

Grace and Work

Introduction:

Without the grace of God we would all be hopelessly separated from Him. When we truly understand what “being separated from God” really means, nothing will be worth the risk of that happening to us. We all need God and, to be with Him, we need His offer of grace (favor).

The problem that exists is that many have misapplied the meaning, purpose, and promise of God’s grace. There are many false approaches to God’s grace. The most popular concept is a wide meaning that extends to everyone without any qualification or effort whatsoever. They believe that God’s grace is like a big umbrella that covers the whole world so that God no longer sees man’s sin. Of course, like any of the noble causes of man’s doctrines, there are exceptions made for the truly sinful, hmmm.

We need to cut through the mess and clarify what God’s grace means to man; and what we are expected to do in the equation of hope. In this lesson we will focus on grace and launch our lesson from the second chapter of Ephesians.

We Are Saved by God’s Grace:

According to Paul’s inspired writings each of us has fallen short of perfection, we have all sinned (Romans 6:23). He also states in Romans 6:23, “*the wages of sin is death*”—*separation from God*.

Yes, sin is a situation of certain peril, from which we cannot free ourselves (Romans 6:16 “*slaves*”). It is as if we are in a prison cell with no door; there is no hope of freeing ourselves—*this is the where we are in sin, and apart from God*.

The word grace means “bestowed favor”. Grace is a benefit bestowed without payment—*this is where we gain the definition of grace as “unmerited or undeserved favor”*. God’s extension of grace is our ability to be forgiven—*it is grace because we are not in a position to pay for it, or deserve it*. Consider again, where we were when God extended the plan of salvation to us. According to Ephesians 2:12-18, we were afar off from God. Ephesians 4:17-19 says we were...walking in futility; in the darkness of our understanding; alienated from God; hard of heart; given over to lewdness; and we were greedy workers of uncleanness. Certainly, by this list, we can see how God is offering something that we do not deserve to receive. Because it was within God’s power to offer us hope. When we could not hope without Him, He provision of hope is by His grace (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8).

We Are Saved By Grace and Not By “Works”

It is scripturally true to say, “*We are not saved by works*”. There is no work that will alone result in our needed justification. Getting to Heaven is not about, “*Look at what I have done*” (Ephesians 2:9). Mankind is not wise enough, mighty enough, or noble enough to triumph over sin (1 Corinthians 1:20-25). No scheme of man; no plan; no work, regardless of its assumed purpose will reconcile man to their Creator. This is the great problem in people adhering themselves to the doctrines of man, and straying from God’s divine direction revealed in His word. If man were able to force, figure, or find his way to Heaven, without God, we could boast of our own achievement—*but our own works will never work* (Ephesians 2:9)

Only God’s plan will get us where we need to be. God has provided the avenue—*Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:6-8; John 14:6). God has provided the opportunity—*this life* (Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 9:27). God has provided the ability—*a livable/doable will* (Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 12:1-2; James 1:17-25).

We Are Saved By Grace “Through Faith”

We absolutely require God's grace but we cannot sit back and pretend that there is nothing for us to do. We must understand that regardless of what God expects us to do in His plan, the offered results of that plan are still grace. It is grace because the results cannot possibly be earned by the required actions.

In God's plan, there is much for us to do (James 1:22-25). We must do the good works of faith; the works of God's design (Ephesians 2:10).

When we study Ephesians chapter 2, we encounter a necessary question. What is the difference between fruitless works condemned in Ephesians 2:9 and the good works commended in Ephesians 2:10? The unprofitable "works" mentioned in Ephesians 2:9 are self-declared works. Things that we decide are good; things that give us something to boast in ourselves over. The "good works" in Ephesians 2:10 are the works of God's choosing; of His design. God's chosen works are humble things, not of our own design, but of God's.

We are simply meeting the requirements of God's grace by accomplishing the things that He has given us to do (Luke 17:6-10). All of the necessary works piled one on the other will never reach to Heaven. It is only with God's grace that the gap is bridged and our way is made available.

Conclusion:

Without God's grace we would all be hopelessly lost in our own sin. We must obey God, to receive His grace (Matthew 7:21). We must continue, to serve God to stay in His grace (Hebrews 10:35-39). We must have His grace, to bridge the gap to our home in heaven (John 14:1-6).

Grace is not a cover-all that masks our souls with Christ. We must strive to find God's grace and keep it (James 1:17-25). We must not abuse God's grace, but much rather we must commit ourselves to God's will and count on His grace; trusting it to be there for our salvation.

We must travel through this life in the hope of God's grace and the doing of His will by taking action in His required works. If you are a Christian, you have been saved by grace through faith. If you are not yet a Christian, the grace of God has allowed Him to patiently wait and has provided you with opportunity to obey, right now. Are you ready? ~tss