

# The Grace of God

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Webster defines grace as, "unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification." It is not often that secular works describe or define theological concepts correctly, but in this case they have. Except insofar as God does not "*assist*" us with either our salvation or His providence, but He provides everything freely and with no help from any man.

Grace is receiving from God something that we do not deserve. It is unmerited favor. It is free, or it is not grace. By grace we receive from God the eternal life that we do not deserve. By grace we receive justification though we remain sinners. Not by any good works that we have done, but by God's grace, we have been set apart from the world by God to Himself. Where we deserved condemnation, we received salvation. Where we have earned death, we have received life. Where we deserved conviction, we received justification. This, by God's grace. Grace is undeserved favor, in which God abounds.

It is often taught, and almost universally assumed, that one goes to heaven through keeping the Ten Commandments. Heaven is achieved by earning it, or so we are taught in many churches and by the secular media. In every religion except true Christianity, a man's final estate is earned by his works. In apostate Christendom, the method of earning one's salvation is ever and always through the keeping of the Law of Moses. However, while the Bible does indeed *contain* the Law of Moses, nowhere does it say or even imply that one *gets to heaven* by keeping that Law. Rather, it states the exact opposite very plainly. Consider what Paul wrote to the church at Rome concerning the Law:

***Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Rom 3:19)***

Here Paul says that the very purpose of the Law was not to save, but to condemn. It was given so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may become guilty. The Law was not given as a means of getting to heaven, but as a means of *revealing the sin* that is in every man, leaving him dependent upon the grace of God for his salvation. He had earlier said:

***As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. (Rom 3:10-12)***

In the Scriptures, law is everywhere contrasted with grace. It is declared openly and repeatedly that no flesh shall be justified by the works of the Law (Rom 3:20, 28; 4:4-5; Gal 2:16 and many others). To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote,

***For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Eph 2:8-9)***

For grace to be grace, it must be free. If one must do something to earn it, then it is not grace, but works. If someone gives you the title and keys to his car and turns around and walks away and you never see him again, then you have received a free gift. But if that person says to you, "You must wash and wax this car if you want me to give it to you," then it was not free, but you had to earn it. Grace is free, and salvation is by grace, through faith. Paul states this principle more clearly when he says,

***And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. (Rom 11:6)***

If one must do anything at all in order to make his salvation effective, then he is saved by his works and not by God's grace. There is no baptism, no speaking in tongues, no public profession of faith, no coming forward, no joining any church, or any other work that is necessary for salvation. If there were, then Jesus would have lied when He declared from the cross, "It is finished!" If a man had to *do* anything to be saved, salvation would not be free; it would be earned. Man would then be glorified instead of God. And that is the nut of the issue. Man has nothing in which to glory, for all alike are found to be sinners. All glory is of God and belongs to the Father of glory.

Beyond the salvation of sinners, however, there is another aspect of grace, which must be considered.

***Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:16)***

Once a person is saved, he does not cease sinning. Paul writes to the churches of Galatia,

***For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Gal 5:17)***

He also wrote to the church at Rome,

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. (Rom 7:15-25)

Sinners are saved by grace, and sinning believers remain as undeserving of any help or providence from God as they were before they were saved. Therefore, by God's grace, and by His grace alone, Christians receive help from God in their sanctification, in their ministries, in their personal walk, and in their growth. God alone may be glorified in any aspect of the sinner's salvation or work. There is no merit on the part of any believer or unbeliever whereby he may demand anything from God, neither salvation nor providence. But God's grace is sufficient for any man, whereby he may both be saved and receive help from God to endure any trial and withstand any temptation. The Law does nothing but condemn while grace saves and blesses.

Perhaps it would be wise here to quote Cyrus Scofield, as he wrote in his excellent little book, "*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*:"

It is, however, of the most vital moment to observe that Scripture never, in any dispensation, mingles these two principles (Law and Grace). Law always has a place and work distinct and wholly diverse from that of grace. Law is God prohibiting and requiring; grace is God beseeching and bestowing. Law is a

ministry of condemnation; grace, of forgiveness. Law curses; grace redeems from that curse. Law kills; grace makes alive. Law shuts every mouth before God; grace opens every mouth to praise Him. Law puts a great and guilty distance between man and God; grace makes guilty man nigh to God. Law says, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth;" grace says, "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Law says, "Hate thine enemy;" grace says, "Love your enemies; bless them that despitefully use you." Law says, "Do and live;" grace says, "Believe and live." Law never had a missionary; grace is to be preached to every creature. Law utterly condemns the best man; grace freely justifies the worst. Law is a system of probation; grace, of favor. Law stones an adulteress; grace says, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." Under the Law, the sheep dies for the shepherd; under grace, the Shepherd dies for the sheep.

Everywhere the Scriptures present law and grace in sharply contrasted spheres. The mingling of them in much of the current teaching of the day spoils both, for law is robbed of its terror, and grace of its freeness.

Grace is the undeserved goodness of God toward sinners, whereby He saves the lost and helps the saved. Grace is the love of God expressed toward those who by nature rebel against Him. Grace is that which cannot be earned, but is freely bestowed. Grace is wholly separate from works, and cannot be mingled with anything done by man. To paraphrase Samuel Clemens, grace is grace and works are works and never the twain shall meet. He who looks to the grace of God for justification is utterly saved; he who looks to his works to save him is utterly lost. The former is alive and the latter dead. The former has a mansion in heaven while the latter has, well, let us say that he will have hot feet.