

## THE REVELATION OF GRACE

*Scripture Reading: Galatians 1:10-12*

"...Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, WHICH I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD JESUS, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). The apostle Paul consistently reminded his hearers that his preaching was "according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God WHICH WAS COMMITTED TO MY TRUST" (I Timothy 1:11). That his message was one of distinct and exclusive personal revelation from the risen Christ to Paul, is of the utmost significance to the student of Scripture in this present age.

Paul describes the experience thus, "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man [himself, Paul] in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven....He was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Corinthians 12:1, 2, 4). In writing to the Galatians, Paul affirms, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but BY THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST."

The apostle wrote to young Timothy, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL" (II Timothy 2:8). To the Roman church, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL" (Romans 2:16). Paul is the sole revelator.

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## THE MYSTERY OF GRACE

*Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:25-27*

In his signature to the Roman epistle, the Apostle Paul appends a wonderfully complete statement identifying himself as the revelator of a distinctive message, the source of that message, the secretive nature of the truths contained in that message, and the purpose of delivering that message.

The very uniqueness that sets apart the gospel of the grace of God is that it was a secret. Never mentioned in Old Testament prophecy, it was revealed on a personal, one-on-one basis to the apostle ordained to be the channel of pronouncement. The Scriptures contain many mysteries, but Paul makes known THE mystery: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6).

To the Romans the apostle wrote, "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of THE MYSTERY, which was kept SECRET since the world began, BUT NOW IS MADE MANIFEST, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations FOR THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH" (Romans 16:25, 26).

Paul's dedication to his holy calling was all-consuming. "[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is THE CHURCH: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God; even THE MYSTERY."

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**RECONCILIATION BY GRACE***Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5:14-21*

"In this present dispensation Israel's covenant dealings have been set aside. Israel has fallen and has been cast away as enemies of the gospel. Now God is dealing with an alienated world of both Jews and Gentiles who have absolutely no claim upon God. God's extension of salvation to such a world is **COMPLETELY UPON THE BASIS OF PURE GRACE**" (C.F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, page 328).

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself [by Jesus Christ]...We pray you in Christ's stead, **BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.**" We emphasize the plea of the apostle, that his hearers be reconciled to God—lest any be lulled into the delusion of the doctrine of Universal Reconciliation. If everyone without exception were automatically reconciled to God by the sacrificial offering of His Son, then such an appeal to men would be pointless. Christ's work of reconciliation opened the way for each individual to believe and accept.

Israel, of course, lost favor with God—but as a nation only. The individual Jew is in the same position as the individual Gentile. Christ was crucified "that He might reconcile **BOTH [Jew and Gentile] unto God in one Body by the cross**" (Ephesians 2:16). "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For **WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED**" (Romans 10:12, 13).

"Through their [Israel's] fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles....And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Colossians 1:21). Amazing grace!

**REH***Notes:***THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE***Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:20-21*

The grace of God is without limitation. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

Ever before us are the undeniable facts of our total undeservedness and the constant and consistent dispensing of God's abounding grace. God sets forth no conditional terms in order to be recipients. "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" (Titus 2:11, 12). His free grace is offered to all who will believe. And after having so believed, we are provided with godly instruction in proper spiritual conduct, pleasing to Him, which instruction itself is a further operation of His grace.

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you" (II Corinthians 9:8). So writes the apostle in his letter to the Corinthian church, when admonishing and encouraging them to give freely of the substance which God supplies by His grace. The more receptive and responsive we are to the love and care provided by God's grace, the more freely His grace showers upon us. Yieldedness, of course, is the key. The natural, human tendency is to become discouraged and desperate in the face of tribulation. "But God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tested above that ye are able; but will with the testing also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

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**GRACE AND THE BELIEVER***Scripture Reading: Philippians 1:29*

As we consider our position and standing in Christ (as members of the Church which is His Body), we cannot but rejoice and be thankful; but we must not become smug and self-righteous in the knowledge of our eternal security. Along with the free gift of our redemption by His shed blood, for which no price is exacted of us, we have received a holy charge of responsibility: "If [since] ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH**" (Colossians 3:1, 2).

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without [non-believers], redeeming the time. **LET YOUR SPEECH BE ALWAYS WITH GRACE**" (Colossians 4:5, 6).

Not all will be sugar and spice! "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also **TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE.**" "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus **SHALL SUFFER PERSECUTION**" (Philippians 1:29, II Timothy 3:12).

Thus the apostle's admonition of total commitment: "**WHATSOEVER YE DO** in word or deed, **DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS**, giving thanks..." (Colossians 3:17).

*REH**Notes:***GRACE AND GOOD WORKS***Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:23-25*

Lest we mistakenly relegate the position of good works only to dispensations other than the dispensation of the grace of God, it will behoove us to take note of some of the apostle's admonitions, as well as his personal example. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore **WE LABOR**, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. **FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:8-10).

Note the terms, so clearly set forth. "If any man's work abide which he hath built [upon the foundation of Jesus Christ], he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned [having been tried by fire], he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Corinthians 3:14, 15). These words clearly delineate between loss of reward for lack of good works and loss of salvation, which is a free gift apart from good works.

Again offering his own personal example for our edification, the apostle looks back over his career of service for Christ as he approaches the end of his mortal years. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

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**OUR ASSURANCES UNDER GRACE**

*Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:19*

From infancy, the mortal soul cries out for assurance. The yearning is often satisfied by parent, pastor, patron or peer; but these are frequently misguided and temporary consolations. Any assurance received from God, however, may be relied upon without reservation. Knowing that we are powerless to generate our own motivations, we find confidence in the assurance that "The love of Christ constraineth us" (II Corinthians 5:14).

To the faithful, there is no restriction of encouragement and fortification from on high. The apostle attests that to those saints, who prayerfully submit themselves to His watch-care and preservation, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you" (II Corinthians 9:8).

But the most stimulating of all assurances is the affirmation of our condition as members of the Body of Christ. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. **AND YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM**, which is the Head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9-10). In the light of our heavenly position, the apostle exclaims, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) Close fellowship with God is the secret to our enjoyment of maximum assurance. How true the words of the prophet, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory."

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