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## "THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD"

by Ted J. Clarke

So much has been spoken and written in the past few years about **grace** that some may have grown weary of hearing and reading about the subject. However, since Ephesians 2:8 says, "by grace are ye saved," we must understand grace to know whether or not we are truly saved. "Grace" is God's "favor" upon us, which we do not and could not deserve. Through Christ, God has given us what we need rather than what we deserve. However, we can receive God's grace only as we accept the **conditions which God attaches to it** (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Is the title of this article presumptuous? Since there are many conflicting views regarding grace, can this author claim to write a definitive article on the **true grace of God**? Because of what the apostle Peter has written in his first epistle, it is possible to present a view of grace that settles clearly many of the questions which continue to arise in a study of grace. Why this book? In his closing words of the epistle Peter said, "...I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that **this is the true grace of God** wherein ye stand" (1 Peter 5:12). If one accepts Peter as being "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1), and one who "preached the gospel...with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1:12), then one must accept what Peter says when he testifies of what comprises "the true grace of God" (5:12). (All Scripture references in parentheses are from First Peter unless otherwise noted.)

### **Peter, Proclaimer of Grace**

The Lord promised to give Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19). Keys symbolize power to open or close. Peter's keys were to open the kingdom of heaven. He did so, beginning in Acts, chapter two, when he preached faith, repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:36-41). However, on this Pentecost Day only the Jews received the gospel. Peter used his keys again in opening the kingdom of heaven to those of all nations (Gentiles) in Acts 10 & 11. If you will study

the entire account you will see that Peter preached faith, repentance, and baptism in water, all in the name of Jesus Christ, just as he had in Acts 2 (Acts 10:43; 11:18; 10:47-48). Sometimes it is contended that Peter did not understand the role of grace in salvation. Since he was a Jew and works-oriented, we are told, he preached a different gospel than Paul's gospel of grace (cf. Acts 20:24, 32.) However, First Peter reveals that both apostles taught the **same** gospel. Did Peter teach that we are saved by grace, through faith, as Paul did (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:1-2)? Indeed, he did! Peter wrote -

"Receiving the end of your **faith**, even the **salvation** of your souls. Of which **salvation** the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the **grace** that should come to you" (1:9-10).

Note that in Peter's statements both faith and grace are tied to salvation, exactly as with Paul. Peter connects the salvation of our souls with the grace of God, which came through Christ in his sufferings on the cross and subsequent glorification in his resurrection (1:11-12). This harmonizes with Peter in Acts 2 when he preached that forgiveness is possible because of Christ's death (vv.

23, 24) and his resurrection to glory (vv. 31-39).

Most commentators believe that the "grace that is to be brought to you" (1:13) refers to the culmination of God's grace in our salvation in heaven when Jesus returns. The problem with that is that the Greek word translated "to be brought" is in the present tense, and literally means "is being brought." The "revelation of Jesus Christ," then, does not mean his second coming. Rather, "the grace that is being brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" is God's saving grace which is brought to us now, as we see and accept Christ as he is revealed to us in the gospel preached by those inspired by the Holy Spirit (1:12-13). Thus, the grace which had been prophesied to come (1:10) and that grace which was presently being brought to Peter's readers (1:13) was rooted and centered in Jesus Christ.

### **Grace and Obedience**

One major problem in the religious world is the denial that we must obey God in order to be saved. Does the "grace of God" which is in Christ exclude obedience? Not at all. It is in regard to that grace that Peter calls for his readers to be "obedient children...holy in all manner of conversation (living) ...Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1:14-16). Some might protest that obedience should be our natural response to grace, but that our obedience

(Continued on page 2)

## **THANK YOU, EDDY GILPIN**

For two years brother Eddy Gilpin edited this paper and furnished its readers with some excellent articles. Brother Gilpin is an outstanding and talented gospel preacher. Although in his youth, Eddy has demonstrated a responsible maturity in editing this publication. During his time as editor the circulation of the paper has increased considerably. His expertise will be missed. Brother Gilpin and his family left the States about the middle of September for Chimala, East Africa to labor as missionaries in that country. Their plans are to be gone for three years. Eddy has promised to submit articles for the *Fulton County Gospel News* as he has time. We look forward to running those articles for you.

As the new editor of the paper, I realize an awesome responsibility to our six thousand plus readers. We shall continue to present the "whole counsel of God" and try to do it by "speaking the truth in love." Our paper is free upon request and will continue to have articles designed for those who are members of Churches of Christ as well as those who are not. Those who wish to submit articles for publication should first write for a copy of writer's guidelines. May God bless us in this work.

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**"THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD"**

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does not in any way secure or maintain our salvation through Christ. It is true that obedience should be our response to God's grace, but it is **not true** that our salvation does not depend on our obedience. Peter plainly says, "ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth" (1:22). This obedience is part of God's grace and equal to the new birth of which our Lord spoke in John 3:3-5. In our obedience we are "born again...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1:23-25). The same gospel which teaches that we are saved by being born again also teaches that we are saved by obedience. This is precisely why Hebrews 5:9 says that Christ "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Jesus does not save those who refuse to obey him (cf. Luke 6:46). Does God's grace remove the need for man's obedience to God? No, a thousand times no! If one believes what Peter has written, obedience to God's will is a part of "the true grace of God" (5:12).

