

WHAT THE GRACE OF GOD DOES FOR US

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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; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee (Titus 2:11-15).

The grace of God is a subject that seems to be constantly misrepresented and abused by well-meaning religious people. A current example emerges from reading an article that expresses concern about the SARS epidemic from a person living in China. The theme of the article raises the question of how the epidemic may or may not affect the general population in China in regard to their interest in the things of God. (Incidentally, the fact that a person chooses to live in distant places does not excuse him or her from correctly handling the word of God. See I Corinthians 4:17). The germane part of the article that serves to illustrate the point of concern reads:

The important thing is for each of us to seek His will and not be swayed by other voices. And even if we do respond to other voices while trying to seek Him, His mercy and grace is still there to cover us.¹

The statement is a clear-cut example of holding a view of the subjects of God's mercy and grace that makes the Bible obsolete, objectionable, and even offensive to those who hold it. Listen to those long enough who take this position and you will hear them reference preaching and teaching that comes straight out of the Bible as legalistic, harsh, and unloving.

What does the grace of God do for us? Let's examine the text presented at the outset to find vital answers.

Grace Brings Salvation to Us

The infallible word of God has said, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." The very first reference to the grace of God in the Bible proves that God's grace includes the concept of God's commands. The Bible says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord . . . thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:8, 22). The contrast is drawn

between the Bible and the “China & SARS” article referenced earlier which said, “And even if we do respond to other voices while trying to seek Him, His mercy and grace is still there to cover us.” “Other voices” do not bring salvation; only the word of God does. Remember how the apostle said, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified”? (Acts 20:32).

Grace Teaches Us

As already shown, the instrument through which God’s grace teaches us is “the word of his grace.” Again, the apostle Paul taught, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us.” Those in error often insist on other means of being influenced by God’s grace such as feeling, intuition, culture/experiences, or traditions from men. Bear in mind that the “grace only” school of thought today is nothing more than the acceptance of the traditional doctrines of John Calvin (1509-1564), French reformer of the Roman Catholic Church, which have been filtered through 500 years of denominational experience and expression. How does the grace of God bring salvation to us? The correct Bible answer is through teaching. The great commission proves that the religion of Jesus Christ is a taught religion. Jesus said, “Go ye therefore, and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit, ASV]: *Teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20a; emphasis gm).

God’s grace teaches there are things we must stop, i.e., “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and things we must start, i.e., “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

Grace Gives Us Hope

“Hope” is the earnest expectation of Christ’s return. Paul wrote, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” The writer of Hebrews likens hope to “the anchor of the soul” which is not cast in this present world but into the world to come (Heb. 6:18-19). God’s grace saves us through the hope of eternal salvation it teaches (Rom. 8:24).

Grace Redeems Us

As he spoke of “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” Paul said that he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.” “Redemption” is “deliverance by payment of a price.”² Paul said here that Jesus Christ “gave himself for us.” Peter wrote further that Christians have been redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Pet.

1:19). Friends, that is why “responding to other voices while trying to seek Him” cannot bring salvation, and the grace of God cannot benefit those who “respond” to voices other than that of Jesus Christ. On this exact point Jesus said, “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:3-5, 27).

Grace Purifies Us

The manner of life of God’s special people perpetually is associated with purity. God’s grace is designed so that he may “purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” “Peculiar” in this passage is from the Greek word *periousios* meaning “being beyond usual; special; one’s own.”³ God is pure (Job 4:17; Psa. 18:26). God’s word is pure (Psa. 12:6, 19:8, 119:140; Prov. 30:5). God’s people, the church, are pure (Matt. 5:8; Phil. 4:8; I Tim. 3:9, 5:22; II Tim. 2:2; Jas. 1:27; I Pet. 1:22; II Pet. 3:1; I John 3:3).

Grace Honors Us

Finally, Paul wrote, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” When a Christian is both teaching and living according to the word of God, he or she is an honorable person. Like Paul, more people should be able to say, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

ENDNOTES

¹Kenneth Thomason, “China & SARS,” *SERVER, A Weekly Publication of the Church of Christ at White Station, Memphis, Tennessee*, 50:23 (June 11, 2003), p. 1.

²*Nelson’s Bible Dictionary*.

³*Strong’s Hebrew/Greek Definitions*.