

GRACE WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY?

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" - Ephesians 2:8. We have been asked to write a simple definite explanation of the meaning of GRACE. It seems difficult to make its meaning clear; therefore many are perplexed and troubled. These we will endeavor prayerfully to help. The word translated "grace," signifies "favor." The same word sometimes is translated "mercy" in the Old Testament. Its force really is, that God saves man without any of his own sinful works; that God Himself alone is man's Saviour, even as Jonah cried in the belly of the whale, saying, "SALVATION IS OF THE LORD." And he was delivered immediately out of his close quarters.

The above Scripture - "By grace are ye saved" - teaches very emphatically that "grace" is God's way of salvation. If man is to be saved, God must show mercy. There is no other way than the Grace Way. This surely is plain, and the reason is obvious. Man was declared bankrupt, as far as having any standing or credit with Jehovah is concerned. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" - Romans 3:23 - has been written of mankind. All are charged with fifteen heavy inditements - Romans 3. Man lost his stable footing in the fall of Adam, and never has been able to regain it, even by God's help. He had no assets whatever, to recommend him to God. His liabilities were tremendous and he had nothing to pay. The Lord gave him plenty of time to redeem his lost credit and pay up, if he had been able to do so. He carried him along, as it were, in his bankrupt condition for a period of four thousand years, giving him every opportunity to make good. Alas! It was no use. He grew worse and worse. He sank deeper in debt with every passing age, with absolutely no hope whatever of regaining his standing. Then, when ALL HOPE WAS TAKEN AWAY, God came upon the scene and redeemed him and gave him a new credit.

The following was the way He did it. He sent His own Son in the guise of man, to take upon His own shoulders ALL his liabilities and pay off ALL his debt. That was grace - that God should so love the helpless, hopeless creature as to give His only begotten Son to be a ransom for his redemption. Then Christ, the Son, willingly assumed the responsibility of man's lost standing. That was grace on His part. He who was rich took the place of him that was bankrupt, with ALL his liabilities. He paid ALL his debt and set him free by dying in his stead on the Cross.

HE DIED, "THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST."

Not only so; but Christ arose from the grave and gave man a positive standing in Himself, as a NEW CREATION. He is no longer a bankrupt, without any credit before the Lord. ALL the assets of Christ's standing are set over to his account on Jehovah's ledger. He is rich indeed. This is grace, all grace, abounding grace.

And here is the marvel of grace, that the Lord should desire to show favor to undeserving man, the desperate and hopeless condition of the latter affording Him the opportunity. In fact, the creature's sorry plight, his absolute need, demanded the Creator's intervention. God's grace plan was imperative, though not deserved nor desired by man. His grace was

magnified by making a way of salvation for man when he did not merit it, neither seek it, nor even want it. Again we say, it was that very unworthiness that commended God' s love and magnifies His grace; for, had man been righteous, he would not have needed divine favor shown him. He that is full, has no need. He could have stood upon his own merits. Had he been good, he would have deserved mercy. There would have been something in him to draw out God' s goodness toward him; but he was neither righteous nor good. When man had been proven ungodly, a sinner, an enemy, yea, a rebel, in God' s universe (Romans 5:6-10); then the scepter of mercy was extended to him in the Gift of Jesus Christ. Man was not only powerless to pay his debt; but more - he did not want to pay it. He was lawless, an anarchist, as regards the government of heaven. Jesus died for this fallen creature, and thus gave proof of God' s great heart of love. That was grace - free, abounding grace - the greatest favor shown to the most ungracious, undeserving, rebellious creature.

SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH.

On what condition are these blessings given? There is only one condition - FAITH on our part - faith toward God. And marvel of marvels, here too is grace; for faith is the gift of God. Man is absolutely dependent upon God' s grace in the matter of salvation. He is "straitly shut up" to divine mercy. He must take salvation as a free gift, or not have it at all. It is either mercy, or judgment. If man refuses God' s grace, he will perforce be obliged to meet His wrath. There is absolutely no escape from wrath, except by GRACE THROUGH FAITH. God saves eternally, ALL who come penitently seeking His face. They are not only pronounced guiltless, the negative side of salvation; but righteous, and thus merit ALL things in Christ.

What we have said, we now repeat - there is no other way, but the Grace Way. God will not do part of the work, and let man do the other part. He will do it all, "save...to the uttermost," or not save at all. He will not even help a man to save himself. Christ is not a crutch, but the Saviour. He works when man quits and trusts. A salvation by man with God' s help, would not be grace - free, abounding grace; and God saves in no other way but by grace. Therefore, our answer to the question, "What does grace signify?" is summed up in the following effectual

CLINCHERS.

Grace means favor shown to the undeserving; that is, there is absolutely nothing in the recipient of grace, to merit its blessings.

God must save man, because man is not able to save himself.

A guilty man cannot atone for his own guilt; therefore, Christ atoned for all the sins of all men for all time.

A sinner cannot turn over a new leaf, for he would soil the new leaf with his filthy fingers in turning it over; because it is written, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" - Romans 3:12.

Man cannot righten the wrong he has done to God, by trying to righten the wrong he has

done to his fellow-man; neither can he atone for his sins against God, by making restitution to man. David cried to God, saying, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" - Psalm 51:4 - though his sin was indeed against his brother.

Christ alone made effectual restitution when on the cross. "I restored that which I took not away," was written of Him - Psalm 69:4.

All who are justified at all, are "justified from all things," "justified by faith," "justified freely (without a cause in the recipient) by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" - Acts 13:39; Romans 3:28, 24.

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness ... Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" - Romans 4:5-8.

Grace, wonderful Grace!
Great, boundless and free!
How its riches fill my soul;
And its glories o'er me roll.
Oh, I'll shout from pole to pole:
His Grace is sufficient for thee.