**Two Apostles, One Gospel**

There are those who claim that Peter wrote **only** to the Jews dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1). Remember that some maintain that there were two gospels: Peter's gospel of works to the Jews and Paul's gospel of grace to the Gentile nations. As we demonstrated previously, Paul and Peter preached the **same gospel of God's grace**. Peter described Paul as "our beloved brother" (2 Peter 3:15). Also, Peter's second letter was written to the same audience as his first (2 Peter 2:1). Peter mentioned that Paul had also written to

this same audience in more than one epistle (2 Peter 3:15-16). There was no difference in the one gospel these two preached, for they were brothers in Christ and they wrote to the same people. Furthermore, Peter (2:9-10) used the same prophecies from Hosea 1:9-10; 2:23 to apply to his readers as Paul did in Romans 9:25-26. The verses of Romans 9:24-26 clearly apply these passages to the Gentiles. Therefore, Peter's audience was made up at least partly of Gentiles. This same apostle said that Jews and Gentiles were saved in the same manner (Acts 15:7-11). The same grace that saves has "appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). This is certainly in harmony with Peter's admission in Acts 10:34-35, that God is no respecter of persons and that men of all nations must work righteousness to be accepted by God.

**God's Grace In Baptism**

Not only does Peter connect our general obedience to the grace of God, he connects one specific act of obedience to salvation and grace, which many deny is essential to receive God's grace; namely, baptism in water (3:20-21). Remember that in 1:10 Peter connected salvation with God's grace through our faith. In the following verses he connected salvation with baptism.

"Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (3:20-21)

Note that Peter contrasts the **disobedient** in the world with **obedient** Noah and his family (Genesis 6:22; 7:5). In Genesis 6:8 it is said, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Why did Noah find God's grace and the others did not? He was obedient, just, and perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:9). One simply cannot separate God's grace from man's obedience; nor should one try to do so. Noah was saved by water, in the ark which he built in obedience to God. The mentioning of that fact led Peter to state that in a like figure, or antitype, "baptism doth also now save us" (3:21). Since we are unquestionably saved by grace, when Peter connected baptism with salvation, he also connected it to the grace of God.

Peter does not say that baptism alone saves us, but he does insist that it is a part of what saves us! Baptism is as much a part of God's saving grace to us

as the flood was a part of God's saving grace to Noah and his family. In the ark the waters bore Noah safely from the destructive power of the flood as it cleansed a sin-filled world. Water (in baptism) saves us and cleanses our sin-stained souls today because it is a part of what God has commanded. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Peter also connected faith and baptism with salvation (1:9; 3:21).

**Conclusion**

Peter "testified" that what he wrote about in this epistle was "the true grace of God" (5:12). Why will some not accept that? Will you? Peter opened and closed his first letter with the subject of God's grace (1:2, 10; 5:10, 12). One cannot successfully deny his emphasis on grace in this epistle. He contended that a part of "the true grace of God" is obedience to God's word in becoming children of God (1:22-25); that we must live as obedient children (1:14-16); and that since "baptism doth also now save us," it too is necessary in receiving God's grace unto salvation (3:20-21). If we attempt to change or substitute any part of "the true grace of God" which Peter has revealed, it is no longer God's true grace. It would merely be the false teaching of men. If you have not been baptized in water in order to be saved, you are not standing in the true grace of God. If you are not continuing to live as obedient children, you are outside of God's true grace. God has made his grace available for all men. Will you not renounce the false teaching of denominational dogmas and stand with us in "the true grace of God?"

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## SALVATION IS THROUGH GOD'S GRACE

by Roy J. Hearn

Just off the coast of Sicily there is a great whirlpool called by the ancients, Charybdis. Opposite on the Italian coast is a great rock they referred to as Scylla. These were thought of as two monsters. To avoid the one would put them in danger of being destroyed by the other.

For a long time those styled "modernists" have been destroying faith in the Bible as God's inspired word. Since this type of infidelity has nothing to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the human soul, there has been a turn to another extreme called "neo-orthodoxy." This allows for belief in the Bible as God's word, but denies the necessity of obeying it. In trying to avoid Charybdis, its adherents run into Scylla.

Regrettably, the Lord's church has not escaped the influence of these "monsters." A few have been engulfed by modernism and completely lost to the cause. Others have been influenced by the highly liberal views of neo-orthodoxy. Included are those who now insist we must preach the **man but not the plan**; that is, preach Christ, but no need to obey any law in order to be saved. A number of preachers now occupying pulpits and some teachers in college classrooms hold such views and are indoctrinating younger men to go forth and preach such among the Lord's people.

