

Thoughts on God's Grace

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Grace may be the most beautiful and significant word in the Bible, for none will be saved except by the grace of God (Eph. 2:8). This word refers to God's bestowal of undeserved favor upon men. While the concept of God's grace is so very important, it is also one of the most misunderstood and perverted Bible doctrines. Yet, if one would be saved from the guilt and consequence of sin, he must understand and respond to it as the Bible directs.

Consider the following Scriptural facts concerning God's grace:

- **Grace is conditional.** God chose to bestow it; it is free in the sense that we could never earn it (Rom. 5:18). However, *free* does **not** mean *unconditional*. Were this so, none would be lost, for God "would have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:6). That God's grace will save some and not others (Mat. 7:13–14), implies that God's grace is conditional (John 3:16). These conditions involve our obedience to God (Mat. 7:21–23; Heb. 5:9).
- **Grace does not eliminate law.** If grace excludes law, it thereby eliminates sin, for sin does not exist in the absence of God's law (Rom. 4:15). Apart from sin, there is no need for grace. Grace therefore implies, rather than excludes, law.
- **Grace does not exclude any or all works to be done by the sinner.** We never can so live or work that God would be **obligated** to save us, therefore we cannot earn salvation (Eph. 2:8–9; Tit. 3:5). These passages clearly identify the works that **do not** save—works of "our own righteousness" in which we could "glory" or "boast." Works of another class, however, are **necessary** for salvation—works that involve our obedience to Divine commands. Faith, repentance, and baptism are such "works" (John 6:28–29; Acts 2:38), which save (Gal. 5:6; Jam. 2:20–26). The granting of God's grace includes/demands such works.
- **Grace does not coerce.** Calvinism insists that sinners whom God has predestined for salvation cannot resist His grace. Contrariwise, the Bible declares that all men can choose to accept or resist His grace (Mat. 11:28; Mark 16:15–16; Rev. 22:17; et al.). While God's grace does not force us, it does instruct us to deny ungodliness and to live righteously (Tit. 3:11–12).
- **Grace does not give license to sin.** Some use God's grace as an excuse to sin (Jude 4)—implied by the idea that grace excludes law and obedience. While grace frees us from the guilt and consequence of sin, we dare not use it as "an occasion of the flesh" (Gal. 5:13, 19–21).

The ultimate expression of God's grace is Jesus Christ, to Whom we must respond in faith and obedience in order to be saved by His grace.

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