

Grace and its Role in Salvation

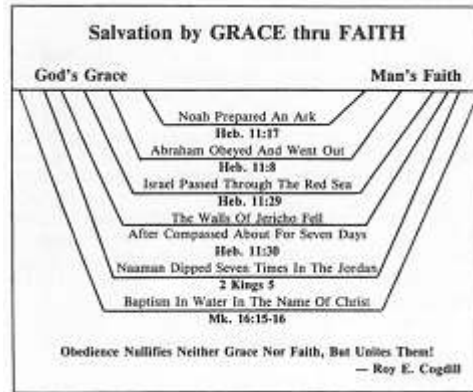
Material submitted as a publishable outline to Jim Deason - 10/2/24

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Ephesians 2:8-9
- B. Grace is amazing but it has also become a breeding ground for controversy, difficulties, and outright error.
- C. We can teach God's truth about grace by understanding:
 - 1. The essentials necessary to a biblical understanding of grace.
 - 2. Why many people think we don't preach on grace (after we've just preached on it!)
 - 3. Practical ways to teach and preach God's truth on grace.

I. THE CORNERSTONES OF GRACE

- A. ***Grace is at the core of God's character.***
 - 1. "Grace" isn't simply a description of what God does. It is who He is.
 - 2. Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 86:15; 116:5
 - 3. The NT continues this theme: John 1:14-18
 - 4. That means the gospel is saturated with grace - Acts 20:24; Romans 5:2; Eph 1:3ff, Titus 2:11-12; Rev 22:21
 - 5. The Bible reveals to us a God who longs to save, who wants to bless, who desires to forgive, and who wants to give what we do not deserve.
- B. ***That means grace was present in the Old Testament.***
 - 1. Some imagine "The O.T. is law, the N.T. is grace."
 - 2. Genesis 3:15
 - 3. Many receive God's "unmerited favor"
 - a. Adam and Eve
 - b. Noah - Gen 6:8
 - c. Abraham was chosen by God's grace and he "believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6)
 - d. Rahab
 - e. David after Bathsheba
 - f. Again and again Israel forsakes God and is forgiven
 - 4. "Far from being a concept absent from the Old Testament it is because of what we learn about grace under the Old Law that its significance may be understood in Christ. Paul taught the Galatians 'the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ' (Gal. 3:24). The Hebrew writer described it as 'a shadow of the good things to come' (Heb. 10:1)."¹
- C. ***Teaching us, that faithful obedience never opposes or nullifies God's grace.***
 - 1. John Calvin taught we cannot do anything to receive grace.
 - 2. The Bible says otherwise. Over and over - especially in the O.T. - we see that people are gifted, given, blessed by God but in order to receive that gift, they had to act in faithful obedience.
 - 3. This chart by Roy Cogdill still works!



4. Examples can be multiplied
 - a. Exo 9:20-21
 - b. What about Exo 12 and the Passover? If you believed the Lord would pass over you if you painted the blood on your door but did not paint the blood what would have happened to your firstborn?
 - c. If Gideon believes God can defeat Midian, but doesn't go to battle would Israel have been freed from oppression?
5. Calvin errs greatly:
 - a. We are not born depraved and unable to respond to God in righteousness - Ezekiel 18:4; 1 John 3:7
 - b. Faith is not given directly by the supernatural act of God but comes through the Word - Romans 10:17
 - c. Faithful obedience never allows for boasting - Rom 3:27
6. Today some seem to not understand that faith in Scripture is a comprehensive term, encompassing more than just belief—it includes our actions, obedience, and trust in God.
 - a. John 3:36
 - b. Acts 10:34-35
 - c. Romans 1:5; 10:16
 - d. 1 John 2:3

