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Grace and Faith

By Harold Turner

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" (Eph. 2:8).

These words give us the overall parts of both God and man in redemption. However, these words have a depth that is often overlooked. The words grace and faith may be considered as the general overall parts in redemption, but each of them contain separate component parts that must be considered in order to get their full meaning.

To declare that one is saved by grace is simple, but what does it mean and what is involved? Grace is the friendly disposition from which kind acts proceed - graciousness, loving kindness, goodwill, and etc. If we separate the kind acts from this friendly disposition, we do not have grace. Hence, grace is an active expressive force. The fact that God possessed deep pitiful, merciful, and loving feelings toward man was not sufficient to save him. These feelings had to be expressed in actions through which man could be saved.

In Romans 5:15-21 Paul shows how this grace was expressed, he said, "the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many unto justification." To speak of salvation by grace must of necessity include the expression of that grace in the act of sending Jesus, and envelops everything that Jesus did in life and in death to make salvation possible to man. Man needed a sacrifice for his sin that would appease the wrath of God, he needed an example for living that was both simple and practical, he needed instruction to assist him in preparing himself to live with God, all these were made possible by the expression of God's grace in the person of Jesus Christ. Hence, the idea of salvation by grace envelops everything that God did for us.

Just as grace envelops the overall part of God in our salvation, so faith includes the overall part of man in salvation. The Scriptures attest that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1), that we are purified by faith (15:9), that we are sanctified by faith (Acts 25:18), that we are the children of God by faith (Gal. 3:26), that we live by faith (Gal. 3:11), and that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph.

3:17). However, not one of these Scriptures promise these blessings solely on the basis of our believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Like grace, faith must be expressed in action. In James 2:14 the question is presented, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" This question is then answered, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect . . . Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:17, 22, 24, 26).

The problem we face in the controversy over salvation by faith, is not over the fact that we are saved by faith, but when by faith one is saved. Before faith will save it must be expressed in action. A faith that does not express itself in repentance will not save. In Acts 17:30 we learn that "God commandeth all men every where to repent." In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." To be saved by faith, we must by faith repent of our sins. A faith that refuses to confess Jesus as Lord will not save. From Romans 10:9-10 we learn that one must confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and that this "confession is made unto salvation." To be saved by faith, we must by faith confess Jesus as Lord, the Son of God (Acts 8:37).

The big controversy over salvation by faith, however, does not begin until we place baptism as a condition to being saved. However saving faith, is a faith that will accept every thing that God teaches in view of salvation. Notice the following Scriptures relating baptism to salvation; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), "Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), "Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:40-41), "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16), "Baptism doth also not save us" (1 Pet. 3:21), "Know ye not, that so many of us

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Watch for Their Souls IV

By W. R. Smith

"The church is on the march" where the quality of the members of the group, whether large or small, many or few, measures up to the divine standard of purity, zeal, unity, liberality, and diligence as revealed in the Book. There must be in each member there of obvious signs of progress towards "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Only by the exercise of "wisdom that is from above" can we avoid confusing quantity with quality. If in our thinking and reporting we are emphasizing large memberships without giving due consideration or effort to the spiritual welfare of those who make up the congregation, whether large or small, we are deceived. Success is not in numbers, but in "Righteousness that exalteth a nation."

If the "weak and sickly among you and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30) were counted out, many congregations would be reduced quite considerably in size. Should this be done? Should those who are weak in the faith be dropped? Yes, but only after a prolonged, earnest and consistent effort has been made to revive them. The church must institute and keep a revival program going on all the time. About the only revivals we hear about in our time are those designed primarily to bring more recruits into the body where they are left to sink or swim with very little coaching on how to survive.

A three point program, faithfully administrated, (1 Pet. 5:2) is needed if we are to move faster towards the high mark of the "holy and without blemish" status. The dilatory are famishing for lack of faith. Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, there are three devices by which to supply this need, namely: preaching, teaching and personal exhortations. So long as any one of these essentials is lacking or deficient or poorly administered, the faltering and indigent will always be with us and constitute a serious roadblock to the forward movement of the church. But where

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“It is related of Daniel Webster, whose wisdom has been highly respected, that when asked what was the greatest thought he had ever entertained, he replied, “That I am a responsible being and must at last account to God.”

