

Spending the Grace of God

by Hendrik Joubert

A friend once jokingly remarked how easy it was for me to make the decisions when we were using his money to pay for whatever we were buying at the time. As we grew up my parents often reminded us that *money does not grow on their backs* when we *needed* things. It is interesting to see how the mindset of most changes when we start earning and spending our own money.

That the grace of God is freely available to all who desire to make use of it is clearly taught in the Scriptures: ***For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,... Titus 2:11.*** When we spend the grace of God, paid for by the blood of His Son, many attempt to do so without the *fiscal control* and responsibility demanded by the Scriptures. By reading Paul's full statement to Titus, notice the objective way in which ***the grace of God*** is used; it saves by ***instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,... Titus 2:12.***

More than one passage of Scripture should cause alarm bells to ring for those who consider themselves simply Christians – I am talking about us. In spite of the fact that salvation is by the grace of the loving God, Jesus warns us that ***the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:13-14.*** A distinct responsibility on the part of man is clearly expressed through the phrase ***there are few who find it.*** Directions are found in the revealed *grace of God*, penitent believers should follow it.

When discussing the narrow way vs. the broad way, Jesus is not talking about a separation between the *Christian* religions and the rest. It is not the atheist, Hindu, Muslim or others who address Him as Lord. ***Matthew 7:21-23.*** The Lord declares that the separation takes place among those who consider themselves *true* followers – some will have such confidence as to reason with Him *face-to-face*, (beyond the deathbed) only to learn that they never had a relationship with Him.

In ***Hebrews 2:1-4*** we find another warning which demands that we spend the grace of God carefully, only as He directs. We are told ***to pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we will not drift away from it*** through neglect. Through the writer God explains the meticulous care He took to reveal His grace, and warns that we may *gradually move away from it* (without notice) unless we take care – ***pay much closer attention.*** Again, this warning is issued in spite of the fact that salvation is by grace.

The warning to the elders at Ephesus given through the apostle Paul seems less subtle: ***"savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Acts 20:29-30.*** Perverse things sound so radical, and not like a *drifting*. *Satan worshippers!* Notice the doctrines of demons mentioned in ***1 Timothy 4:1-4.*** The two doctrines mentioned do not constitute an exhaustive list, but serves to show that anything not found in ***the teaching of Christ (2 John 9; Matthew 15:9)*** is to be considered doctrines of demons, however subtle they seem.

We use, or is it abuse, the letters to the ***Corinthians*** and ***Romans 14*** to justify what amounts to a willful refusal to submit to the simple will of God by those who consider themselves mature teachers of God's word. We argue that if Paul could call the Corinthians his brethren with what they did, we should be much more tolerant of our *erring brethren* – seemingly

forgetting the repentance demanded and the results accomplished. Are we too generous in applying the grace of God to ourselves and some others?

Then consider the letter addressed to the church of Ephesus found in **Revelation 2:1-7**. They are praised for being doctrinally sound, but they lost their first love. Worshiping God properly merely to brag about being scripturally correct, and lashing out at those who fail to do so, does not seem to be all that there is to pleasing God either. In **Psalm 50** God declares that it is not for a lack of sacrifices He reproved Israel: ***"I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, And your burnt offerings are continually before Me."*** **Psalm 50:8**. The problem was that their heart was not in it, so as to demonstrate an awareness of why the sacrifices were necessary but also demonstrating a love and appreciation for God, who would act gracious towards them for submitting to Him.

Follow the progressive description of the character God desires as Jesus described in the sermon on the mount. **Matthew 5:1-12**. Take note of the raw emotion and respectful reaction of a penitent sinner who realizes the gracious pardon made available by a loving and caring God. Then look at the reason why they should let the grace of God instruct them to become such. **Matthew 5:13-16**.

Through Peter God supplies us with what should be another sobering warning, demonstrating that salvation is by grace: ***For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*** ¹⁸ ***AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?*** **1 Peter 4:17-18**. Jude wants to talk about the love of God and the wonderful provision made for His children, but realized the necessity (inspired) to warn them about some who have ***crept in unnoticed***. **Jude 3-4**.

Salvation is never deserved through meritorious acts of obedience. These acts demonstrate that our faith is in God and in what He says. It demonstrates absolute trust in Him and what He says. It should demonstrate a full realization of what it took to pay for our sins. We should obey from the heart that form of teaching to which you were committed. **Romans 6:17**.