### All Things Are Under Law

Observe nature and see that there is law and order. Nature is governed by God's **impressed** law. In every area of science man recognizes these laws and works in harmony with them. Man is higher in creation than the rest of nature, having a mind with which to reason and choose. Therefore, man is subject to the **expressed** law of God, revealed in the Bible. Everyone is bound by it, no exemptions. In this respect all authority has been committed to Christ and those who refuse to obey him will be destroyed (Matthew 28:18; Acts 3:22-23). Some are affirming that salvation is wholly by grace apart from any law. But note that the gospel of Christ is the "law of faith" (Romans 3:27). "A great company of priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). The gospel is to produce obedience among all nations (Romans 1:5; 16:26). Thence, **the faith is the law** of God, and salvation is based upon obedience (Hebrews 5:9). Law may be defined as a rule of action laid down by a superior to be obeyed by the inferior. Numerous passages can be

given to show that man, the inferior, must obey God, the Superior (Matthew 7:21-27; 1 John 2:3-5; 5:3).

### The Gospel Is A Legal System

Legal means, "Of, pertaining to, based upon, governed by, law." The New Testament is the will of Christ, a legal instrument (Hebrews 9:16-17). Elements in it correspond to a legal human will, which includes will-maker, gifts, conditions, death of testator, probation, executors and heirs. Relative to salvation, Christ is the will-maker. The gifts are remission of sins and eternal life for the faithful (Acts 2:38; 1 John 2:25). Conditions are those of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:47), plus all others that apply to God's children. The will of Christ was made operative by his death, it was approved in the court of heaven, and executed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles (Acts 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The heirs are those who submit to the terms of the will.

While the gospel is a legal system, it does not destroy grace, nor do conditions in any way reflect upon grace. If a friend or relative chooses to include you in his will, that is grace. It may be without conditions, but if he adds conditions it is still grace, for he does not have to include you either way. God was not under obligation to save man either with or without conditions, but by grace he provided the way and **his grace is incorporated in the conditions of his will**.

### The Law Of The Spirit

Paul says: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). The law of the Spirit is that revealed by the Spirit through the apostles (John 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 2:11-14). Therefore, one is made free from the law or rule of sin by obedience to the law of God given by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said truth makes one free (John 8:32). The Bible defines truth as being God's law and commandments (Psalm 119:142, 151). Our souls are purified by obeying the truth, or law (1 Peter 1:22). That being true, how can anyone affirm that salvation is by grace alone apart from law?

### Grace and Gospel

No doubt one is saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). But salvation is appropriated to oneself through **faith** expressed in overt acts of obedience. "Neo-orthodoxy" is not new after all, when we note Cain practiced it. He had faith after a fashion or he never would have offered any kind of sacrifice to

God, but he decided he did not have to obey. He was rejected (Genesis 4:1-8). God testified of Abel's faith only through his obedience (Hebrews 11:4). James plainly states that faith is made valid by works, or simply obedience (James 2:17-18) and shows that both a child of God, Abraham, and an alien, Rahab, were justified by works (James 2:23-25). Therefore, the grace of God is made available through faith that is active, that is obedient (Romans 1:5; Acts 6:7).

The gospel is God's power to save and in it is incorporated the means by which men are made righteous, or acceptable to God (Romans 1:16). The Jews were lost because they followed their own righteousness and not God's (Romans 10:1-3). The commandments of God are righteousness (Psalm 119:172), thus it is plain they did not avail themselves of the grace of God by obeying the law of God, the New Testament.

It has been shown that we are justified by grace and by law, therefore, it is clear that God's grace is incorporated in his will — his law — and grace is appropriated to oneself when conditions are complied with, just as is true with the human will. Be not deceived into thinking that one can have salvation apart from obedience to God. Nobody can reach such a high spiritual state either before or after baptism that relieves him of obedience to God. If Jesus never sought to please himself, but be always submissive to the Father, who are we that think we don't have to submit to any law (Romans 15:3; John 6:38)?

The first time Timmy was taken to church, he was absolutely fascinated by the young minister, high above him in the pulpit. Soon the preacher was waving his arms vigorously and his voice had risen almost to a shout as he tried to drive home his point. Timmy became more and more uneasy. Finally he could stand it no longer. He turned to his father and, with a quiver in his voice, whispered, "What are we gonna do if he gets loose?"

*A sure way of getting the last word in an argument is to say, "You're right."*

*A true Christian always has a warm heart and cool head, but never cold feet or a cold shoulder.*

*No amount of riches can atone for poverty of character.*



## Amazing Grace

by John Newton

Amazing grace how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now I'm found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears allayed;  
How precious did that grace appear  
When I His Word obeyed.

Thru many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Twas grace that bro't me safe thus far  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright, shining as the sun;  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

*It is often better to return than to go on, especially if you have taken the wrong road.*

*Kind words may never die, but without kind deeds they sound mighty sick.*

*If the report says the bride looked stunning, does it imply that the groom looked stunned?*

*A cool-headed man is one who, when called a bad name, can mark it down as one man's opinion.*

*The clown usually gets more applause than the sage, for people would rather be entertained than caused to think.*

*Faultfinding is one talent that should be buried and its grave forgotten.*

*Christians have cause for great joy. They have forgiveness, vision, power and promises unlimited.*

*Life is real, life is earnest,  
And the grave is not its goal.  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest  
Was not spoken of the soul.*

*We multiply happiness by dividing it.*

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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