Church of God Ministries
Spanish Fort, Alabama

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The Grace of God?

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Here on the Gulf Coast, and many places here in the Northern Hemisphere, darkness is now coming an hour earlier as of this past Sunday! Well so says our clocks and watches. Most of us have gone off daylight savings time as we began the month of November.

There is a very interesting history of where DST originated, (as far as a nation) in Germany back in 1916. But I won't spoil your search. You might be surprised. Like most things in this world, financial gain always has a part with decisions.

The good news is this means I am now on the same time zone as many of those we serve in Guatemala, Colombia, and other international Spanish speaking areas. This may seem like a little thing, but actually is very helpful to me in coordinating calls, Zoom visits, etc. that I do online as well as personal travels.

What it also means, is that it gets dark earlier, and many of the outside activities we did during the warm, longer summer days are changed, I often find myself inside working on other things I let go by during the summer.

One of the areas of study in God's Word, that I like to revisit are the Epistles of Paul. Paul was a deep thinker, and his teachings, under the inspiration of Jesus Christ, are those we can't just read right over, and move on…we must meditate, reflect, pray and think deeply about. Some have taken me years to better comprehend, and it is fascinating to see how Paul truly desired to serve God and His children.

One subject or concept that is discussed often, and has arisen several times over the years in my walk with God, is the "grace of God."

I'm finding many of the younger generation within the greater COG are now venturing into multiple views, and ideas on the subject. Some seem to be a bit confused. For some long time brethren it may have been years since they have "proven" what they believe. Some hold on to staunch views and never study more deeply to "*see if these things be so*". (Acts 17:11)

One definition that comes to mind that has been stated over the decades is that "grace is Gods' unmerited pardon."

Now, certainly the act of being forgiven or pardoned is indeed a wonderful manifestation of the grace of God. But, there is so much more to grace!

One of the first uses of the word grace in the Greek Scriptures is instructive. "*And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*" (Luke 2:40) Jesus never sinned, so obviously He never had to be pardoned. How then was the grace of God upon Him? We know He had God's favor and blessing and received an extraordinary amount of the working of God's Spirit. (John 3:34)

The Greek word translated grace is *charis*. The Online Bible Greek Lexicon makes the following comment on the use of this word: "that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, grace of speech, good will, loving-kindness, favor." I'd suggest this expands our understanding and appreciation of God's grace.

John in his Gospel also links grace with Jesus as the Word of God and states He was "*full of grace and truth*." (John 1:14) John goes on to comment: "*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*." (John 1:16-17)

When Jesus was baptized and also during the transfiguration vision, it is recorded that a voice was heard that said, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*." (Matthew 3:17; 17:5) Jesus' heavenly Father expressed His joy,

pleasure, delight and favor over His Son. Jesus likewise came with a message of encouragement, hope and good will.

There are 119 verses in the New King James Version where the word “grace” is found, so there’s a lot to say about how you and I are recipients of grace.

Paul addressed the Ephesians elders and told them, "*So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified*." (Acts 20:32) Gods' word instructs us, builds us up, and prepares us for receiving our ultimate inheritance in God's kingdom.

This is a gift of God's grace. Here we have a focus on the grace that comes from God's revelation to mankind recorded for us in the Scriptures. Much of that knowledge includes God's laws and commandments. Yet, so many want to set grace *against* the laws of God.

The apostle Paul wrote, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17) We may not find the specific word “grace” in this passage, but the concept is there just as well.

The apostle Paul refers to the component of grace involving Christ's sacrifice and the forgiveness of our sins, "*being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24). We can’t buy or earn this status of being declared just and righteous. It is a gift that also depends on exercising faith. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*" (Ephesians 2:8)

It takes faith to believe that the Word who was indeed God became flesh for the purpose of suffering, dying, and shedding His blood to pay the penalty for your and my sins. It also requires faith in God's revelation in His Word to accept what defines sin, what we are told to repent of, and what righteous and godly behavior is.

Paul in the book of Romans goes on to ask, "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!*" (Romans 6:1, 14-15) If we really value God's grace, we will not trample on it by continuing to sin and sully the cleansed condition that God has bestowed on us by His grace and by the work of Christ.

In this book of Romans, Paul comments on the role of the law of God. "*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law*." (Romans 7:7)

So, keeping the law of God cannot forgive past sins. Only the sacrifice of Christ who gave up His past eternal life, can pay the penalty of sin. "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*." (Romans 6:23) This is the second death because it is appointed to all men to die once because we are limited human beings with a limited life span. (Hebrews 9:27)

It's an act of grace for God to instruct mankind about His laws which define a way of life that will bring blessings when they are followed. It is an act of grace to warn mankind about the curses and negative consequences for disobeying and disregarding His holy and righteous laws and commandments. "*Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*" (Romans 7:12).

I hope these reflections and comments are helpful to you, and you'll find time to study these scriptures, perhaps sometime this Sabbath, individually or welcomed as a group…

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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