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## "BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED."

"For the grace of God that bringeth [leads to] salvation hath been manifested for all men – teaching us that renouncing ungodly desires we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, waiting for the blessed hope, even the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, devoted to good works." – Titus 2:11-14. –

GRACE, 'tis a charming sound," sang the poet, nor did he exaggerate; for to all who have learned the true meaning of divine grace, that word, like the word "gospel," is a synonym for all the divine mercies which God's people may now or ever enjoy. But this word grace is little used to-day in common conversation on the every day affairs of life, and consequently remarkably few appreciate its richness, its wealth of significance, and consequently many of the statements of Scripture in which this word occurs are, to the majority of readers, deprived of their real beauty and force.

The word grace signifies *favor* – particularly unmerited favor. Acts of grace are thus to be clearly distinguished from acts of justice and from obligations. If this proper signification were in the minds of people when reading the Scriptures where the word grace so [R2284 : page 102] frequently occurs, it would be to all true believers a great protection against numerous of Satan's wiles and false doctrines – the general aim of which is to misrepresent the divine dealings and to pervert and subvert the divine testimonies. Every testimony to the effect that God is extending his "grace" to humanity or to the Church is a testimony to *their unworthiness to justly demand* those favors or blessings.

The spirit of the world in general is that of self-sufficiency and independence; following their own wisdom and lacking the instruction and wisdom from above, the worldly-wise regard themselves with

complacency; they believe themselves to be quite sufficiently righteous to merit a good deal of divine blessing and reward: true, they admit also that they have imperfections, but these they expect to pay for to the full according to some law of divine retribution. Hence they are undisposed to look for or to accept pardon, forgiveness, justification through the great sacrifice for sins which God has provided. They see a law in nature according to which fire burns him who believes that it will burn and burns equally him who believes not that it will burn. And so they regard all of the laws governing [R2284 : page 103] humanity as merciless, graceless – strictly just.

The Scripture presentation of the matter does not overlook the law of retribution – that sin of any kind, the transgression of any law, will surely bring its penalty, whoever may be the sinner and whatever may be the conditions. And the propositions respecting divine *grace*, rightly understood, are not in conflict with this universal law of retribution: the proposition of *grace* is not to prevent fire from burning, but to provide a healing balm; not to prevent the wages of sin from following transgression, but to succor the repentant who desire to reform, and to help him back to divine favor and full recovery, along the lines of strictest justice; – by a willing ransom-price. And since this succor is wholly unmerited on man's part and without just obligation on God's part, it is purely of divine favor – "grace." Indeed, if it were not for sin and its retributive punishments, there would be no room for grace: it is man's necessity for grace that constitutes the divine opportunity for its exercise. Grace, however, operates in harmony with the divine laws, and not in violation of them.

Remembering that *divine grace* signifies God's unmerited mercy and favor, let us examine its operation in the light of Scripture: –

(1) The first movement of divine grace toward mankind was the exercise of benevolence, love and compassion toward mankind in his fallen and sinful condition. There was nothing in man to merit this compassion and sympathy; quite to the contrary: we were aliens from

God and enemies of his righteous rule through wicked works, – the depravity wrought in us through sin voluntarily committed by father Adam.

(2) It was in harmony with this thought of grace on God's part, or, as we might term it, God's gracious plan, that he revealed something respecting his purpose of ransom and restitution to father Abraham; – thus preaching first, beforehand, to him the good tidings of a coming blessing or grace, saying, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blest." Abraham, and others who believed God, rejoiced in mind under the influence of this gracious promise – altho even the beginning of its fulfilment was still nearly two thousand years off.

(3) The third step of grace was in the great gift of divine love, our Lord Jesus Christ. It included the gracious arrangement made with the only begotten Son of God, on account of which he joyfully laid aside his heavenly glories and conditions and humbled himself in death as the ransom or substitute for the first Adam and thus incidentally a "ransom for all" the race of Adam.

