

## THE GRACE OF GOD

*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 it.

Consider the following facts:

- **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: 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 apart from 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 all works by the sinner.** We never can live so that God would be obligated to save us; we cannot earn salvation (Eph. 2:8–9; Tit. 3:5a). These passages clearly identify the works that **do not** save—works of "our own righteousness" in which we could "glory." Works of another class are necessary for salvation, however—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; Tit. 3:5b; Jam. 2:20–26). Grace includes/demands such works.

- **Grace does not coerce.** Calvinism insists that sinners whom God has elected for salvation cannot resist His grace. Contrariwise, the Bible teaches that all men can choose to accept or resist His grace (Mat. 11:28; Mark 16:15–16; Rev. 22:17). 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 to be saved (John 8:24; Heb. 5:9).

—Dub McClish