

Value of Grace

God's grace is *AMAZING GRACE!* Let us tell men what God did for them before we tell men what they need to do. Peter said, **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).** Are you growing in grace? We recently brought a lesson entitled "Growing in Grace." The material in that lesson is foundational for the next several lessons. You can review it on our website. In that lesson we defined God's grace as providing salvation to man that did not deserved being saved. **Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.** Growing in grace is appreciating more and more the salvation that the Lord provided.

Grace Provides Salvation

There are some things we can accept mentally that gives us problems emotionally. One of those things is that sinners are saved by grace! While we read that we are saved by grace, somehow we try to earn/deserve it. From the beginning to the end of salvation, we see God's grace and not man's merit! Human merit is completely ruled out in the victorious Christian life.

- One hears about Christ and what God did at Calvary. This is the Gospel.
- One believes (trusts) what he has heard and puts his dependence upon God.
- One repents because of the goodness of God. **Romans 2:4 ... knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?** It's not the badness of man but the goodness of God (i.e. the grace of God) that causes one to repent
- One confesses his faith. He acknowledged verbally that he believes that Jesus is the resurrected savior. **Romans 10:9-10 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**
- One puts Jesus on in baptism. This physically illustrates complete acceptance of Christ. **For if all are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:26-27).**

The secret of Christianity is not in self-confidence, self-effort, self-determination. The secret in Christianity is looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. **Hebrews 12:1-2 ... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (2) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;....** Jesus paid it all. There is nothing else Jesus can do for the remission of sins. **"For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).** Paul in Ephesians 2:8-10 eliminates human boasting. **Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John. 1:7). The sin problem is solved forever at the cross! This is the grace of God. Yet grace demands obedience. It is a disgrace not to accept grace.

Just as a person can worship in vain they can also receive the grace of God in vain. **2 Corinthians 6:1** *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* One receives grace in vain when they go through the motions of obeying the gospel without being truly converted; or when they are not truly committed, or when they don't count the cost of obedience. Let us understand that once a person obeys the gospel of grace, they belong to Christ and grace demands response; otherwise it is useless – received in vain. Salvation is a gift of God offered when Christ died on the cross. Gifts are neither to be unused or buried. The Grace of God saves sinners. **"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:11).**

Grace Enables Works

Grace not only saves sinners; grace also keeps the saints. Do not miss this point. After baptism Christians are not left alone to flounder. Christianity *begins* in grace, *continues* in grace, and *ends* in grace. Let us be reminded that Christians are not under law but grace. **Romans 6:14** *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Grace in this verse refers to the covenant (system) of grace which is the gospel message of Jesus Christ. We live under the covenant of grace, not the old Law of Moses.

Grace is not only the power to save, it is also the power to enable. Grace enables works. **Ephesians 2:8-10** *For by grace are ye saved through faith (obedience to the gospel-lb); and that not of yourselves: it (the gospel-lb) is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* We are saved by the system of grace and as such we become a workman created unto good works. Not works of merit but works of love. Grace is the underlying foundation of the Christian life. Notice what the Hebrew writer says about this matter. **"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28).** "Let us have grace." What does that mean? It means we bear the fruit of grace. Grace (the gospel system) produces workman unto good works. Grace enables works.

When we understand that there are times when the term "grace of God" refers to the gospel system provided by Jesus Christ when he died on the cross, then passages like Acts 13:43 comes to light. **Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God** (Acts 13:43). Into what are they (and we) to continue? They were to continue in the grace of God, i.e. continue in the teaching of the law of Christ.