“Keep your fact toward the light, and the shadows will fall behind you.”

“Set not your mind on high things, but content yourself with what is humble. Be not wise in your own conceit.”

“He will be said to flourish in virtue who aids the forsaken.”

“Those who look for the faults of others are often ignorant of their own. Those who are aware of their own faults and imperfections are, as a rule, humble in mind.”

“The only people, scientific or other, who never make mistakes are those who do nothing.”

WATCH FOR THEIR SOULS (Cont.)

diligence is exercised in watching for their souls the dead weight will be revived or eliminated altogether.

The big challenge is a plan to bring the sheep into contact with the moving power of God - Rom. 1:16.

It is expecting too much of those who languish to muster enough strength from their own dwindling supplies to read and study the Bible voluntarily. Most of them lack the appetite and spiritual energy to attend Bible classes where, presumably, they may receive life-giving stimulation. Perhaps a goodly portion of them hear one sermon per week but usually this is neither enough nor of the variety required for their needs. The Bible class could be more helpful than the sermon but since attendance is optional they fail to get an adequate diet of milk and/or meat.

This challenge must be met by the leaders adopting and following a plan to fortify and strengthen every member and especially the tottering. Toolong now the brethren have said “Just let it be” and it will work itself out. Not so, only aggressive and positive action on the part of the bishops will bring order out of the confusion. Sometimes stern measures must be adopted to save a drowning (lost) soul.

Every member of the congregation should be assigned to a Bible class after, and not before, competent teachers have been provided for each group. What should be done with those who will not attend after they have been assigned? Such cases point up the need for the planned, continuous revival, under the direction of competent leaders - “highly esteemed in love for their work’s sake.” Laborers in the vineyard will rally to the call of such men, thus making the church an effective instrument in “seeking and saving the lost.” These trained workers will proceed gently and patiently in their efforts to bring the slothful to the fountain from whence all blessings flow. Those who respond unfavorably and say “It’s nobody’s business but mine if I absent myself from Bible classes and preaching services” are indeed babes and are sorely in need of encouragement and the sincere milk of the word. If, over a prolonged period of teaching, pleading, admonishing, and prayers in their behalf, no progress is made, only one other course is provided for their salvation. The answer is found in 1 Corinthians 5:5.

There is no challenge which faces the church today more serious than that of watching for the souls of church members - Hebrews 13:17. /

“The greatest reward for doing a thing well is the increased ability to do yet more.”

Love for God

By Charles W. Leonard

To answer the question, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” (Matt. 22:37). Since we are to love God above all, how do we come to do this?

One does not come into the world loving God. He must learn to love Him. Before we can love God, we must come to know who God is. The Bible teaches, “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19). We learn of God’s love from the Bible. The alien sinner can only love God after he believes in God. To attempt to reverse this order is to pervert the Scriptures.

Paul raised the following questions; “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14). The basis for our faith is the word of God - “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom 10:17). John wrote, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:30-31). It is impossible to believe in him of whom we have not heard, likewise it is impossible to love him of whom we have not heard.

When writing to Christians, Paul listed both love and faith as fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). This seed must be planted before the fruit of the Spirit can be produced. This seed - the word of God - produces faith, love then grows out of faith. In both the natural and spiritual laws, the fruit can come only after the seed has been planted. The medium through which the Spirit operates on the sinner is only through the word. This word produces the faith from which love should grow.

It is possible for one to have faith and not have the proper love (James 2:19, John 12:42-43). However, it is impossible for one to love God apart from faith. It is not scriptural to speak of love for God coming before faith in God. There is not a recorded case of conversion in the book of Acts indicating that one loved God before believing in Him. Both faith and love should continue to grow, and as they do, personal involvement will be evident (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Love and faith are both expressive in obedience to God’s will (John 14:15, 1 John 5:3). Love then is an outgrowth of faith, which in turn comes from God’s word, which teaches us how to show our love to Him.

One of Our Richest Resources

By Coy Walters

One of the richest resources among the churches of Christ is our young Christian boys and girls. There may be some who will disagree with this, but young people who are properly guided are a great resource. This writer knows of a particular congregation that was begging for a qualified youth director to come and work with its youth. This congregation claimed that its youth were causing much heartache, and that they were losing most of them to the forces of evil. You, too, may know of congregations with similar problems, or maybe you even witness this in the congregation of which you are a member. This problem that many congregations are facing is very disturbing.