(4) It was a fourth step of grace when God, having determined to select a Church, a "little flock," to be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ their Lord, in the dispensing of the divine favors or *grace*, promised through Abraham, began the work of selecting this Church – receiving at Pentecost the first installment, from the house of servants into the house of sons and joint-heirs. (John 1:12,13.) Altho tests were applied to those received into the family of sons, and altho character qualifications were imposed upon them and will be imposed upon all who will be called and accepted to this high calling, nevertheless this also was a step of grace, because there were no obligations resting upon God to confer upon us such a "high calling," such "riches of his grace in Jesus Christ our Lord."

(5) Throughout this Gospel age the same grace has been in operation doing a twofold work; (*a*) justifying repentant believers from the guilt of their moral obliquity, and giving them thus a standing

before God in Christ's imputed righteousness; – thus making them *eligible* to the "high calling to divine sonship and to joint-heirship in God's Kingdom to come, and (*b*) then extending to them that "high calling," inviting them through the divine Word to become the "very elect." True, there are conditions imposed, and not all the many "called" will be among the few "chosen;" but nevertheless it is an inestimable privilege to be "called" and to have put within our grasp the opportunity and all the needful helps, whereby we may make our calling and election sure.

(6) The grace of God will still further be manifested when the "elect" Church shall all have been sought, found, tried, disciplined, and "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;" for the blessings which will be conferred upon this glorified Church will not only be such as were not merited, such therefore as were not of obligation upon God's part, but according to the divine testimony they will be additionally great, super-abounding in grace, "exceedingly abundantly more than we know how to ask or expect;" for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath in reservation for those that love him." – 1 Cor. 2:9.

(7) Even then, God's grace will not have exhausted itself; – even after having thus honored and blessed and exalted the Church, the body of Christ, whose only merit consisted first in an honest confession of sin and an acceptance of the divine favor, and second, in their "reasonable service" in rendering their lives in obedience to him who bought them and in and through whom the divine graces were extended.

Then divine grace will begin to be *fully manifested* – then *all* shall see it, *all* shall know it, and *all who will* may share it; for then will begin the glorious [R2284 : page 104] "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" – the Millennial age of a thousand years; the

time when the knowledge of the Lord shall graciously be caused to fill the whole earth; the time when all the sin-blinded eyes shall be opened; the time when all the prisoners of the pit (death) shall come forth, that they may be instructed in righteousness. Then, according to the grace of the divine promise, he who redeemed the world shall judge the world in righteousness, a trial, an opportunity, that whosoever will, with a knowledge of sin and its penalty, and with a knowledge of righteousness and its rewards, with a knowledge of the goodness and grace of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, may then stand trial and be judged as to whether they will *receive* God's grace and its provisions of eternal life, or whether they will *reject* these and die the second death.

Here we behold the wonderful steps of grace. No one can intelligently believe in divine grace who holds the theory of evolution or any other theory of salvation than the Scriptural one, which recognizes man's original creation in the divine likeness, his fall into sin and death, his redemption therefrom by the death of our Redeemer, and his hope for recovery through divine grace extended now to the Church and to be extended by and by through the Church (under Christ its Head) to all the families of the earth.

Coming now to consider present manifestations of divine grace toward the Church, we note that many professed followers of the Lord fail in a very large degree to appreciate this grace which it is their privilege to enjoy. This is attributable largely to false teaching and preaching. In very much that is preached in the name of the gospel of the grace of God, the element of grace is entirely omitted, and such preaching is proportionately vain – sometimes worse than vain – in that it is delusive and subversive. For instance, how common it is for people to hear and to believe that if they "*do right*" they will have divine rewards at the end of life's race; but if they "*do wrong*" they shall have divine punishment at the end of the race. Such views ignore grace entirely, for if we are to be punished in proportion to our shortcomings and rewarded for our obedient deeds, where would be

the "*grace?*" where would be the mercy? where would be the necessity of a Savior, a sin-offering, an atonement and a reconciliation with God? and where would be the peace *through* our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? None of these mercies and blessings can be rightly recognized except as the grace of God (his unmerited favor) is seen in them.

