

# WORD OF TRUTH

Vol. 1

Issue 12

## GRACE

*“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2: 8-10).*

Dr. James A. Stewart referred to Ephesians as the “*Alps of the New Testament.*” Surely the teaching found here in chapter two is very lofty. Every evangelical Bible teacher in the world teaches on this passage, and on the subject of *grace*. All of us say we believe in salvation by grace “plus nothing, minus nothing.” This is the core of fundamental doctrine, but do we really grasp its full meaning?

We must examine the meaning of the Bible word *grace*. The Greek word for grace is *charis*. Most of us simply say grace is unmerited, undeserved favor. The definition is good, if incomplete. Strong’s Greek Dictionary gives this definition: “*figuratively, literally and spiritually, especially the divine influence on the heart, and its reflection in the life.*” Grace bestowed from God is a free gift of divine favor in contrast to doing good works seeking to find favor with God.

It is even in contrast from the works of the law, freely forgiving the sinner who has broken the law, **solely on the merits of another who kept the law perfectly**. Remember, law allows **no failures, no mistakes**: “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*” (James 2: 10).

For now, the Lord has not allowed me to locate my notes on a series I preached on Ephesians at the Lakewood Presbyterian Church in Atlanta about 20 years ago. Most of my ministry has been as a missionary worker, and evangelist. As such, most of my preaching has not been in series on certain books of the Bible, or continuing themes. So it was a real thrill for

me to do a somewhat detailed exposition at that time. In the course of two years I was able to cover Ephesians, and a study of the Seven Churches of Revelation. I enjoyed it immensely. In that time I was not able to exhaustively study Ephesians, but we covered some ground even though they only had me there an average of two or three times a month.

There are basically three types of preaching. The first is *textual* preaching. This is where you take a text from the Bible, and either explore (expound), the text, or build a theme around it.

The second is *subject* preaching. You take a Bible subject and preach a message on it from all over the Bible, and other resources.

The third is *expository* preaching which takes a book of the Bible, or a chapter, or good sized portion, and attempts to mine the material as deeply as is practical in the allotted time. This is the best kind for a pastor to use because the people can learn much about the Bible this way. Of course, there are many variations on these types of sermons, but these are the basics.

To study the subject of grace, the second chapter of Ephesians is perhaps the best place to be. These verses encapsulate grace showing us what it is, and what it isn't, in relation to law, works, death, life, God and man. It is not of yourselves. Nothing you could do from within to merit this salvation. You say "**What about faith?** Isn't that something I do?" You exercise faith as the vehicle to reach for salvation, but the context of the verse indicates that **even the faith is a gift of God**. It is not of works lest any man should boast.

Paul, as in all his epistles, tells us from the start to whom he is speaking. In Ephesians 1:1 he says "*to the saints*". Paul says it is by grace that we are *saved*. Sinners are made saints by the Lord. They are *saved*. This is another great Bible word. It means **deliverance**. It means life in contrast to the death he talks about in verse one. He says "*You hath he (God), quickened (made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sin (the broken law) (Ephesians 2:1)*". He is speaking of spiritual death here, and in the past tense. *You were dead!* Things are different now. You have been made alive! Our verse {*by grace are you saved*}, is also past tense. Inverting the words brings it clearer: **by grace you are saved through faith**. This is the meaning of the text.

John R.W. Stott puts it this way: **“You were saved through faith, and even this faith by which you are saved is God’s gift. Theologically, this is true. We must never think of salvation as a kind of a transaction between God and us in which he contributes grace, and we contribute faith. For we were dead and had to be quickened before we could believe. No, Christ’s apostles clearly teach elsewhere that saving faith too is God’s gracious gift.”** (e.g. Acts 18:27; Philippians 1:29) From the Message of Ephesians; IVP, Downers Grove, Illinois; 1979 edition (Emphasis mine).

Matthew Henry’s commentary on our text says: **“Note, every converted sinner is a saved sinner. Such are delivered from sin and wrath; they are brought into a state of salvation, and have a right given them by grace to eternal happiness. The grace that saves them is the free, underserved, goodness and favor of God; and He saves them, not by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, by means of which they come to partake of the great blessings of the gospel; and both that faith and that salvation on which it has so great an influence are the gift of God.”** (emphasis mine).

He says in Ephesians 2:1: **“You have been made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins”**. He goes on to tell us that these dead sinners were **“dead men walking”** according to the world system, which is against God, and following **“the prince of the power of the air”**, which is Satan. These dead also had **“their behavior in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others”** (verse 3). In other words, the apostle is saying that these saints mentioned in Chapter one started out as everyone else, all **“children of wrath”** under God’s curse. In contrast to now being saved, they were lost.

He goes on in verses four and five to reiterate the quickening of God so that they are no longer dead in sin. **Nowhere in these two chapters does he give one iota of credit to man regarding their salvation. It is all of grace!** The making alive, the undeserved favor, the faith, the union with Christ, the good works that follow as God’s plan after salvation, are all the gift of Almighty God!

Note that it has brought them (and all of us who are saved), to a position in heavenly places spiritually with Christ. In the entire Bible you do not find any scripture that indicates that any man or woman can be saved without

Jesus Christ! This goes for elect and non-elect! In the OT; He is the coming Messiah. In NT: He is the realized Messiah. You see this making alive, this grace, this faith we have been discussing has an objective, and **the objective is Jesus Christ**. This grace leads us to Him, who as Savior had to die for us. He procured our salvation for us. He is the salvation that this grace and faith lead us to. **His very name, Jesus, means salvation**. Remember: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father but by me” (John 14:6).*

This grace leads one to Christ and no other, and it is absolutely necessary to **“look unto Him”** by faith to be saved. The goodness of God exhibited in His Grace, leads us to repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 2:4). There is no other way! Praise to His Name!

So we can say grace is:

- 1) Free Grace---the gift of God.
- 2) Saving Grace---it brings us to eternal salvation.
- 3) Sovereign Grace—not of ourselves, but by God’s sovereign will.
- 4) Sustaining Grace—created in Christ Jesus unto good works. He ordained beforehand that we should walk (move forward) in them.

## **Amazing Grace**

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind, but now I see

T’was grace that taught my heart to fear  
And grace, my fears relieved  
How precious did that grace appear,  
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come  
‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home

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've first begun

Song by John Newton in 1779. The world's best-known hymn. These are the four most commonly used verses, of possibly ten, six of which were definitely written by Newton. Click link for more. These are the ones we know so well in most churches in the South.

[www.anointedlinks.com/amazing\\_grace.html](http://www.anointedlinks.com/amazing_grace.html) also see this site for more:  
[http://cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/m/a/amazing\\_grace.htm](http://cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/m/a/amazing_grace.htm)

Another great hymn of grace is:

### **Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.**

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace!  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer; Hither by Thy help I've come;  
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger, Interposed His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.

O that day when freed from sinning, I shall see Thy lovely face;  
Clothed then in blood washed linen, How I'll sing Thy sovereign grace;  
Come, my Lord, no longer tarry, Take my ransomed soul away;  
Send thine angels now to carry, Me to realms of endless day.

For more on this great hymn and the author, Robert Robinson, see:

<http://cyberhymnal.org/htm/c/o/comethou.htm>

By Charles Woodruff email: [oursong2004@charter.net](mailto:oursong2004@charter.net)

Snail mail: 90 Raymond Ray Street, Newnan, GA 30265

Visit my blog- <http://cyberwordoftruth.blogspot.com>

Originally written May 27, 2006 and revised March 11, 2007