

Powerful, Marvelous Grace!

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The most sublime message in all of the world is the theme of the Scriptures. That message conveys the wonderful truth that God will save sinners. Not because He is forced to do so, but because He wants to do so. The great God of Heaven sees sinful men and desires that they come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Simply stated, that is what the Bible calls grace - powerful, marvelous grace. Powerful, because God's grace is "*exceedingly abundant*" (1 Timothy 1:14). No one has to be concerned that God's grace is limited in quantity. There is enough grace to extend to every man or woman now living, dead, or yet to be born. God's grace is marvelous, because it is beyond comprehension why God would be so concerned for disobedient, sinful rebels. "*God so loved the world*" is the only reason given for the sending of His Son and the extension of His grace toward man. We marvel at such mercy! It is a mercy and grace adequate enough to forgive the sins of the whole world! It is a thought too high and holy to be fully appreciated this side of eternity, but one that we enjoy to the fullest.

God's powerful, marvelous grace has been the subject of much discussion over the centuries. Some have mistakenly concluded that God's grace, in the end, will save everyone regardless of how they have lived, because of the depth of God's love. The love of God, however, does not preclude Him from punishing evildoers. Hell will be filled with people whom God loves! His grace is powerful and marvelous, but God has placed certain limits on His grace.

For instance, God's grace will not save those who refuse grace. The sad fact is there are unbelievers, and they will be lost eternally (Revelation 21:8). Grace can be rendered ineffective by man's refusal to believe God can and will save him. Grace can be frustrated when man does not have faith in the Savior, Jesus. Jesus said, "*For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*" (John 8:24). It is erroneous to conclude that God will save by grace a man who refuses to be forgiven. Unbelievers cannot be saved because they have not placed themselves in the sphere of God's grace through obedient faith. Ephesians 2:8 says that we are saved by grace through faith. One teacher I know said that he tested a man's belief in salvation by grace by how that man quotes Ephesians 2:8. If a man goes further than saying, "*For by grace you are saved...*", the preacher concludes that they do not believe in salvation by grace. But Paul didn't stop there, either. He said "*grace...through faith.*" Shall we therefore conclude that Paul did not believe in salvation by grace? Of course not.

Furthermore, God's grace will not save the disobedient. It seems almost silly to make such a point, doesn't it? Surely everyone understands that God's grace is limited to the obedient. Yet, some people hold on to the false hope that such is not the case. It is possible to be "*fallen from grace*" (Galatians 5:4). Certainly, one who has fallen from grace is no longer a recipient of the benefits of grace. Even those who were once saved by grace can be lost through disobedience. God's grace does not ignore disobedience and rebellion. God's grace forgives when we repent of sin. This is why the popular "once saved always saved" theory is so blatantly wrong. God's grace does not give permission to sinners to continue in their sinful ways. Roman 6:1-2 calls upon recipients of the grace of God to forego sin. We must turn sin loose, and stop our pursuit of wickedness if we wish to bask in the grace of God. Paul argues with the Romans that more sin does not equal more grace. Grace does not give incentive to the disobedient to be more

rebellious. Rather it encourages sinners to turn away from sin. Saving grace *“teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age”* (Titus 2:11-12).

Personally, I resent the efforts of some present-day brethren who say that historically, preachers and teachers among churches of Christ have never really preached nor understood the grace of God. These critics demonstrate both their arrogance and ignorance in making such charges. Somehow, these brethren have suddenly “discovered” grace for the rest of us poor, unenlightened souls. Yet, their “discovery” is not Biblical grace at all. Their brand of grace allows them to take liberties where God has not granted license. They use grace as a cover for sin and disobedience. Their “discovery” of grace is really a self-authorized liberty to ignore God's plan of salvation and the scriptural patterns God outlines for His church. We would all do well to be wary of any teacher who is so arrogant as to think he has discovered for the rest of us such a profound Biblical truth.

Grace. Powerful, marvelous grace! It is the expression of God’s love for His creation. It is the basis of our eternal salvation in Jesus Christ. It is what Jesus came to offer, and what we would do well to accept through an obedient faith to Him.