The fact is that the divine standard of righteousness is much higher than men generally understand: with God righteousness is synonymous with perfection; and hence "all unrighteousness [all imperfection, however or whenever or wherever] – is [a proof of] sin." Thus all men are proved to be sinners, – because all are imperfect, *un*-right. And the divine law is that the sinner, the wrongdoer, the *un*-right, the imperfect, *shall not live*. "The wages of sin is death." Whoever [R2285 : page 104] understands this can see at once that man's only hope of eternal life lies not *in his own perfection*, but in *divine mercy, grace*. To plead that we are not wholly bad, corrupt, or even that we are not so bad as some others, is to admit our imperfection, and hence to prove the hopelessness of our case except as divine *grace* intervenes to help us.

But, says some one, That is not a fair statement of the case. God made me as I am, imperfect; and justice requires that he shall not demand of me an impossible perfection, nor punish me for weaknesses and imperfections beyond my control.

Such reasoning implies a misunderstanding of the case. It is a mistake to assume that God made us imperfect. All "his work is perfect." (Deut. 32:4; Psa. 18:30; Matt. 5:48.) He neither created idiots nor other physical and mental malformations of humanity, but, as the Scriptures declare, we were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity – in sin did my mother conceive me." Our blemishes come to us from our parents, not from God. The Scriptures not only point out to us father Adam's sinless perfection, saying that he was created in the image of God, but they plainly declare that it was by his disobedience that the divine sentence of death passed upon him and passed as an inheritance,

a legacy of evil, to his offspring, saying, "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world and death as a result of sin, and *so* death passed upon *all men*, for all are sinners [imperfect]." Truly also, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape [disobedience] and the children's teeth are set on edge. – Rom. 5:12,17-19; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2.

The very basis of all our hopes, then, is this grace of God, operating toward us through Jesus Christ our Lord. God's grace does not subvert or set aside God's law, however, and he who would rightly appreciate and use the divine grace should recognize this fact. God's grace was not intended to frustrate the spirit of his own law: it was not intended to clear the guilty, the wilful transgressor. It acknowledges the divine law, attests its justice, and has fully met its requirements in the person and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on behalf of Adam and all his race involved in his transgression and his penalty – death. Hence it was that "Christ died, the just for the unjust" in order "that God might be just and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." And the only condition upon which God's grace is offered is our acknowledgment [R2285 : page 105] of our sin, weakness and imperfection, a sorrow for these and a repentance and reformation to the extent of our ability and an acceptance of Christ Jesus as the personification of divine grace. Upon no other condition can we step into this grace of God or walk in its way and inherit its rewards.

And even after we have received Christ and God's grace in him, and are no longer recognized as strangers, aliens to God, but sons, as servants of righteousness and no longer servants of sin, being imperfect, we are not free from blemishes of word, thought and deed; yet, God's grace under the New Covenant continues with us to cover our blemishes until perfected in the resurrection. Under its provisions whatever is contrary to our wills, and purely the result of hereditary weakness, may be forgiven; and our obliquity and blameworthiness be gauged only by the measure of wilfulness or assent connected with the wrongdoing. Nevertheless, to some extent, chastisements or natural penalties for violations of law may be expected: but to those under

grace these will come as helps by the way, causing them more and more to detest sin, as corrections in righteousness, as chastisements and disciplines for their blessing. And even these sure penalties may be to some extent ameliorated in accordance with the wisdom of our great High priest, who, having borne all our sins in his own body on the tree, is freely empowered to abate for us so much of the penalty of our misdeeds as grace may be able to cover as *un*-wilful transgressions.

