

In the King James Version of the Bible, the word grace appears in 159 verses. Most of these (122 verses) are found in the New Testament. In one manner or another, it is clear that grace is an important Biblical subject. And, we would not disagree with anyone who would teach that grace is important to our salvation. In fact, we would go so far as to say that one cannot be saved without grace.

But, this is not the same as saying that we are saved by grace alone. The grace alone doctrine teaches that one is saved, not of anything which they have done, but by God choosing them because he wants them to be saved. It also teaches that God does not choose to save some people and leaves them in a lost condition.

We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just: merciful, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom He in His eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness has elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works; just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves. (Confession of Faith, "Article XVI, "Eternal Election", Doctrinal Standards of the Christian Reformed Church, as published in *Psalter Hymnal*, Grand Rapids: Publication Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 1959)

This view is held by many today in various forms. When we study this issue of salvation by grace only, it will also be taught that God chooses those to be saved by allowing the Holy Spirit to work on them miraculously to produce a saving faith in that person. Thus, to some extent, all of those who teach that the Holy Spirit must bring you to salvation through a miraculously intervention are teaching salvation by grace alone.

I do not believe that people have really thought through what the statement that is the title of our lesson actually says, "I'll just have to trust in God's grace". They have resolved themselves to a blind hope or leap of faith hoping against hope that they will be saved one day. They have no certainty of this salvation, and many times live lives that are full of distress and despair. How can anyone be comfortable not knowing they are saved, not having any idea when they are going to be saved, and thinking there is nothing they can do about their salvation? This view

has troubled people throughout history, and has led many to do nothing but wait. A wait that will cost them their eternity with God! We need to take a very careful study of the subject of grace and how it fits into the overall picture of how we are saved. So to help us in our understanding, let us examine what we need to do to be saved.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the people came to the apostles and asked what they needed to do to be saved (Acts 2:37). In Peter's response, he gave them three things to do. (1) He told them to repent (Acts 2:38). (2) He told them to be baptized (Acts 2:38). (3) He told them to save themselves (Acts 2:40). While there is much that could be said concerning these passages, we want to note something. Peter did not tell them to just wait around and hope God elects to save them. Every part of his response involved a requirement that they do what was necessary to bring about their salvation. Peter knew that God expected man to work out his own salvation (Philippians 2:12).

Think about some other things they were taught to do. In Acts 3:19, they were told to repent. In Galatians 5:6, they were taught they needed to have faith in God (cf. Hebrews 11:6). Romans 10:9,10 taught them they had to confess Christ, such as we see recorded for us in Acts 8:37. And, they were told to be baptized in order to have their sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Again, we notice that man was not passive in his salvation. In the New Testament, they did not have the attitude that they would just "wait on God's grace".

To help us a little more, think about what Paul told the Jews in the 1st Century. Paul and his companions were going throughout the world preaching the gospel in an effort to win souls for Christ. There were those who obeyed the gospel and there were those who rejected it. At times, the opposition was great and the listeners' hearts were hardened. On one such occasion, Paul turned to the Jews and stated concerning their rejection of the gospel: "...seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). In this statement, we see that Paul understood they had a part in their salvation. They had chosen to ignore the teaching and thus showed that they did not desire to be saved. Paul knew that whether they were lost or saved depended on whether they accepted the truth or not. Paul did not instruct them to wait on the grace of God, but to do something about obeying God

so they could be saved.

Even after reading such passages as these, people will still cite such passages (or at least part of them) as Romans 3:24 – "*Being justified freely by his grace...*" or Romans 5:20 – "*...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*" Without reading the rest of these verses and the context surrounding them, it would be easy to think that we might be saved by grace only. Yet, in these passages, Paul also talks about faith and righteousness (our keeping of God's law). He also helps us to understand that our righteousness is through Jesus Christ. Paul is not teaching grace only, but is showing us that we now have our salvation because God bestowed his grace upon us. Right after his statement in Romans 5:20, Paul shows us that we are not to continue in sin that grace may abound (Romans 6:1,2). He even goes so far as to say that we are dead to sin and must not live any longer in sin. Again, Paul is teaching us that there is something we must do to be saved.

