

BIBLICAL GRACE

How Can We Define It?

BY GRACE WE ARE SAVED!

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

—Ephes. 2:8

Throughout the Scriptures there is one fact that can easily be recognized: *man cannot save himself!* We see that the human race willfully chooses to continue in sin and rebellion (Rom 3:10), and every person has sinned grievously against God (Rom 3:23). Moreover, every sinner is destined to spend eternity under the just punishment of a holy God, burning in an eternal abyss where mercy and forgiveness will never again be available (Rev 20:15). Therefore, man's only hope is the atonement of Jesus Christ which was secured on the cross of Calvary. In God's great love and mercy He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer for the sins of the unjust (1 Pet 3:18). In the redemptive sacrifice of His Son, God's grace was clearly manifested to all (1 John 4:9). Oh, worthy is the Lamb of God who was slain for the sins of the world. We are saved by grace and grace alone. But what does this mean for the man who receives the grace of God by faith? What will the grace of God produce in a man's life? How do we know whether or not we've received the grace of God?

LAW AND GRACE

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. —John 1:17

Many people are confused concerning the subjects of law and grace. Some churchgoers label any doctrine that requires morality a "gospel of law." We must understand what the Bible says about the differences between law and grace. Some would have us believe that the law of God is completely irrelevant in this age. Is the law of God without value in this dispensation of grace? How does grace transcend the law of God?

The law was given by God in addition to the promises "because of transgressions" (Gal 3:19). It was designed to regulate conduct, to define sin (Rom 3:20), to show Israel their inherent tendency to violate God's will and to do evil (Rom 5:20), and

to awaken their sense of need for God's mercy and redemption (Rom 7). The Son of God came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). In fact, Jesus said that not one letter of the law would pass away until all things are fulfilled! Why is this so? What and who is the law for today? The answer to these questions is simple; the law is unchanging and its function is the same today as it has always been: to lead sinful mankind to the blood stained cross of Jesus Christ!

*Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine... – **Tim. 1:9-10***

*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator....Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. – **Galatians 3:19, 24***

The purpose of the law is to show men and women their need for the grace that God offers through Jesus Christ. The law can save no one (Rom 3:20). Neither can the law make anyone holy (Gal 2:21). The law is a spiritual mirror whereby the sinner sees his gross need for God's mercy.

Next, look at what the Bible says about the grace of God and its purpose. Remember that the root problem with mankind is SIN. Sinners are estranged from their Creator because He is holy and they are unholy (Isa 59:2). The mission of Jesus Christ was to eradicate sin. He was manifest to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8), save His people from their sins (Matt 1:21), and make man free from the bondage of sin (Luke 4:18; John 8:32, 36). Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a Roman cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven to restore our fellowship with God. His death on the cross destroyed the breach between God and man for those who obey the gospel.

*And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross... – **Col. 2:13-14***

The law plays an important role in bringing people to the place of true, godly repentance (Ps 19:7). When someone repents of their sins (turns away from all that the Bible calls evil), believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and trusts Him for

salvation, then God extends His full grace to that person. It is that manifold grace which touches the sinners heart, brings about the new birth (John 3:3), forgives him of his sins past (Rom 3:25), and delivers him from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4)! The true grace of God radically transforms the hearts of men; there is no doubt when someone has been a partaker of His grace!

WHAT IS BIBLICAL GRACE?

*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;** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ... – **Titus 2:11-13***

Here in this New Testament passage, the attributes of grace are clearly defined. This definition contradicts what modern teachers proclaim. The Bible declares that a true believer is being constantly taught to deny *ungodliness* (wickedness) and *worldly lusts* (the fashionable trends of this present evil age) and to live *soberly* (moderately), *righteously* (just), and *godly* (holy), in this *present world* (now, today, before heaven). Why is it that so many church-goers profess to be partakers of God's grace, yet their lives are unchanged? Many are brazen in defense of their worldly, shameful, and sinful testimonies! Dear friend, don't be deceived. **GRACE TEACHES MEN TO SAY NO TO SIN AND YES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS...** thus saith the Word! How wonderful is the true grace of God!

GRACE TRANSCENDS THE LAW

*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the **righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,** who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. – **Romans 8:3-4***

How does the grace of Jesus Christ transcend the law? The grace of Jesus Christ frees the believer **from sin!** Jesus Christ makes His people free from sin (Matt 1:21)! Under the law, the sinner sees his sin, and struggles against it, but he has no power to overcome; he sinks deeper and deeper into despair. In his desperation he cries out to God in repentance, humbly surrendering to His will. Then, he is united with Jesus Christ and receives the grace of God. He still recognizes what sin is, but now he has power to overcome (Rom 6:14), and the devil is put to flight (James 4:7). Oh, what a marvelous difference it is!

"What the law tried to do by a restraining power from without, the Gospel does by an inspiring power from within!" –Catherine Booth¹

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: *whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. – 1 John 3:6-7*

What a great and marvelous salvation! May we never take for granted the grace of God which is offered through the blood of Christ!

BEWARE OF FALSE GRACE!

*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, **turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness**, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. – Jude 1:4*

The Bible warns that there are false teachers who turn the grace of God into *lasciviousness* (fleshly indulgence). They convince multitudes that the grace of God allows mankind to live in rebellion to God's commandments. They define grace as "unmerited favor;" therefore, there is no need to be concerned with lifestyles..."after all, we're just forgiven sinners!" Oh, what lies are being preached today! It is indeed possible that a Christian may sin (1 John 2:1), but repentance will soon follow and he will continue in his life of holiness! The normal Christian life is free from sin and rebellion. Dear friend, don't let the empty words of false teachers deceive you. Search the Scriptures and open your heart to the Holy Ghost! Humbly bow before the cross of Christ and cry out for the true grace of God which will save you from your sins!

–B.W.

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¹ Catherine Booth, *The Writings Of Catherine Booth*.

