

GOD'S GRACE REQUIRES OBEDIENCE

The prevailing notion in the religious world is that God's grace is equivalent to toleration of sin — that under the law of Moses, God condemned and punished sin, but His grace now eliminates all law and He tolerates every sin man wants to commit. Thus, the modern answer to Paul's question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1) is, "Of course! The grace of God saves me regardless of how I live. Grace eliminates obedience." Does it?

To understand Paul's response to the question, we must understand that he uses the terms faith and grace as synonyms for the gospel scheme of redemption. He wrote to the Ephesians that, "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8), yet he said to the Romans that the gospel is God's power to save men (Rom. 1:16-17). The gospel system of justification is one of grace on God's part and faith on man's part. So the gospel — the message of grace and faith — is that which reveals God's grace and produces obedient faith in those who accept it. It was through the free gift of Christ that God's grace was manifested to the world, but it is through the faith of man that His grace is applied to our souls. The plan of salvation is singular, but consists of two parts — God's and man's.

The Grace Of God

So far as God's grace is concerned, He has done everything He's going to do to bring about our salvation. His plan to save the race of man was purposed from eternity, executed in the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of Jesus Christ, and revealed to man by the Holy Spirit through Christ's apostles in the first century. His purpose was carried out, Christ died once for sin (Heb. 9:27), and everything necessary for man to know about God's plan of salvation has already been revealed by the Holy Spirit (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-12). Note the past tense of Titus 2:11 — "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." God has completed His work in saving man, His grace has been revealed and there is nothing more He will do.

As the prime cause of salvation, God willed it according to His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:7-11). As the sacrificial cause of salvation, Christ freely gave Himself for our sins (Rom. 5:6-8). As the procuring cause, His blood purchased us from sin (Acts 20:28; 1 Jn. 2:2; Eph. 1:7). As the revealing cause, the Holy Spirit miraculously guided the apostles into all truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13) and revealed the mystery — or plan — of salvation through them (Eph. 3:3, 5). As the instrumental cause of salvation, the gospel which was revealed

by the Spirit brought life and immortality to light, (2 Tim. 1:10), and is God's power to save. Since God has done all this, that leaves man with the responsibility of availing himself of God's grace and that must be done "by faith."

Man's Faith

It is by faith that man appropriates the grace of God and receives salvation. That was Paul's argument in Galatians 3:6 when he said, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Notice that Paul doesn't say "Abraham believed in God," but that, "Abraham believed God." When Moses disobeyed God's instruction to speak to the rock at Kadesh and struck it twice with his rod, God told him he would not enter Canaan, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel..." (Num. 20:12). Moses believed in God, but he did not believe God. One may profess belief in God, but if one does not obey God, he is an unbeliever and, in this sense, Moses was an unbeliever.

Faith in God is not mere mental assent to His existence, but a willingness to do whatever God says. That is amply illustrated in Hebrews chapter eleven. The faith of those worthies listed there was one which moved them to action. "By faith Abel offered..." (Heb. 11:4). God told Abel what to offer, and Abel did what God told him, for "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Likewise, "By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11:7). By His grace (Gen. 6:8) God instructed Noah to build an ark, and gave him the specifications for it. By faith, Noah obeyed and built the ark according to God's instructions and it was said of him, "Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22). That was acting "by faith." So it was with Abraham's faith. He heard God's voice and acted upon the commands God gave him. Thus, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gal. 3:6) Faith is doing what God says because God says to do it. No other kind of faith is acceptable to God, and no other kind of faith will make one righteous.

In Galatians 3, Paul argues that we have been called to the liberty which is in Christ and no longer serve God as bondslaves, but as sons in the glorious liberty of the gospel by which God forgives, receives, adopts, and blesses those who answer its call. But even in the liberty of the gospel there is danger. Not a danger that arises from the gospel itself, but from the liberty that is ours therein. That danger is the one which we find so rampant in our contemporary world and

which Paul addressed in the Roman epistle — the danger of viewing God's grace under the gospel as a license to sin.

"For if by one man's 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. Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound...that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid, How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. 5:17-6:7).

When a person is baptized into Christ, he is separated from his old life of sin which held him in bondage. He is no longer a servant of sin, but a servant of Christ.

"If we keep in mind what Paul had been saying, we will see that to crucify the old man is the same thing as to die to sin. Of himself, Paul said, 'I have been crucified with Christ' (Gal. 2:20). Paul the sinner died. What was true of him is true of everyone who becomes a Christian. The old man, the body of sin, is the sinner. Every time a person becomes a Christian, a sinner dies. We die as sinners and are raised up as saints. ...We are then no longer the bondservants of sin. When a bondservant, or a slave, dies, he passes from under his master. His master no longer has dominion over him. ...If a slave of sin dies to sin, he is free from service to his master. Sin rules him no more" (R. L. Whiteside, *Commentary On Romans*, p. 133).

Jerry C. Brewer from *GospelPreceptor.com*

BIRTHDAYS

Abby and Erin Stillwell, 07-17; Cindy Nelson, 07-19.

ILL

Sunday: Chris Edwards. **Wednesday:** Chris Edwards
Those battling cancer: Diane Cannon, Ledgia Campbell and Ron Wood. Please remember these in your prayers, as well as: Janice Carter, Allen Scott, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

HOME BOUND

Bob Adams is in Room D-4 of the Johnson County Nursing Center in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Sunday: Jeremy Keifer; Nelson's (AM); Ted and Julia Thrasher. **Wednesday:** George Thomas. The Nelson's planned to be in Newton, KS and Texas this weekend.

BAPTISM

Melanie Tullis was baptized last Sunday, July 9. We appreciate her honesty and courage and pray for her a long and good life of service in Christ.

MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING

Our monthly Men's Business Meeting will be held this Sunday July 16. All men of the congregation are encouraged to attend.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 55; Sunday PM, 47; Wednesday PM, 46.

Family Bible Studies

"King of Kings"

July 24-28, 2006

7:00 PM to 9:00 PM Monday - Friday

Those To Serve

July 16, 2006

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Thrasher

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... Joel Nelson
SONG LEADER..... George Thomas
OPENING PRAYER Jeff Nemecek
PRESIDE..... Trent Thrasher
ASSIST..... David Adams
ASSIST..... John Cody Carter
CLOSING PRAYER..... Charles Tullis

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER John Carter
CLOSING PRAYER..... Gary Cole
LORD'S SUPPER..... Trent Thrasher

WEDNESDAY July 19th

SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
INVITATION Myron Nebergall

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher
Phone: (913) 764-2325
E-mail: olathecoc@sbcglobal.net

CHURCH OF CHRIST

515 WEST PARK

P.O. BOX 482

OLATHE, KANSAS 66051

www.kc-cofc.org/olathe.htm

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