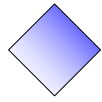


The Voice of Truth



March 16, 2014

"Law of Grace"

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Paul said, "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Grace is usually defined as "unmerited favor." God didn't owe it to us. Out of love he extended grace. The grace of God is truly one of the main topics of the entire Bible. No one could say, "we could have just as easily have been saved without grace." We depend on God to save us. God did this through His grace.

"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, in this present world" (Tit. 2:11-12). The relationship between law and grace is of the major theme of Paul's writings. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). "But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one mans' offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:15-17). We should never be guilty of minimizing the importance of grace in our salvation. Without Gods' grace we could not be saved! His grace we are shown in the greatest gift: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jno. 3:16).

As the song "Amazing Grace" goes; God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). Grace provided for our pardon while we were yet sinners. But our gift of pardon is conditional. How about when God offered Abraham land, but to receive it he was to leave his country. By faith Abra-

ham obeyed. How do we receive God's amazing grace in the forgiveness of our sins? Jesus said that when men hear the gospel of God's grace, they must believe it and be baptized in order to be saved by Gods Grace. (Mk. 16:15-16). Grace throws a rope to man drowning in sin. Man must believe and obey in order to be saved by grace. He does not deserve that grace and can never earn it.

The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, (Jno. 1:17). God supplied mans' greatest need when He sent His Son to die for man. Without this, we would be utterly hopeless. He could provide no means of forgiveness of sins. God's grace is seen in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Grace comes to all.

The grace of God is what we all need, and can only be obtained through Christ, through faith in Him. Paul said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). God's grace made Paul what he was. Grace is God's part in our salvation, Grace is that which God gives, and which man cannot do for himself. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet. 5:10). Faith is man's part in his salvation, and is something man can do for himself, and God does not force upon man. God's grace is from above, and descends from Him.

It is by the death, burial and resurrection that God reached down to man: this is Grace. Grace is shown most clearly by the Son of God. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jno. 15:13). "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor" (Eph. 5:2). We have done nothing to earn this. Salvation is the free gift of God; but it takes two, "Grace and Faith".

God wants all men to hear of His amazing grace. It is

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broad enough to take in everyone, if only men will receive it. *"The Lord is patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet. 3:9). During the time of God's patience, we have the wonderful privilege of telling men about His Grace. We must show people

that they need God, this mercy, gift of love, the conditions for receiving it, the joy of sharing God's grace. For God who is rich in mercy for His great love where with He loved us, even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together in Christ, by Grace we are saved. ♦

"I Samuel 15"

By Jarrod Jacobs

This chapter reveals one of the darkest times in Israel's history. By the end of this chapter, we see Samuel leaving Saul, and looking for a new king in I Samuel 16. Most people will remember that King Saul was commanded to utterly (completely) destroy the Amalekites, but he did not do so (I Sam. 15:3, 8-9, 11). The result was that he lost his kingdom. He went from being a very inspiring person from humble beginnings, to a tragic figure that, put simply, taught us what "not to do" (I Sam. 15:17-19)! Let us study this chapter, and learn some lessons that hopefully will help us in our service to God (Rom. 15:4).

The Lord Is Our Commander.

When Samuel came to Saul, he wanted him to "hearken unto the words of the Lord" (v. 1). It makes no difference what a man, or group of men might tell you to do. What matters is what God has said (Col. 3:17; I Pet. 4:11)! The Lord is in control, and He wanted Saul to utterly destroy these enemies who had been fighting God's people since Exodus 17:8-16. Once Saul knew what God wanted him to do (I Sam. 15:3), it was up to him to obey.

In like manner, the Lord has told us what to do in the New Testament (Heb. 1:2), and it is up to us to obey His word if we wish to go to Heaven (Matt. 7:21-23; Heb. 5:8-9; Rev. 22:14; etc.)! The Lord is over us, and we are to submit to Him (Jas. 4:7).

God's Commands Are Easy To Understand.

When Saul was told to utterly destroy the Amalekites, he began correctly (v. 8), but he did not complete the job. He saved the king, and the best of the animals (v. 8-9). Did he do this because he did not know any better? No, for Saul told Samuel, "I have performed the commandment of the LORD...Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me" (v. 13, 20). Thus, he not only understood what God had said at the beginning (v. 3), but he then spoke as if he had obeyed (he lied)! When his lie was exposed (v. 14), Saul then blamed the people for saving the best of the animals (v. 21). I Samuel 15 is just one example of a per-

son who knew God's will, and knew what was expected, but did not do it! He could have done it, but he decided he didn't want to! He listened to the people rather than God and suffered the consequences (v. 23-30). Yes, God's commands can be understood. Saul could not blame others and be considered guiltless!

The lessons we need to learn include the fact that God does not command us to do something that we cannot do. Two, we can understand God's word (Eph. 3:4, 5:17). Third, God knows whether or not we have obeyed Him (Prov. 15:3; Heb. 4:13)! Seeing that these things are true, the question is we will obey Him or not? Will we be like Saul? What will we do?

Our Sin Hurts Other People, Even Future Generations.

In reading I Samuel 15, we see that no sooner had Saul and the people disobeyed God than the word of the Lord came to Samuel, "saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night" (v. 10-11). When Saul and the people disobeyed, they did not simply hurt themselves, but they grieved Samuel. They also grieved God in this sinful action. Really, this is the way it is with sin; we hurt others as well as ourselves! Sin affects more than just the guilty one. Even in cases where one might claim, "I am not hurting anyone but myself", do we not have family and friends who love us and want the best for us, and grieve because of our bad decisions? Too, consider the lasting effects of sin, and how it can harm generations yet unborn.

