

THE GRACE OF GOD

an introductory study

That 'the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.'" Ephesians 1:18-20

The above passage was Paul's prayer for the church of Ephesus. He knew that a revelation of God's grace would be the greatest deterrent against sliding back into their old lifestyle. God's love when understood in all its dimensions will foster the utmost devotion in the hearts of the believers. Grace and knowledge are complimentary. When grace is not comprehended, it is easy to become like Esau who carelessly traded his birthright to satisfy his immediate carnal desire. The only real tragedy that can happen to a believer is to lose one's faith in God.

"Now Jacob cooked a stew: and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary," Therefore his name was called Edom. And Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?" Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils: then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."
Genesis 25:29-34

"For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit, and a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'" II Peter 2:21,22

In this study we will attempt to trace God's love and grace from eternity past, to our present standing with Him, and then look through the glass into the glorious future prepared for God's people.

DEFINITIONS:

GRACE: It is translated from the Greek word, 'charis.' It indicates the divine influence upon the human heart, and its reflection in the life of the believer. It implies unmerited favor, a divine gratuity, endowment, or a miraculous faculty that is imparted. Grace always distinguishes the graced one as being favored or blessed spiritually. To further develop the definition, let's look at the words; influence and reflection.

INFLUENCE: the power to produce an effect without using force.

REFLECTION: a likeness or image.

Grace then is a work of God's premeditated love to bring about a godly effect upon the life of the believer. The Christian is God's own workmanship.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

“for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

Philippians 2:13

THE OLD TESTAMENT: A REVELATION OF GOD’S MERCY

The Old Testament is a contrast between God’s holiness and man’s depravity. Man with all his good intentions does not have the innate ability to be righteous. The history of Israel is one of repeated spiritual and political apostasies. The only redeeming factor of these two diametrically opposed natures was God’s longsuffering and mercy. Notice the words of the prophet Jeremiah.

“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning, Great is Your faithfulness.” Lamentations 3:22,23

THE NEW TESTAMENT: A REVELATION OF GOD’S GRACE

The same holy God of the Old Testament made a new covenant that enabled us, through the blood atonement of Jesus and the Holy Spirit’s inward work, to walk in holiness before Him. The manifestation of His favor only becomes greater with the passing of time. We, the recipients of this grace, are on display before principalities and powers demonstrating just how good God is. Through Jesus we are more than conquerors. We are the sons of God. The church is in contrast to the great disappointments of natural Israel. She is spiritual Israel and well pleasing to the Lord.

“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John 1:17

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that , not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven- things which angels desire to look into.”
I Peter 1:10-12

“that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:7

“to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 3:10

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” Galatians 6:15,16

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