The Cornstalk

A workman created in Christ Jesus embraces some characteristics of which some are seen in Ephesians 3:14-21. Christianity is not another self-improvement course! Christianity is based more on intake not output. Now use your imagination. Imagine a cornstalk. Command this cornstalk to make corn! It cannot! A cornstalk cannot make corn! Only god can make corn! He bears corn on a cornstalk. Corn is fruit and not the work. It is intake not output. A cornstalk, of itself, cannot manufacture corn. A cornstalk will produce in direct proportion to what it has brought in. This is the simple law of nature—intake determines output. A cornstalk needs soil, water, sun, minerals and the more the better. You do not blame the cornstalk during a drouth. No farmer is angered with a cornstalk during bad conditions. The cornstalk is at the mercy of intake. Put it in and nature will put it out.

Intake determines output. God provides Christ, "The Gift." He is our life. To the degree we bring in; we will put out. This is nature. When we fail, we usually fail with intake not output. Cornstalks bear corn naturally. You never see a cornstalk sweat, breathe hard, quit in frustration. Cornstalks don't "work on" cobs one day, kernels the next. Fruit comes naturally, in season. Fruit is on its own time schedule. A cornstalk will put out in direct proportion to what it brought in.

Now let's read Ephesians 3:14-21 and notice our intake. ***Ephesians 3:14-21 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.***

Paul says (v16) we must be strengthened by the Spirit in the inward man! Christians are commanded "to be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians. 5:18). This means to be under the influence of the inspired word of God that was delivered by the Spirit.

A temple is defined as a building inhabited by God. Christians are the "*Temples of God.*" ***1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*** This is an amazing thought! Christians are the "Temples of God." Your life displays the existence of God. This also is foundational. Intake determines output. The more you are filled with the Spirit, the more you will display the "fruit of the Spirit."

Paul then says Christians "intake" Christ. ***(17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;*** The more Christ is in me, the stronger I am. ". . . ***Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10).*** Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" 75 times. The Gospel (obedience) puts a person in Christ and then it puts Christ into the person! We can have all of "Christ" that we want! Our intake will determine our output.

Paul then encourages love. Christians are rooted and grounded in love (v17). Love, to Paul, is stability. The more love one has the more obedient one is: ***"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John. 14:15).*** It is God's love for us and what he did for us (i.e. His Grace) that produces our love for God. Intake determines output.

Paul then offers the total resources of God! ***(19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*** Christians may be filled with the fullness of God! Not merely an ounce! Not some! But ***ALL!*** Christians can have all that God has available for intake! Heaven is at their disposal, (vs 20-21) ***"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*** God is able to make us able. Intake determines output. This is the value of grace.

Grace Changes Our Hearts

Christianity is more than an intellectual decision. Grace turns human thinking upside-down. In closing consider with me the "Elder Brother" in the prodigal son story (Luke 15). This elder brother in a lot of ways represents human justice at its best! But with grace, human logic fails! The "Elder Son" was not against being humanitarian . . . he was not against some sort of rehabilitation. He really wasn't against forgiveness. He was against a "party" . . . making the prodigal some kind of a hero! To him having a party for someone that did what the younger brother did was wrong.

But the justice of Jesus is not a distributive justice which gives people what they deserve. The

justice of Jesus is one of grace. Oddly, it is only "good people" that cannot understand such justice. As the little boy said, "It ain't right!" That's what the elder brother was saying. But Jesus said, *"The first is last and the last is first."* This bothers some people.

Jesus' actions outraged even more than His teachings. The Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, ***"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them"*** (Luke 15:2). Jesus "chose" to associate with the wrong folks! This included Gentiles who were not adequately instructed on the law. This included tax-collectors who were renegades, women who did not count, and immoral sinners. Jesus died outside the camp (Hebrews 13:12-14) and Jesus identified Himself, not with the learned Rabbis, but with the oppressed, depressed, and suppressed. He truly was a friend of sinners. The more we understand and appreciate this concept, the more we are "growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord."

The judgment of our Lord is not "right answers to selected questions." The judgment involves benevolence, mercy, and compassion. Grace has value—it changes our entire thinking about God, life, people and the judgment.

Perhaps you are here and have not taken advantage of the grace of God available to you. You can do that today. Invitation