

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be looking at the subject of grace in the scriptures.

I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter. The primary criteria for inclusion are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include the references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

In addition, if you have a testimony to share, please send that to me as well and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

Also, if you have particular subjects that you would like me to cover in the Newsletter, please let me know.

You can also view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) by going to:

<https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

I've also added a new part to the site where you can find additional resources, aptly named:

<https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

If at any time you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please let me know. Your responses to me are confidential unless you request otherwise.

Ephesians 2

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved),
6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.
8 For by grace are ye saved through faith--and that not of yourselves; but it is the gift of God--
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
11 Wherefore, remember that ye were in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands,

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world;
13 But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.
14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us,
15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;
16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby,
17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh.
18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Ether 5

28 I give unto men weakness, that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.
29 Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness; and I will show unto them that faith, hope, and charity bringeth unto me the fountain of all righteousness.

Salvation through the grace of Christ is a subject and phrase about which much is spoken in Christian circles due in no small part to the writings of the apostle Paul. It hearkens back to the idea that salvation is not something we can achieve either by the works of our hands or the merits of our character, but by the person and power of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, Paul wrote much about this because many of those that he wrote to were confessing Christians, but they were also misled at times by some who taught that the law of Moses was still the governing body for believers. At the time when the New Testament events were unfolding it was the religious leaders of the Jews that promoted this idea that salvation was the reward for strict and typically literal Mosaic law adherence, with the idea that the law itself was responsible for bringing about this salvation.

We understand now that this interpretation of salvation was flawed.

The justice of God requires a matching punishment for a corresponding sin, and the law of Moses was, if nothing else, a law concerning justice. The law contained no mercy in its statutes and judgments – it did however lay out in excruciating detail how to match punishment for crime. It was a law of reparations, but in no place did it grant something for good behavior, as it were.

The schoolmaster aspect of the law of Moses showed that the means of reparation is sacrifice, in which the only currency was life in exchange for life. It taught this by providing a symbolic reference that men could carry out through a system of ordinances that involved the sacrifice of sheep, goats, other cattle, and birds. It taught Israel that the only way for justice to be satisfied is for an innocent life to be given in exchange for the sins that have been committed. It did this in part as a deterrent against bad behavior.

When Adam and Eve committed their sin by partaking of the fruit they had been explicitly commanded to not eat, they had already been told by God that in the day that they should eat of that fruit, they would “surely die”. Yet having partaken of the fruit, they did not die a physical death,

but a spiritual one. This led to a natural conundrum: how can the word of God be fulfilled in bringing death to satisfy the demands of justice while also giving mankind the opportunity to satisfy the purpose for their creation, which is to have life? Both are the word of God, yet both are equally impossible because they are juxtaposed against each other.

This is where the wisdom of God fixes the conundrum: God would bring about the one by bringing about the other. There must be a death to enable life, and thus the plan of salvation was born.

Let's look at the term soul for a moment. In the beginning God created Adam as a living soul. Before Adam could "live and move and have his being" as Paul might have said, he was flesh created out of the dust of the earth, but he was not immediately a living soul. Rather, after having given his flesh form, God breathed into Adam the breath of life.

Genesis 2:7 (KJV) And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:8 (Inspired Version) And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul--the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also.

Thus the spirit and the body is the soul of man.

It is important to note this because without the breath of life – or in other words his spirit – Adam was just a lump of flesh lying motionless on the dirt from which his body was formed. This two-part composition of the living soul is important because of how this became an answer to the problem of atonement. Atonement is the process of bringing two people separated by an offense back together through a trade of sorts – the reparations for a sin.

The law of Moses taught this in the form of a metaphor: they had ordinances to carry out which demonstrated how the life of an innocent creature (cattle, birds, etc.) had to be given by sacrifice – death -- to cleanse the guilty sinner of his sin. But it was a metaphor, only showing by example what the real sacrifice would have to be.

What the Jews in the early New Testament times had lost sight of was the metaphor element of the law of Moses, believing instead that these sacrifices of innocent animals actually performed the work of this substitutionary sacrifice

It is not that dissimilar to how Catholics today view the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in which they believe the bread and wine to become the actual body and blood of Jesus. The idea that metaphor is the actual element instead of representing the actual element is one way in which the truth becomes obscured by simple misunderstanding.

From the time of Adam until the time of Jesus Christ, sacrifices of this nature were performed to show man what Jesus would be doing on our behalf. As such, the law of Moses was a temporary law intended to be fulfilled by the life of Jesus.

Hebrews 9

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us,

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the meridian of time hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. And he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation unto them that look for him.

One may be inclined to believe that this sacrifice of Jesus answered for every sin for every person, but that would be an overstatement of what the law taught us. Verse 28 above shows us that “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of *many*,” not, “*all*,” as some might suggest. That key difference tells us volumes about the sacrifice of Jesus.

The “law” taught that those who wanted to be forgiven would have to bring their sacrifice to the priests. The people who did not bring their sacrifices to the priests could not receive this beneficial forgiveness of sins. If Jesus bore the sins of “all” then it would be inconsistent with the function of the law.

The people who brought the animals to the altar did it because they wanted something – they wanted to become right with God. But it was not done without some kind of expectation. They expected that the offering they brought – by virtue of bringing it to the altar – was that this would be pleasing to God, and thus by pleasing God they would find favor with him.

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1 (Inspired Version) Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The people who diligently seek to please the Lord do so by exercising their faith in him. But the sacrifice of the Lord is not for those who do not seek him, but for those who do seek him, because the Lord is pleased by those who diligently seek him.