Paul gave these instructions to the young man, Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." These words should be the goal of every young Christian, but they must have help to achieve this goal. This help is to begin in the home - "And, ye father, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Children are a blessing from the Lord, but the responsibility of parenthood is an awesome one.

Young people, by nature, have an abundant amount of energy and enthusiasm. They have a body that is full of life and the need to burn-up that energy. The need we face as parents, elders, and preachers, is to direct these energies in the right direction. One thing for certain is that they are going to use it. Whether it is used for good or evil is largely dependent upon us.

The opinion of this writer is that our young Christians are one of our greatest evangelistic tools. It has been my privilege, while in college, to have been engaged in several campaigns where a group of young Christians, with their leaders, have made all-out efforts to bring Christ into every home in a community.

We assisted in a 6 week campaign in Brazil, where 27 students, mostly 18-20 years of age, engaged in such an effort. I am not hesitant to say that the average parent could not have lasted very long in any of these efforts simply because of the energy required. The results of such efforts are overwhelming and it was all because someone directed these young Christians in burning up their energy for the Lord. Many such efforts are carried

No Middle Ground

By Clovis Ragsdale

It is a fact that the Ostrich, an African bird of great size, will hide its head in the sand when it comes face to face with danger. Many have been slain because they refused to take the means to protect themselves.

A parallel can be seen from this in the lives of some people who believe in God, heaven and hell. They pass up opportunities to become a Christian and die outside of Christ. They will not face the fact that the Bible teaches one that he must become a Christian to receive eternal life and escape eternal punishment. These have adopted the philosophy that if one will live a good moral life, it is not necessary to become a Christian and serve God through the church. They create a middle ground position, claiming neither to be saint or sinner. These argue their case with the assertion that God is to good and merciful to send one to Hell, if that person has lived a good moral life. These claim that the church is nonessential, and that the assembling for worship is just an optional matter. They rationalize that after all they are better than many church members anyway!

This attitude is the product of human reasoning, and is contradicted by the Bible verse after verse. First, Isaiah said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Man cannot put himself on a par with God. However, he tries this when he invents for himself a way to gain eternal life without complying with the way outlined in the Bible. Jesus said,

out by the local congregation directing and using their own youth. The good that this does in building the character of these youth, and influencing others to serve the Lord, cannot be estimated.

The campaign is only one method of using our youth and their energies to serve the Lord. There are many things they can and will do if properly directed. It would be wise for every congregation, large or small, to have a planned program for its young people, especially during the summer.

Let us not waste one of the richest resources that the church has. The church of tomorrow will be made up of the youth of today. The church will be stronger now, and even stronger a generation from now, if we direct the energy of our youth to serve the Lord.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" John 10:1.

In Matt. 7:21, Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

It is the will of God that all men believe (John 8:24), that all men repent (Acts 17:30), that all men confess (Mat. 10:32) that all men be baptized (Mk. 16:16, Acts 2:38), and that all such continue faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). God, who cannot lie, has promised to save only those who comply with these things. To save anyone who does not obey would make God a liar and a respecter of persons, which he is not (Acts 10:34).

In 2 Thess. 1:8, it is stated that Christ is coming back to take vengeance on all them that know not God and that obey not the gospel. We cannot obey the gospel without - believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized. In Acts 2:47 the Bible shows that those who do this are added to the church.

If the church is not necessary for salvation, then Christ died unnecessarily. Acts 20:28 states that He purchased the church with His own blood. If the church is not necessary, God would have made the blunder of all ages by sending His Son to die the death of the cross to purchase an unnecessary institution. Surely no one believes that He did.

A close study of the Bible reveals that man has only two choices in the spiritual realm, either to serve Satan or to serve Christ. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." To be a Christian we must accept and serve Christ. This is a Bible truth that no man can deny. If we refuse to face this fact then we are like the ostrich.

"As a leader in the Lord's church, don't be a driver. The Master, whose worthy example you wish to follow, did not drive men, He led them."

"True knowledge is to know how little can be known."

"Don't criticize a brother to another. A most intimate friend may some day turn against you and then may tell tales out of school."