In the case of Saul, the consequences of his sin were felt in the immediate, and for years to come. In addition to losing his kingdom, we read in I Chronicles 4:41-43 that in the days of King Hezekiah, the Simeonites killed Amalekites in their nation. Why was this necessary? It is because Saul was disobedient! Saul's incomplete work meant these people had to risk life and limb in later years! Perhaps the most well-known consequence of Saul's disobe-

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dience is recorded in the book of Esther. The enemy who came dangerously close to destroying the Jews was a man named Haman, *"the Agagite, the Jews' enemy"* (**Est. 3:6, 10**)! Now, how could it be that this man could get so close to destroying the Jews? It is because Saul sinned by failing in his duty long ago! Yes, future generations of Jewish people were affected because of the sin of Saul.

It is no different today. When we sin, we not only hurt ourselves, but we hurt others. Sadly, some sins will affect people in generations to come as well! Friends, our selfishness does this damage! When we decide we want to commit a certain sin (**Jas. 1:14-15**), and nothing will stop us, let us remember that we cannot and do not live in a vacuum (**Rom. 14:7**)! In fact, our sin not only affects folks on earth, but God Himself (**Gen. 39:9b; Isa. 59:1-2**)! If you do not believe this, just look to the cross! Have we forgotten the reason Jesus Christ came to this earth (**Lk. 19:10; Rom. 5:8; I Tim. 1:15**)? Yes, our sins hurt others. Often, we hurt others we never intended, nor imagined we would hurt!

When One Does Not Do All God Says, It Is Sin.

There are some who try to justify themselves in their sin by saying, "I am not that bad, I do not kill people or steal things, I think I am O.K." When asked whether or not they have obeyed God, they will say, "I believe in Jesus, and I am a good person. That is enough." Then, when this person is shown the Scriptures concerning salvation (**Mk. 16:16**) and how one sin can keep them from Heaven, and that one sin grieves God, that teacher may be called "legalistic" or a "Bibliolater" (Bible-worshipper).

Is a person "legalistic" to say such things? Let us see what God said about Saul's sin: *"It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments"* (**v. 11**). Wait! Didn't Saul do MOST of what God said? Didn't he get a "vast majority" of God's will accomplished? Why then doesn't God focus on that? The fact is that by not doing all that God had said, God looked upon Saul as being disobedient (**v. 19**)! He is said to have rejected God because he did not do all that was commanded (**v. 23, 26**).

Let us make sure we do not have such a cavalier attitude about sin! It is not enough to do "some" or "most" of what God has said. Saul's error is a very real example and reminder to us (**Rom. 15:4**) that God demands COMPLETE obedience from His people (**Rev. 22:14; Jn. 14:15, 15:14; Heb. 5:9**).

Blaming Others Does Not Excuse Our Sin.

Saul made excuses concerning his sin by saying, *"I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me...But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal"* (**v. 20-21**). Though Saul blamed the people for the disobedience, God knew who was responsible! As a result, God rejected Saul from being the King of Israel. Though what Saul said may have been true, listening to the people instead of God was not a sufficient excuse! He knew what to do and did not do it.

We know that listening to others instead of God has been a problem men have had since the beginning. When God confronted Adam in his sin, He said, *"Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"* (**Gen. 3:17-19**). Adam listened to his wife instead of God and suffered for it (and so have we!) just like Saul listened to the people and suffered for it (and so did future generations).

Friends, to whom are we listening? Let us remember that we are responsible for our own sin. Others will not answer to God for the sin we commit (**II Cor. 5:10; Ezek. 18:20**). Since this is true, why are we listening to others instead of listening to God? Let us learn what **I Samuel 15** teaches, and be *"living sacrifices"*, the kind of people who please God! (**Rom. 12:1-2**) Credit: The Old Paths - 3/20/11 ♦

**When an archer misses the mark, he turns and looks for the fault within himself.
Failure to hit the bull's-eye is never the fault of the target. To improve your aim –
Improve yourself. ♦**

**Either the Bible will keep you from sin . . .
Or sin will keep you from the Bible. ♦**

THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

1. There is an eternal kingdom.

2 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:50; 2 Tim. 4:18; Luke 23:42

2. It will be ushered in at His Coming and Judgment.

2 Tim. 4:1; Matt. 25:31-34

3. There are only two alternatives.

Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 13:23-30

4. The rich will hardly enter it.

Matt. 19:24-26; Mark 10:23-27; Luke 18:24-27

5. The poor, rich in faith, are heirs of it.

James 2:5

6. The wicked shall not inherit it.

1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-6

This includes the wicked in the kingdom.

Matt. 13:31; ex. Matt. 22:11-13; 25:26-30

7. What must we do?

Do the will of the Father - Matt. 7:21-23

Continue in the faith - Acts 14:21-22

Give diligence to add the virtues - 2 Pet. 1:5-11 ♦

THINK ABOUT IT!

When a farmer stops plowing his land, stops planting seed, and stops harvesting his crops, he has stopped doing those things that identify him as being a farmer. When a Christian stops attending worship services regularly, stops studying, stops giving as he has been prospered, and has stopped working for the Lord, he has stopped being a Christian because he has stopped doing those things that identify him as a Christian. *"By their fruits ye shall know them," (Matthew 7:20).* ♦

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com