

Understanding Grace

Introduction. The following comment was written by a Christian and posted online: "Grace is one subject one hears very little about in conservative Churches of Christ except it be prefaced by a stern warning of what grace is not."

Perceptions may or may not reflect reality. Clear and unbiased thinking is needed to sort out the issue of grace. Paul taught in Romans 1-6 both about what grace is and what it is not. Romans 1-3 is why we need grace, Romans 4-5 is about what grace provides for the remedy of sin, and Romans 6 is about what grace is not, which is a license to sin.

In an effort to better understand grace, we will study five passages explaining the realm of preaching grace. This will help us avoid rushing to an extreme of grace.

I. ***Titus 2:11-15***

- A. When preachers are teaching you to deny ungodliness, worldly lusts, and live righteously, they are preaching the true grace of God. Now, like each of the books and letters of the New Testament, we will mention a variety of subjects. We will cover the love of God and the mercy of God, and we will illustrate it like Jesus did with the prodigal son. We will also preach the kingdom and the church, because that is where grace is enjoyed.
- B. When we examine Jesus' teaching, it was not all about God's grace specifically, but it was all part of God's grace generally. Would it be fair to examine Jesus' sermon on the mount and charge that Jesus did not preach enough about God's grace specifically? Examine Peter's sermon on Pentecost. Would it be fair to charge that Peter did not preach enough about God's gracious nature specifically? Yet, the entire sermon, with the opportunity to call on the Lord and be saved, was all generally part of preaching grace.
- C. We should and do preach about what Jesus did for us on the cross, and we should and do preach about the gracious nature of God, but we should recognize that our range of topics should be as broad as the topics found in the New Testament, or against any topic that competes with or challenges the truths of the New Testament (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

II. ***Acts 11:19-24***

- A. What did Barnabas see? He saw how people had repented and had entered Christ, were joyful about their blessings in Christ.
- B. Furthermore, they were continuing in the activity that faith in Jesus demanded. All of this was encapsulated in "the grace of God." They

would "cleave unto the Lord" and show their love to Him by doing His commandments (John 14:15).

III. **Acts 13:42-43**

- A. What would it take to "continue in the grace of God"? It would be "continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).
- B. What the 3,000 brethren were doing by "continuing in the apostle's doctrine" was the very same as "continuing in the grace of God."
- C. When we preach against any and all error, such as wanting to hold on to the Law of Moses (vss. 38-39), we are basically exhorting brethren to "continue in His grace."

IV. **Acts 14:19-22**

- A. "Continuing in the faith" is the same as "continuing in His grace". Teaching brethren to be faithful and true to the "faith once delivered" to the saints (Jude 3-4), is teaching God's grace. Would it be fair to say Jude wasted a letter and did not specifically say enough about God's grace? Did he spend too much time warning about apostasy?
- B. Any time a man preaches the kingdom, the parables of Jesus, or the books of the New Testament, he does not skip over the grace of God (Colossians 1:22-23).

V. **1 Timothy 4:15-16**

- A. Can we read 1-2 Timothy and get the idea that one should only preach about God's gracious nature? Can we save people if we do not defend the truth on all fronts of attack?
- B. Timothy will be preaching the saving truth if he defends true grace against those trying to alter it (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:6-7; 2 Timothy 2:23).
- C. Preaching grace is preaching "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). It is preaching a wide range of topics that help brethren like is found in 1 Corinthians. Could you fairly accuse Paul of not preaching enough about grace to the Corinthians?

Conclusion. I do not believe I have neglected the grace of God. I do not believe that people who make comments like the opening comment have a better grasp or understand God's grace better than I. We all have room to grow in grace and knowledge, but the opening comment is not true of my experience in churches in general or of my preaching specifically.

Comments like the one above are indicative of someone who is simply not satisfied with his own experience and who has surmised that it was the fault of others. At any rate, understand and appreciate the nature of God and His amazing grace, while realizing that there is far more to preaching

the true grace of God than merely dwelling on that specific aspect of it to the exclusion of what grace teaches and demands.

I am deeply indebted to Terry W. Benton for the use of his material.