with the creation and all things that grow on the earth which we are able to enjoy.

- c. Therefore when we work with the creation which God has given us we can understand that whatever we enjoy from those labors is also a gift from God.
 - 3. Most people understand that if a man does not work, then there will be nothing for him to enjoy. They understand that in order to enjoy the fruit of our labor, we must first be willing to labor.
 - 4. Therefore, even though our livelihood is a free gift from God since we cannot earn God's blessings, we must still do something in order to receive that gift.
 - a. *"For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).*
 - b. *"The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing" (Proverbs 20:4)*
- C. This same principle is true for many aspect of our life today.
 - 1. When an organization is giving away free gifts, people understand that they have to submit their name and information in order to receive their gift; it is free, but they must do something in order to receive it.
 - 2. If a person gives \$100 to his friend for groceries the friend will certainly understand if he has to go to the person's house in order to receive the money. He does not say that just because he had to do something in order to receive the gift it negates the fact that it is a gift.
 - 3. Even so, God's grace, His free gift, is contingent upon our doing something in order to receive it.

III. The Contingency of God's Saving Grace

- A. The Old Testament is filled with instances where Israel's receiving a blessing was contingent upon their obedience to God's commands.
 - 1. Deuteronomy 11:26-29: *"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known."*
 - 2. We understand from this passage that God promised to bless Israel, but He would only bless them **IF** they were obedient. Therefore their blessings were contingent upon their obedience.
 - 3. The same was true for the curse which they would receive **IF** they disobeyed God.
- B. God's saving grace is given to all mankind within the context of this same contingent.
 - 1. Because of His grace He is willing to give us salvation even though there is nothing that we can do in order to pay Him back for His gift.
 - 2. For this reason we are saved by God's grace, as it is written, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).*
 - 3. However, just as a man must work in order to enjoy the fruit of his labor and just as Israel had to be obedient in order to receive the Lord's blessings we are told, *"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" (Hebrews 5:8-9).*
 - 4. God's grace is seen in Christ's sacrifice, but that grace only offers salvation to *"all who obey Him."*
 - 5. Therefore, just as it was with Israel, so we can only receive the blessing if we are obedient to God. Our obedience does not earn our salvation, rather it is the contingency upon which God will grant us our salvation.
- C. For this reason, when we use God's grace the way He intended, there is no end to the things that it can teach us (Titus 2:11-14).
 - 1. The Grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness Tit. 2:12
 - a. If we sin we have an advocate, though we must strive to not sin (2 John 2:1).
 - b. Romans 5:8-9 – Through Christ sinners are justified. Our justification grants us another opportunity to learn how we may overcome sin.
 - c. Titus 2:14 – *"Gave Himself for us that He might redeem us."*

2. The Grace of God teaches us to live soberly and righteously
 - a. Ephesians 4:1-3 – When we walk worthy of the calling we walk soberly
 - b. Romans 5:17; Rom. 12:3
3. The Grace of God Teaches us to look for the blessed hope Tit. 2:13
 - a. 1 John 3:3 – “*we shall be like Him.*”
 - b. 1 Peter 1:14 - “*Rest your hope fully upon the grace*”
 - c. 1 Peter 1:21 – That hope is in God.
4. The Grace of God teaches us to look for the “Glorious return of our God and Savior”
 - a. Revelation 3:3 – He will come like a thief in the night
 - b. 1 Peter 4:7 – Be watchful because the end is at hand
5. God’s saving grace would never be able to teach us any of this if we did not have to do anything in order to receive it. Therefore let us be diligent to enter into His grace.

Conclusion

1. God’s grace is the greatest gift in the world and is necessary for our salvation.
2. But we can only benefit from that grace if we fulfill the commands of God.
3. We must first fulfill four specific commands in order to receive His saving grace: Believe on Jesus, repent of our sins, confess Him as Lord and be baptized (Mark 16:16). From here, we are able to grow from what His grace and teach us.
4. If you desire salvation through Christ Jesus, you can obey the gospel today. Will you come?