D. Tangent on *pistis* (faith) as allegiance or loyalty.

1. With faith becoming almost meaningless religious jargon, used to mean anything from “faith in faith” to mere mental assent new terminology can be valuable.
2. Terms like “allegiance” and “loyalty” may better convey what faith is about, especially with their inherent tie to kingdoms and a king.
3. This is consistent with usage in the New Testament era:
4. Examples of *pistis* as loyalty, obedience, or allegiance:
 - a. “King Demetrius to the nation of the Jews, greetings. Since you have kept your agreement with us and have continued your friendship with us, and have not sided with our enemies, we have heard of it and rejoiced. Now continue still to maintain trust (*pistis*) toward us, and we will repay you with good for what you do for us. We will grant you many immunities and give you gifts” 1 Maccabees 10:25-28
 - b. “The affection and loyalty (*pistis*) towards me of the people of Galilee were such that, when their cities were taken by storm and their wives and children enslaved, their lamentations over their own calamities were not so deep as their concern for my safety.” Josephus Life of Josephus 16.84

- c. “These few selections demonstrate that *pistis* in the world of Jesus, Paul, and the early church was understood to mean something more than mere intellectual assent or belief in the absence of evidence. One of the primary meanings of *pistis* in the ancient world was the pledge of loyalty expected to rulers and ruling nations. In those contexts, loyalty is expressed in obedience and fidelity.”²
- 5. “To respond to the gospel above all means to publicly acknowledge allegiance to Jesus the universal king.”³
- 6. Does Romans 4 prove otherwise?
 - a. Sadly some brethren seem to think so, claiming Romans 4 is an example of faith as “non-doing trust.”
 - b. The context here matters - some Jews were relying on circumcision as a work that earned salvation.
 - c. Certainly we can’t merit, or earn our way into God’s good graces, but does Romans 4 mean Abraham did nothing but trust, meaning mere mental assent?
 - d. Absolutely not! In Gen 15 Abraham had already obeyed the call of God to leave his homeland (Gen 12:1ff)!
 - e. Note especially verse 12 - “walked in the footsteps of faith.”
 - f. Further, Paul is not contradicting James 2 where the same passage is quoted to show the necessity of obedience!

E. ***Because grace is unconditioned (free) but it is not unconditional.***

- 1. Much error concerning grace can be traced to people thinking a “free gift” must come without placing any expectations on the recipient.
- 2. Yet this is a Western way of thinking about gifts and gift-giving.
- 3. Fundamentally grace (*charis*) means gift (2 Cor 8:1ff). What was gift-giving like in the New Testament world?
 - a. **Gifts are designed to create and nurture relationships.**
 - (1) In the NT world that meant gifts were not given indiscriminately.
 - (2) Who wants a bond with the weak and undeserving?
 - (3) Romans 5:6-8
 - b. **Gifts always carried an expectation of return.**
 - (1) “Gifts, however, did create circular exchange: something was expected to come back to the giver, even if only gratitude or honor. The structure of gift-giving was commonly identified in the popular image of the Three Graces (Charities), who danced in a ring, bound together in gift-and-return.”⁴
 - (2) Seneca writes in *On Benefits* that gift-giving is like a continuous ball game where one person throws a ball to another, expecting it to be thrown back.⁵
 - (3) “If you do good, know to whom you do it, and you will be thanked for your good deeds. Do good to the devout, and you will be repaid— if not by them, certainly by the Most High” (Sirach 12:1-2).
 - (4) This is very much part of Paul’s world. “Grace, for Paul, is not a gift from a disengaged benefactor who would rather be left alone; it is *not a donation ‘with no strings attached’*” (emphasis mine -mdr).⁶
 - (5) We can see this in Scripture:
 - (a) God gives Canaan to Israel - expects them to take land
 - (b) God gives Jericho to Joshua - expects him to destroy the city
 - (c) God gives Naaman healing - expects him to wash

- (d) God gives us forgiveness - expects us to walk in “newness of life (Rom 6:4),” to “do good works” (Eph 2:10).
- 4. “The grace of God is unconditioned (given in absence of merit or worth) but it is not unconditional.”⁷
- 5. That leads to a better definition: **“Grace is God’s undeserved favor that brings us into a relationship with Him, and transforms and energizes us to obedience.”**
- 6. Grace expects transformation - Eph 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-12; Gal 5:6

F. Summary: we are saved by grace

- 1. God is gracious. It is who He is. He wants to save, to bless, to have fellowship with us.
- 2. How can God do that when we are sinners? Grace!
- 3. Ephesians 2:8-10
- 4. *“Why is grace so amazing? Because it redeems us from sin, relieves our fears and reassures us through danger. Without God’s grace there would be no justification, no cross, no redemption, and no reconciliation. Because of His grace the blood was shed, the propitiation was offered and sanctification was made possible. Without God’s grace there is no pardon, no peace and no salvation. Because of God’s grace there is an eternal reward for the righteous.”⁸*
- 5. Titus 3:4-7
- 6. Paul Earnhart loved to say, “God is the hero in this story.”