There is a disposition in our day, as there was a disposition in the days of the apostles, for those who have once accepted of divine forgiveness, the grace of God through Christ, to turn aside therefrom and to attempt to justify themselves by works. Even while first experiences were those of humble dependence upon divine mercy, subsequent experiences sometimes lead to the rejection of the grace that at first was so thankfully received. The Apostle wrote to some thus affected, saying, "Christ has become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Gal. 5:4.) Judged from this same standard, how many Christians to-day have backslidden – fallen from grace – lost the trust in the merit of the precious blood and in divine favor extended to us through the great atonement sacrifice. Now, as then, the disposition is to trust to works of our own righteousness, which the inspired writers tell us and which our own consciences should prove to us are imperfect, "filthy rags" unfit and unable to cover us. Yes, we need a covering before we could in any manner or degree hope to be acceptable to God, and this covering of our imperfections with the imputed righteousness of Christ, is another statement of the grace of God extended to us. This tendency to depart from a recognition of God's grace in Christ as our only hope for eternal life, and to take *instead* a hope of being able to walk righteously and to do justly, and thus to merit eternal life, is what the Apostle very properly calls "another gospel" – a false gospel. – Gal. 1:6.

This thought of the divine grace as the basis of all our mercies is interwoven with all the promises of God's Word. Thus the Apostle



speaks of the gracious plan of God, and Christ as the exponent of that plan as "the grace of God and the gift by grace." – Rom. 5:15.

Our approach to God in prayer is spoken of as an approach, not to the throne of justice and equity, but as an approach to "the throne of grace," where "we may obtain mercy and find *grace* to help in every time of need." – Heb. 4:16.

Again we are exhorted that our hearts be established in *grace*; and again told that unto every one of us is given *grace* according to the measure of our faith; and again the Apostle declares of himself, "By the *grace* of God I am what I am."

According to the testimony of our text this grace is general, "for all men," and must therefore ultimately in some manner or other be extended to all men, – the dead as well as the living. The translation of our Common Version is manifestly faulty here; all men, even in this most enlightened day of the world's history, have not yet beheld God's grace in any degree, nor has it as yet brought them salvation. But since it has been provided freely for all, so ultimately it shall be extended to all, that all *may* avail themselves of it.

The teaching of this grace is not that we may continue in sin that grace may abound; for divine grace is intended to benefit only those who renounce sin and become servants of righteousness: and thus, as our text declares, God's grace teaches us that we should repudiate sin and live separate from every ungodly desire, in righteousness, soberness and godlikeness. Furthermore, as our text declares, this grace of God does not claim to have reached its completeness, and to have accomplished in us and for us the grand designs of the God of all grace. On the contrary, it teaches us to *wait* for the consummation of this grace until the glorious manifestation of the Son of God in the majesty and power of his Kingdom, to unite his Church with himself as his Bride and joint heir, the channel of mercies and blessings through which God's grace shall flow to all the groaning creation. – Rom. 8:18-22; 11:31.

## "RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN."

"We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." – 2 Cor. 6:1.

This exhortation is addressed to such as have already recognized God's gracious character and the gift [R2285 : page 106] of his grace toward mankind, – the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. The Apostle has just been explaining this matter of how God's grace had provided a reconciliation; "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them [but unto him who died for them]." He declares himself an ambassador on behalf of God to declare this grace and exhorts his readers not only to accept of God's grace in the forgiveness of sins through Christ, but additionally that they also should become fully reconciled or completely in harmony with the Lord, as would be represented by full consecration to him and his service, after the example of the Apostle himself.

We take it that this exhortation of our text is the equivalent of the same apostle's exhortation elsewhere, namely, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God [already brethren because already believers in Christ and partakers through him of divine grace], that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." – Rom. 12:1.

The Apostle was here urging progress on the part of the believers, advancement from "justification by faith" to the next higher step in divine grace and privilege, – *full consecration* even unto death, in response to the "call" to joint-heirship with Christ in his Kingdom, – to suffer with him in the present time, and to reign with him by and by in glory. These two steps are *contrasted* by the same Apostle, who says of himself and others who had taken both steps, (1) "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (2) "By whom also [additionally] we have access by faith into this [further] grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of [sharing] the glory of God." – Rom. 5:1,2. [R2286 : page 106]

In our text the Apostle distinctly implies the possibility that some may receive the grace of God *in vain* – to no purpose. We see from the connection as we have examined it, that he refers to the grace of God in *justification*, the forgiveness of our sins, and not to the second step of grace, our acceptance to the new nature through the begetting of the spirit. This implies, therefore, that the only object of justification by faith in this present age, is to give us a footing, a standing of acceptableness with God, from which we may be able to advance and take the second step of self-sacrifice, and become joint-heirs with Christ in his Kingdom. Nevertheless, this first step and all the privileges and blessings connected with it would be "*in vain*," profitless to us, if we fail to take the second step, the particular feature of the divine plan which belongs to this Gospel age.