When Paul wrote “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8) it was with this background. Faith meant something more than just accepting the divinity of Jesus – it meant the exercise of faith in a meaningful and important way: it was bringing an offering to the Lord with a singleness of heart and desire for pleasing the Lord. No practicing Jew would have considered that admitting the divinity of God was sufficient for making oneself right with God. Even devils admit to the divinity of God, but that is not sufficient for them to be made right with God.

While Jesus performed the great work of performing that last atoning sacrifice, our need to sacrifice is not entirely finished if we want to demonstrate our willingness to serve him and to choose him as our savior. The prophet David wrote about this almost a thousand years before the birth of Christ:

Psalms 34

18 **The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.**

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

20 He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

22 **The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.**

How can one be a servant of the Lord if he does not “serve” the Lord? They must bring the offering of a broken heart and contrite spirit and **do** the work of a servant. The reason for **doing** the work of a servant is out of an expectation of some reward for having done so.

We begin to realize that being “saved by grace through faith” means that grace is the means, but that faith is the determining factor in whether that grace is available to you. After all, how can you receive this “gift of God” if you continue in the works of sin without repentance? Rather, the works of faith are those that would cause you to repent of sin. Repentance is more than mere asking for forgiveness, but the alteration of your life to cease from the commission of sin as best you can.

The apostle James, who was the Lord’s brother, wrote to the churches to guide them in understanding the importance of understanding what faith involves.

James 2

14 What profit is it, my brethren, for a man to say he hath faith and hath not works? Can faith save him?

15 Yea, a man may say, I will show thee I have faith without works; but I say, Show me thy faith without works, and **I will show thee my faith by my works.**

16 For if a brother or sister be naked and destitute, and one of you say, Depart in peace; be warmed and filled, notwithstanding he give not those things which are needful to the body, what profit is your faith unto such?

17 Even so, **faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone.**

18 Therefore, wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead and cannot save you?**

19 Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble; thou hast made thyself like unto them, not being justified.

20 Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?

21 **Seest thou how works wrought with his faith and by works was faith made perfect?**

The end of repentance is obedience, and the end of obedience is grace.

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

If there is no obedience, there is no repentance, and without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins. Without forgiveness of sins we face the terrible reality of suffering what we deserve.

Hebrews 6

4 For he hath made it impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come,

6 **If they shall fall away**, to be renewed again unto repentance, seeing **they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame**.

7 For the day cometh that the earth--which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it and bringeth forth herbs meet for them who dwelleth thereon, by whom it is dressed, who now receiveth blessings from God--shall be cleansed with fire.

8 For that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected and is nigh unto cursing; **therefore, they who bring not forth good fruits shall be cast into the fire; for their end is to be burned**.

What is grace though? Isn't grace what saves us?

Indeed it is. But a gift of God that is rejected is no different than one that was never offered, and we reject the grace of God by continuing in those things which are sinful. That is why faith is important for the application of grace.

Grace is the abundant good-will of God towards us, by which he offered himself as a sacrifice for us so that we might have an abundant eternal life in the resurrection. If we reject that good-will by continuing in sin then we are essentially saying, "thanks, but no thanks." It is an act of faith to pursue obedience, and it is by faith that we can be made perfect.

Matthew 5:50 Ye are, therefore, commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

We can continue in the good-will, or grace of God, when we seek the will of the Lord. Where we fail is where grace – the power behind the sacrifice of Jesus – can overcome our weaknesses.

Romans 6

1 What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?**

2 **God forbid**. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection,

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead to sin is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him,

9 Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

The Book of Mormon provides a very keen, insightful and powerful explanation for this sacrifice.

Alma 16

210 For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice--yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an **infinite and eternal sacrifice**.

211 Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood, which will atone for the sins of another.

212 Now if a man murdereth, behold, will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay.

213 But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; **therefore, there can be nothing, which is short of an infinite atonement, which will suffice for the sins of the world; therefore, it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice;**

214 And then shall there be, or it is expedient there should be, a stop to the shedding of blood; then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall all be fulfilled, every jot and tittle; and none shall have passed away.

215 And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law--every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal; and **thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name;**

216 **This being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice and bringeth about means unto men, that they may have faith unto repentance.**

217 **And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore, only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.**

With the end of the law of Moses, there is a new law, and that law is Christ:

Romans 7:24 And now I see another law, even the commandment of Christ, and it is imprinted in my mind.

3 Nephi 7

10 **Behold, I am the law and the light;** look unto me and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.

11 Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore, keep my commandments.

12 And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.

3 Nephi 4

44 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I created the heavens, and the earth, and all things that in them are.

45 I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

46 I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.

47 And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.

48 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

49 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings; and **ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit.**

50 **And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost,** even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

51 Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin; therefore, **whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive; for of such is the kingdom of God.**

52 **Behold, for such I have laid down my life and have taken it up again; therefore, repent, and come unto me, ye ends of the earth, and be saved.**

Salvation by grace is the term we can use to describe all of these things that Jesus does for those who repent of their sins and come unto him as a little child. It is they that reap the benefit of his work and sacrifice, but we need to understand that this is not a gift that is earned since there is nothing we can repay – we are not the ones that were able to make an infinite and eternal sacrifice. Grace is a gift given by God that is received by those who turn away from dead works.

The prophet Nephi in the Book of Mormon wrote this very simply.

2 Nephi 11

43 For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ and to be reconciled to God;

44 For we know that **it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.**

Therefore, let us do well.