II. WHY DO PEOPLE SAY WE DON’T PREACH ON GRACE?

A. We aren’t preaching on grace.

- 1. John 12:47

B. We’re teaching (perhaps without meaning to) one-time grace.

C. We aren’t preaching what the denominations say about grace.

- 1. “Of late, some have charged us with not preaching grace because we do not preach a denominational concept of grace.”⁹
- 2. Denominational conceptions of grace include many false doctrines:
- 3. Imputation of Christ’s righteousness
- 4. Irresistible grace
 - a. We have free will - Josh 24:15; John 15:6-7; Luke 6:46; Matt 23:37; Acts 2:40
 - b. The implications of Calvinism’s irresistible grace are incredible:
 - (1) If God’s grace irresistibly saves some why doesn’t God irresistibly save all?
 - (2) Why should we preach or try to reach the lost?
 - (3) How can I know if I’ve been saved?
- 5. Once-saved-always-saved - a clear contradiction of Gal 5:4; Acts 8:22-23; 2 John 9
- 6. Continual cleansing - no passage teaches God automatically forgives any sin.
- 7. Super glue theory of grace
 - a. Some imagine God’s grace will be there at judgment to “fix” any sins and weaknesses they have.
 - b. Sewell Hall notes “If faithful obedient Christians live in constant fear of being lost, they may not be hearing enough preaching on grace. But when people who are knowingly practicing sin still feel good about

themselves, they are probably not hearing enough strong teaching on obedience and godly living.”¹⁰

III. HOW DO WE PREACH AND TEACH THIS EFFECTIVELY?

- A. ***Make sure we're preaching on what grace is, and not just what it isn't.***
- B. ***Emphasize how grace brings relationship, and empowers us to faithfulness.***
 - 1. Titus 2:11-12
 - 2. God is actively helping us:
 - a. Through the Word - 2 Tim 3:16-17
 - b. Through the church - Gal 6:1-12; 1 Cor 5; Rom 15:14
 - c. Angels assist us - Hebrews 1:14
 - d. The Holy Spirit helps us - Romans 8:9, 26; Eph 1:13-14
- C. ***Teach that God is good.***
 - 1. Psalms 34:8; Romans 8:31-39

IV. CONCLUSIONS:

- A. It's been pointed out that many seem to think God is like Santa Claus but God isn't Santa Claus!
 - 1. His grace is *available to all*.
 - 2. We must have a *working faith* to receive His gifts
 - 3. Because His gifts are *designed to create relationship* where we will *faithfully serve and love Him*.
- B. That is what grace means, and that is what every preacher needs to be preaching about God's amazing grace!

Mark Roberts
RobertsMark@sbcglobal.net

- C. Endnotes:
 - 1. Kyle Pope, "Was There Grace in the Old Testament?", via *Faithful Sayings - the Bulletin of the Olsen Park church of Christ*, Vol 23, No 43, Oct 24, 2021, <https://olsenpark.com/Bulletins21/FS23.43.html>
 - 2. Garrett Best, "Faith as Allegiance," Ministry of Study blog, <https://ministryofstudy.wordpress.com/2020/10/10/faith-as-allegiance/>
 - 3. Matthew Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone*, Baker Academic, 2017, pp. 212-213.
 - 4. John M. G. Barclay, *Paul & the Power of Grace*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020, p. 6.
 - 5. Barclay 8.
 - 6. Barclay 73.
 - 7. Barclay 87.
 - 8. Ken Weliever, *Christianity Magazine*, September/October, 1999, Volume 16, Number 9/10.
 - 9. Tom Roberts, "The Restoration of the New Testament Doctrine of Grace," *Guardian of Truth*, June 5, 1986, page 10.
 - 10. Sewell Hall, "Balanced Preaching on Grace and Works," *Christianity Magazine*, Sept-Oct 1996.