We are not to add to the Word of God, and to say that to receive justification in vain (by not making use of it to progress to a complete consecration and newness of nature) would mean eternal torment, or even the second death: we are simply to understand it as it reads, that the intention of the grace of justification, the first step, being to qualify us for the second step, those who fail to take the second step will have no particular benefit accrue to them from the first step, which would thus have been taken in vain, profitlessly, without permanent results and advantages.

We hold that the Scriptures in general teach that only those who take the "narrow way" will gain *any prize* offered during this Gospel age, which is specifically the age set apart for the development of the "royal priesthood," devoted to good works – to self-sacrifices in the service of the Lord and his cause. Indeed, there is only one prize and one hope of our calling during this age – the other prize and other hope and other call will be in the age to come. We cannot therefore expect that any who take the first step of faith in Christ, and who are therefore temporarily justified because of their faith, will have a reward for a faith which did not *work* by love. The faith that works by love speedily goes on to full consecration and self-sacrifice, and is a sure indication

of the kind the Lord is seeking for his "little flock," the "royal priesthood," the "joint-heirs." The faith, therefore, which refuses to work by love, cannot be considered an acceptable faith in God's sight. Nor can we expect that this class will be counted worthy to share in the earthly phase of the Kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets.

Why should they be rewarded? It was by God's grace that the *knowledge* of his grace reached them, while it passed by others. Will they be rewarded further because they have already been blessed with a knowledge of God's grace which they have rejected – received in vain? We think not. Instead of being more worthy to receive blessings of the Lord than the ignorant world who never tasted of his grace, they are, if anything, more blameworthy, because that after having tasted of the truth they did not love it sufficiently to serve it when they found that that service implied self-sacrifice. Quite different from this was the conduct of the ancient worthies. While not favored with the "high calling" to the divine nature and jointheirship with Christ, because this "call" was not yet due to be proclaimed, nevertheless, these ancient worthies manifested a faith and a trust in the Lord and his promises which *worked*, and by their works manifested a love for the Lord and a loyalty to him which did not hesitate to sacrifice reputation, wealth and life itself, in obedience to the principles of righteousness revealed to them. [R2286 : page 107]

Those who receive the grace of God (justification, forgiveness) in vain, permit their justification to lapse, and to our understanding have thereafter no advantage above the remainder of the world, nor has the Lord more interest in them than he has in "all the families of the earth," for whom he has prepared the gracious blessings of the Millennium. When God's time shall come for extending to the world in general his mercies and blessings, we fail to see that previous knowledge and opportunity, misused, received in vain, will be of any benefit or advantage: whether or not it will be of disadvantage and bring greater "stripes" of punishment, will depend largely, we believe, upon the

measure of light enjoyed with its corresponding responsibilities, and the measure of conscientiousness with which that light was lived up to.

A much misunderstood text respecting grace is the one used as a caption for this article, namely, "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8.) The erroneous thought given by many is that our faith is not our *own* faith, not of our own volition, but an impartation, a gift from God. Of course, in one sense every gift and blessing which we enjoy is indirectly if not directly from God; "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." (Jas. 1:17.) But the proper understanding of the Apostle's words, we believe, is this: It is of God's grace and not of personal merit on our part that salvation is offered to us; and altho that salvation is offered to us as a *reward of faith* (including true faith's obedience), yet we cannot even boast respecting our faith as tho it merited the Lord's favor, – for our faith is something which is the indirect result of divine providence also; there are millions of others in the world who might exercise just as much faith as we if they had been favored of God with as much light, intelligence, knowledge, as a basis of faith: hence our faith is not to be credited as a meritorious condition but we are to be thankful to God for it, for the circumstances and conditions which have made it possible for us to exercise faith are of his grace.

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