

Salvation By Grace

Introduction. One of the most heartwarming doctrines in the Bible is salvation by God's grace, yet it is grossly misunderstood by a lot of people. All agree that salvation is by God's grace, but disagree on how God saves by grace and the result of that salvation.

Grace is "goodwill, lovingkindness, and favor." It is used of the kindness of a master toward his inferior or servant. Of course, the New Testament writers use "grace" preeminently of the kindness by which God bestows favor to the ill-deserving, grants to sinners the pardon of their sins, and bids them to accept eternal salvation through Christ. Let's note the misconceptions and then examine them to get a clear pictures of God's grace.

I. Two Basic Misconceptions Of Grace

- A. People believe that God's grace eliminates all human activity in salvation.
- B. People believe that God's grace makes apostasy of the one thus saved an impossibility.

II. Does Grace Eliminate All Works?

- A. The Bible teaches that salvation by grace eliminates some kinds of works, but it does not teach that all works are excluded. Three kinds of works are mentioned in the Bible:
 - 1. Works of the Law of Moses.
 - a) Undoubtedly, salvation by grace eliminates the possibility of one being saved by the works of the Law of Moses (Galatians 2:16).
 - b) The Law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). The Law was taken away (Ephesians 2:14-15; cp. Matthew 5:17-20).
 - 2. Works of man.
 - a) Salvation by God's grace eliminates works of man's righteousness, or works of which one can boast (Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:9; Titus 3:5).
 - (1) When the Bible denies that salvation is by human works it denies that salvation is by any scheme of human devising.
 - (2) If man is ever saved it will be by the plan which God devised — man could never devise a system or perfect a plan that would merit a home in heaven (Jeremiah 10:23; cp. Proverbs 16:1; John 3:27).
 - b) Cornelius was a good man full of good works but they could not save him (Acts 10:2; cp. 11:14).

3. Works of God.

- a) The works of God include everything God designs and commands man to do. Certainly no one can possibly be saved without working "the works of God" (Acts 10:35; Romans 10:10; cp. Matthew 7:21).
- b) To affirm that salvation by God's grace excludes all human activity is to affirm that one can be saved without faith since faith is said to be a work (John 6:28-29).
- c) To demonstrate the necessity of human activity in salvation by God's grace, notice the following contrasts:
 - (1) Grace is given of God (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). He saves us by His grace (Acts 14:3; 20:24, 32; Romans 11:5; Hebrews 10:29).
 - (2) Grace is accepted by man (Romans 5:2).
 - (a) By grace God provides the gospel (Acts 20:24) and man must receive the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1).
 - (b) Grace justifies (Romans 3:24) but man must have faith to accept this grace (Romans 10:10).
 - (c) Grace is provided in the death of Christ (Hebrews 2:9) and man must enter His death by baptism (Romans 6:4).
 - (d) Grace brings salvation (Titus 2:11) and man must work it out by obedience (Philippians 2:12).
- B. Today people render slavish obedience to sectarian creeds which contain human doctrines unknown to the Bible.
 1. If they are saved eternally by such systems of human religion they can truly boast of having merited salvation.
 2. And yet, these same people accuse Christians of believing in salvation by human works apart from the grace of God!

III. Does Salvation By Grace Make Apostasy Impossible?

- A. It is often argued that since God saves man by His grace, if man is ever lost it will be due to a fault in God's grace. This error is based on the idea that grace eliminates human responsibility, but this assumption is false.
- B. The New Testament teaches that man is saved by grace, but he can ...
 1. Put it from him (Acts 13:46).
 2. Fail to keep it in memory (1 Corinthians 15:2).
 3. Receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1).
 4. Frustrate the grace of God (Galatians 2:21).
 5. Fall from God's grace (Galatians 5:4).
 6. Do despite to the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29).
 7. Fail of the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15).
 8. Fail to make it sure (2 Peter 1:10).

9. Turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4).

C. Furthermore, man must ...

1. Grow in it (2 Peter 3:18).
2. Continue in it (Acts 13:43).
3. Be strong in it (2 Timothy 2:1).
4. Stand in it (1 Peter 5:12).

Conclusion. I hope the day will come when men will cease to pervert the doctrine of salvation by God's grace. This doctrine includes human activity and human responsibility. Man can never merit the rewards of grace and boast that he has earned an entrance into heaven when he performs the "works of God."

If sin abounds in you, take hold of God's grace (Romans 5:20). We always provide the occasion for people to obey and identify themselves with the people of God. Change your life now and your destiny in eternity by coming forward as we sing.