Could You Be Fooling Yourself?

GRACE AND FAITH (Cont.)

Jesus constantly taught the people that they were in for some surprises at the judgment. By precept and parable, he admonished his hearers that things at the judgment would not turn out as they had always expected them to. From the very beginning of his public ministry, he indicated that men at the judgment would come expecting good fruit from an evil tree. He described at least four classes of people who will meet with dismay and disillusionment at the judgment.

1. Those who did much religion apart from obedience to his revealed word. He said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:22-23). This seems to indicate that a great deal of religious activity is for naught, and that prophesying, casting out demons, and doing many wonderful works are to no avail at the judgment unless they were done in such a manner as to meet the Lord's specific demands and requirements.

Jesus said in the following verse: "Everyone, therefore, that heareth these words of mine and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man that built his house upon the rock." This man's house stood, and a religious life on such a basis will stand at the judgment, but those who "hear these, words of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand." It fell, as will the spiritual structure of that person who busies himself with teaching and working at things other than what the Lord especially commands. "He that heareth these words of Mine and doeth" something else is in for some bitter disappointment and experience at the judgment.

What glory does the Lord get if you do great works unless you do the exact work, in the exact manner, in the exact place that he teaches?

2. Those who overlook opportunity for service in the name of Christ will be disappointed. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all the nations." (Matt. 25:31-32). He will separate them one from the other, on the right hand and on the left. To those on the left he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye

gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." (Matt. 25:41-43).

In surprise and disillusionment they will cry out, "Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" His reply will be startling: "In as much as ye did it not unto one of the least of these (my brethren), ye did it not unto me."

Day after day, in the persons of children of God, they had met the Christ, hungry, athirst, naked, or sick, or in prison, or as a stranger, and were cold and unconcerned and heartless. When they failed in their duty to the children of God, Jesus said, "Ye did it not unto me." He identifies himself inseparably with his church, and those who mistreat the church of God or its members have awaiting for them some rather gruesome experiences at the bar of judgment.

3. Those who fool themselves as to their own piety and preparation will be disappointed at the judgment. The Pharisee went into the temple to pray, and proposed to thank God for his own personal excellence over the Publican and entertained evidently no thought of danger for himself. The Publican seemed to entertain no thought of danger for others, but dwelt on his own sins. And probably contrary to the expectations of both, the Publican went down to his house justified, rather than the Pharisee. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?"

Those who fool themselves are warned by James: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." James 1:22. James declared that there is nothing more permanent than looking in a mirror and forgetting in that particular brand of religion that will permit a man to hear the word, and not do it. James immediately describes another man who will be disappointed at the judgment: "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain." James 1:26. The heart is a great deceiver, but man often deceives his own heart.

4. Some very provident, cautious and careful people will be disappointed at the judgment. When the one talent man came in to render his accounting, he said with evident satisfaction, judiciousness and caution, "Lord, I knew thee, that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter, and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo,

as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3). "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). Col. 2:11-13 shows that baptism is an act of faith in the operation of God to save us. Baptism is an expression of faith in the blood of Christ to save us, for we are buried into His death where His saving blood was shed (John 19:33-34). Baptism is a command and teaching of God, not an ordinance of the church. Since baptism is the act that puts us "into Christ" it must be the final act of faith in our redemption. Once in Christ, we begin living a life of faith, a faith that is continually directed by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

God expressed His grace in action, as we must express our faith in action before we can be saved. It seems strange that no one contends that grace will save us apart from the expressed acts of Christ, and the gospel, but will contend that we can be saved apart from the expression of our faith in obedience. Rom. 6:17-18 states that we are free from sin when we obey. Heb. 5:8-9 teaches that Christ promises salvation to the obedient. 1 Pet. 1:22 teaches that our souls are purified when we obey the truth. To be saved by faith is to by faith obey in repentance, confession and baptism.

thou hast thine own." He did not lose a penny, he did not risk anything, nor had he taken any chances with the austerity and hardness of his Lord. So he came in, fully confident that he had acted wisely. But, the Lord was much displeased with his course of action - see Mat. 25:26-30. Those who risk nothing for Christ, who are cold and indifferent, will be disappointed. Are you in for some surprises at the judgment?

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