

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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Saved by Grace

Part 2

by Roger Shouse

What does it mean to be saved by grace?

Some would give the impression that salvation by grace simply means you do nothing. God does it all. You just sit back and enjoy the ride. Such is not true. Even in Ephesians, Paul says, “walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (4:1). Later he would say, “walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk” (4:17). He would continue with, “be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness: (4:23-24). Specifically Paul says: put aside falsehood (4:25); do not let the sun go down on your anger (4:26); steal no longer (4:28); let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth (4:29); let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice be put away from you (4:31); be kind, be tender-hearted, be forgiving, just as God in Christ has forgiven you (4:32). Why would a person do these things? Are they trying to be good enough to go to heaven? No. It is not to earn grace, but rather, it is because of grace they do these things. God gives us a second chance. We were caught doing wrong. Why would we turn around and go right back to doing wrong again? Are we not thankful? Are we not grateful? Have we not learned anything? Do you think the man in Matthew 18 who was forgiven an enormous debt would just go back in debt, thinking my master will release me from this again? Paul wrote Titus saying, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12). Grace changes us. Grace teaches us. We are so glad that we don’t get what we deserve. Because God allows us a second chance, we live differently. We live better. We live according to God. Those who continue to live as they please, ridicule God’s marvelous gift. God doesn’t have to save us. It is his choice. It is his right. It is his gift.

On several occasions in the book of Acts, the question is asked, “what must I do to be saved?” The answer never came back, “Nothing. You don’t have to do a thing.” They were never told, “because of grace, God has done it all.”

At Pentecost when the crowd asked Peter, “What shall we do?” Peter said, “repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

Jesus told Saul on the Damascus road, go into the city and it will be told what you “must do.” When he went into the city, he was told to be baptized (Acts 9:6, 18; 22:16).

The Philippian jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" He was told to believe in the Lord Jesus. That very night he was baptized into Christ (Acts 16:30-33).

Baptism is not earning salvation. Paul said we are saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8). Faith is the avenue in which we can receive the grace of God. The Revelation writer tells us that Christ released us from our sins by his blood (Rev. 1:5). The King James Version reads: "washed us from our sins in his own blood." It is in baptism that we contact the blood of Christ. Without the grace of God, baptism would be nothing. Baptism is an act of obedience. Baptism is an act of faith. Hebrews 5:9 says, "Jesus is the author of salvation to all those who obey Him." Salvation by grace does not mean I do nothing. Salvation by grace does not mean God doesn't care what I do. Salvation by grace does not mean I live as I please. The expression "*saved by grace only*" or "*saved by grace alone*" is not found in the Bible.

Three implications about grace

1. ***We complain too much.*** If we truly grasped the concept of our enormous debt that we owe because of our sin and what a wonderful gift forgiveness is, I believe we would be happier saints. Far too many Christians act as if they have been drafted into the army. They are willing to serve their country, but as soon as their "hitch" is over, they want nothing more to do with military life. It is all a matter of duty. We ought to be rejoicing saints. We ought to be thankful Christians. Why do we fuss about "how hard it is to be a Christian?" Why do we complain about "Having to go to church services?" When special opportunities come up, like gospel meetings, why do some sigh? Would they rather God treat us the way he ought to? Grace should make us so appreciative. Because of grace, we ought to race to God's side.

2. ***None of us is going to be perfect.*** If we could do things right, we would not need grace. But we don't. We sin. We don't do things that we should. And the things we should not do, we do. Yet, the grace of God gives us the confidence that we are saved and are heaven bound. Heaven is not based upon perfect attendance for church services; it is based upon faith and love in Christ. That faith and love will compel us to do what we can, but when we have done all, we have not done enough. We are saved by grace through faith. The preacher is not perfect. He is saved by grace. The elder's sin. Do they have to resign? If elders had to be perfect, there would be no elders. They are saved by grace. We should not expect nor demand perfection. We can't live up to that standard. It makes us miserable and ridden with guilt. We do not enjoy the life God has given us when we expect perfection. Just think what grace would do to our marriages. Just think what grace would do to our children. For some reason, those who have been extended grace have a hard time giving grace to others. God gave Jonah a second chance. Yet Jonah could not give Nineveh a second chance. The elder brother could not give grace to his brother. We need more brethren who follow the example of the prodigal's father. We can be so demanding and hard on each other. God does not treat us that way. God gives us a second chance. God restores, elevates, and celebrates with us. Why can't we do the same to each other? Let us offer grace to each other.

3. ***Our thinking isn't always right.*** Most of us understand that we are not perfect in our behavior. We are saved by grace. Yet so often, our behavior is a result of our thinking. If God can save us with our imperfect behavior, can he not also save us in our imperfect thinking? Does this mean it doesn't matter what you believe? No. Just as with our behavior, it matters how we walk; yet we are not perfect. In our thinking, it matters that we know the will of God (Eph. 5:17), yet we are not perfect. Does anyone have perfect knowledge in all things? Does anyone ever get to the point where they no longer have to study? No. Just as our behavior is a "walk," so is our learning, a growing process. What does all this mean? In a congregation, we do not all behave or think "perfectly." Instead of being so quick to divide, destroy, and label, we need to be patient and allow for grace. This does not mean we close our eyes to error. This does not mean we tolerate whatever brethren want. Paul taught otherwise (II Tim. 4:2-4). What it does mean is instead of acting like the elder brother, why don't we act more like the Father. Are there false teachers? Absolutely. The Bible speaks of them. Is everyone who speaks something wrong a false teacher? If so, then we are all false teachers, for no one has perfect knowledge, but God.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound.