

DOES GRACE EXCLUDE LAW?

This question has been asked many, many times. I am convinced that many, if not most of the people in the world today have misunderstood the grace of God. Many seem to think that God's grace will cover any and every sin in my life, even if I am unwilling to repent of that particular sin. One of the sad things about this gross misunderstanding is the fact that now some in the church are beginning to misunderstand grace as well. As a matter of fact it is not uncommon to hear members of the church say that it is just recently that our brethren have understood the biblical doctrine of grace.

Let's take a few moments to understand the biblical definition of grace. Grace, like many words, can be used in different ways. The word grace is used to in a way that denotes beauty or gracefulness in James 1:11. Grace is also used in Colossians 4:6 to describe our words. Finally, in Ephesians 2:8 the word grace is used of God's favor He bestows upon His children. In our article we will be talking about the favor that God bestows upon His children.

First, let's mention that there are always two sides in man's salvation. God's side, or grace, is the provisions God made whereby man could be saved. Paul put this way in Titus 2:11, **"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."** Notice how Paul describes God's grace as teaching us to live a certain way. In other words, God's grace provided the plan whereby we could be saved.

We also must mention that there is man's side in salvation. Man's part in God's plan is faith (Hebrews 11:6, **"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"**). Saving faith, as it used in the Bible, is always active and obedient. Consider James 2:20-26:

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Some have wrongfully concluded that there was no grace under the Law of Moses. In fact, some have even argued that grace and law are mutually exclusive. However, the Bible clearly teaches that grace and law have always been compatible. Notice for instance how Noah was saved by grace, yet he had to obey what God said (Genesis 6:8-22). Even under the Law of Moses, God's grace was clearly evident (Jeremiah 31:1,2).

(to be continued next week).

Kerry Clark

DOES GRACE EXCLUDE LAW? (P. 2)

I highly recommend that you read last week's article to refresh your memory. We have noticed that grace and law worked in complete harmony during the time that the Law of Moses was in effect. This is in stark contrast to some today who say that there was no grace during Old Testament times. Under the Patriarchal Law, Noah was saved by grace and obedience (Gen. 6:8,22). Under the Law of Moses, the children of Israel were saved by grace coupled with obedience (Jer. 31:1,2). Paul even mentions that grace abounded under the Law of Moses (Rom. 5:20).

As we proceed, we need to mention that there is no conflict between grace and law today. God's nature does not change (James 1:17). If God saved men by grace coupled with man's obedience then, what would make us think that God is dealing with mankind differently today? The fact is that we are saved by grace united with our obedience (Heb. 5:8,9). God has given us the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). Notice that the text clearly indicates that we are under law today. Some, even some of our brethren, argue that we are not under law today. However, several Scriptures reveal the fallacy of this contention. Consider the Hebrew writer's statement in Hebrews 8:10, **"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."** Notice carefully that God said that He would put His laws into our hearts. Thus the contention that we are not under law today is blatantly false. Consider also Galatians 6:2, **"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."**

There is no doubt that the Bible teaches that we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8). It is also clear that men must be obedient to God's law for His grace to be fruitful (Heb. 5:8,9). Therefore, it should be clear that grace and law are not mutually exclusive!

How then are men saved? There is something that needs to be mentioned about a law system. The only way that a person can be saved under a law system is by perfect adherence (James 2:10). Of course, no one kept the Law of Moses perfectly; aside from Jesus (Heb. 4:15). No one has, or will be able, to keep the New Testament perfectly. Therefore, we are in need of a Savior. We are in need of God's amazing grace. But, God's grace alone will not save (contrary to one of the signs in front of a local church building).

Then the question, must man obey God in order to be saved? The Bible answers with a resounding yes. Consider again Hebrews 5:8,9, **"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."**

Yes, we are saved by grace. And, yes we are saved by obedience. But, that has been the way that God has dealt with man since the beginning of time. That's why Peter said, **"...Save yourselves from this untoward generation"** (Acts 2:40). Do not allow anyone to frighten us or brow beat us with the contention that grace and law are mutually exclusive. They work in beautiful harmony.