If this is true, then what is the grace of God? To best understand this, we need to turn to Ephesians 2. In this section of scripture, we see that grace is the gift of God (verse 8). The word grace means "favor". It is usually defined as an unmerited favor or that which we do not deserve since the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), but God has given us the opportunity of salvation. Therefore, grace is that which God has bestowed upon us even though we should have never received such favor (cf. John 3:16; Romans 5:7,8).

Ephesians 2 helps us to understand this concept also. When we read verses 4 and 5, we find that it was because God was "rich in mercy" and because of his "great love" that he has given us the opportunity to be saved with Christ. What did God do that we might be saved? He gave his son on the cross of Calvary to pay the price for our salvation (Hebrews 10:10). Because of this great sacrifice, we can now be saved. However, we must always keep in mind that Jesus did not die on the cross so we could live like we want to live (2 Corinthians 5:15). We must live in keeping with his will. This is what the grace of God enjoins upon us.

Paul affirms this when continuing his discussion in Ephesians 2:8. Here, he connects the two parts of our salvation, God's part and man's part. We are saved by grace (God's part) through faith (man's part). One without the other is useless. It is half the formula.

While we cannot be saved without grace, we also cannot be saved without meeting God's conditions for salvation.

In the Biblical record, they did not wait on God's grace. They sought immediately to be saved. The Eunuch in Acts 8 was being instructed concerning Jesus and realized his need to be baptized and asked what hindered him to be baptized. There was water there to do so, and he wanted it done (Acts 8:36). They that gladly received the word in Acts 2 were baptized. They did not wait on anything but readily submitted themselves in obedience to God. Even the Romans, to whom so much had been said concerning grace, obeyed from the heart the message they had been taught (Romans 6:17). Certainly, we recognize that God wants all men everywhere to be saved (Acts 17:30). However, God is not going to just save us without our having obeyed his will. A good example of this is Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ.

Here is how Paul summed up his salvation, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am...*" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul knew that he did not deserve to be saved, especially since he had been the great persecutor of the church. But, when we view Paul's conversion, do we find that he was just elected by God, with no work on his part?

When Paul was persecuting the church, he was making a trip to Damascus with the purpose of arresting members of the church. While on that journey, Jesus appeared to him in a bright light and spoke to him. Paul was a more subdued person when he spoke to Jesus. In his discussion with Jesus, Paul makes what would be a strange statement if we were just supposed to wait on God's grace. In fact, if there was ever a time in which one could be saved miraculously, this would be the perfect opportunity. So what did Paul say? "*..Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" (Acts 9:1-6). If all that could happen to Paul so he could be saved would be God's grace coming upon him, that is, God choosing to save him, then why did Paul ask such a question? Simply put, in the New Testament, they all understood they had to fulfill their part in their salvation. If they did not, they would be lost.

What did Paul do? He went into the city and waited to be told what to do. After all, this is what Jesus told him to do (Acts 9:6). Three days later, Ananias came to Paul and told him what he had to do to be saved and Paul was baptized into Christ (Acts 9:18). Why

would Paul submit to baptism? Because he had been told to do so in order to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16), and Paul wanted to be saved and serve God (1 Corinthians 15:10).

When we think about this, we begin to see how grace fits into the picture of how we are saved. Paul did not deserve to be saved, but God gave him the opportunity to be saved. God had given his son upon the cross so Paul (and all of us) could be saved. Paul would later express his appreciation for this in Galatians 6:14: "*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*". And although God's grace was bestowed upon the world, man is not saved just because Christ died for us. Man must still respond to God's plan of salvation.

It is a dangerous thing to "just wait on God's grace". God is not going to mysteriously save us. Those who wait will be lost. The grace of God has already been given to us. It is now up to us to obey God by following his plan of salvation. To put it simply, here is how we are saved. Grace (God's part). The price of redemption paid on the cross for all mankind (Hebrews 9:15). Obedience (Man's part). A simple plan really. Hear God's word (Acts 10:33); Believe in God and his word (Hebrews 11:6); Repent (Acts 2:38; 3:19); Confess Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10); and be baptized in water (1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16). This will bring us out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9), into his kingdom (Colossians 1:13), and will make us new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We can choose to wait on his grace or we can realize that his grace is already here, and God is waiting on us. Let us choose today to accept his grace by obeying his will (Ephesians 2:10).

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the
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**"They Shall Be Turned
Unto Fables"**

"I'll Just Have To Trust in God's Grace"

by
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