

# Salvation Through Grace

*“by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8)*

Our opening citation demonstrates the importance of the role of Grace in the salvation of men and women: “by Grace” we are “saved through faith” - and to those who would advocate that salvation is based upon personal merits and actions, the Apostle writes that it is “not of yourselves,” rather “it is the gift of God”. Given the importance of the subject, is it somewhat surprising that there seems to be little written about it in Christadelphian works. The Apostasy has a range of opinions, including the bestowal of some mystical power upon believers, and the idea that men and women are somehow irresistibly operated upon in order to save them, irrespective of their own free will. But leaving behind the fables of men, our duty is to set forth Bible Truth on the matter, and this we shall endeavor to do.

The Greek word for “grace” literally means “favour”, and the word is frequently used in the context of salvation to describe the “favour” of God towards man. Consider the following testimonies:

“we believe that through *the grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved ...” (Acts 15:11).

“ ... the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of *the grace of God.*” (Acts 20:24)

“the hope ... which is come unto you as it is in all the world and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you since the day ye heard of it, and *knew the grace of God in truth*” (Col. 1:6).

“*the grace of God* that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Tit. 2:11)

From these passages, we find that Grace is an aspect which is important for us to understand. Indeed, the Gospel itself is defined as “the Gospel *of the Grace of God*”, and elsewhere the Word of God is described as “the word *of his grace*” (Acts 14:3, 20:32), which again demonstrates the importance of a correct understanding: i.e. we cannot understand the Gospel of God if we do not understand it’s doctrine of Grace.

## ***BEING MADE RIGHTEOUS BY GRACE***

The Epistle to the Roman ecclesia links grace with faith and justification (the means by which we can be accounted as righteous in the sight of God). So we read of the believers:

“ ... *being justified freely by his grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24, see Tit. 3:7, ).

Another rendering of this verse is: “... being declared right, *without paying, by His favour* through the redemption which is in Messiah ...”. His Grace, or “favour” is the means by which we are “declared right” freely, that is, “without paying” - as we saw from Ephesians 2:8 (cited above), it is “the Gift of God”.

This theme is continued into Chapter 4 of Romans, which has, as its central theme, the way in which a believer can become righteous in God's sight - through faith rather than obedience to law. Using Abraham as an example, the chapter teaches: "to him that worketh is the reward **not reckoned of grace, but of debt**. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, **his faith is counted for righteousness**" (Rom. 4:4-5).

The principle here is that no man can be righteous and earn salvation by their own good works: it can only come as a gift of grace to those who have faith. So we read further:

"Therefore it is of faith, **that it might be by grace**; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Rom. 4:16).

So, "it is of faith, that it might be by Grace". The underlying theme here is the glorification of God. Salvation can only come to those who believe in Him, and the work of His Son: God alone is glorified. Even the very best endeavors of men fall short of His Righteousness, as it is written: "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: (Rom. 3:23). So, the remedial system of salvation is appointed by God to be "by Grace", because it is based upon faith and forgiveness, and not fallible works of obedience, and wages earned. This theme runs throughout the New Testament Scriptures, the following are two clear examples:

"we through the spirit wait for the hope of **righteousness by faith**" (Gal. 5:5)

" I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but **that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God which is by faith ...**" (Phil. 3:9).

#### **THE CERTAINTY OF OUR HOPE**

There is nothing worse than hearing of elderly brethren and sisters being terrified of dying because they fear that they have not been 'good enough,' or 'worthy' and that they might be cast away at the judgment. The Scriptures state that: "it is of faith that is might be by Grace; to the end **that the promise might be sure to all the seed ...**" (Rom. 3:16). The fact of God's Grace being extended to us through faith is something that is ordained in order for the promise to be "made sure", that is, not to be uncertain, or doubtful. Occasionally, those of the Churches ridicule us for having an uncertain hope: i.e. that we do not know whether we will be approved at the judgment seat or not. Indeed, we ourselves can look towards the judgment seat with vexation and uncertainty as to whether or not we will be admitted to the Kingdom. The Bible, on the other hand, speaks of our hope of Grace as being definite and certain:

"... the **full assurance** of hope ..." (Heb. 6:11).

"... which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, **both sure and steadfast ...**" (Heb. 6:19).

If we trust in the Word of God, and believe that He is able to perform that which he has promised, then we are hoping in a thing that will become a definite reality. Our hope of having a place in God's kingdom is a "full assurance" being "sure and steadfast", not an

uncertain possibility that might or might not take place. Of what use is an anchor if it is not sure and steadfast? Even so, our faith should be “an anchor of the soul”.

### ***TWO WAYS***

Our Master likened a person’s walk in life to traversing down a particular path, either broad or narrow:

“enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, ***which leadeth unto life***, and few there by that find it” (Mat. 7:13-14).

Notice, which destination is ultimately reached depends solely upon what path is being followed. The narrow path does not lead to more than one place, to both destruction and life, depending upon the exertions of those who walk along it. The way of life leads only to life, and therefore if we are walking along that Way, arriving at the correct destination is guaranteed!

In the case of Noah, who “prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb. 11:7), entering into the Ark was his guarantee of salvation. Just so long as he remained in the ark, his salvation from the flood of waters was guaranteed!

The Master exhorts us to “seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for ***it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom***” (Luke 12:32). The fact of the kingdom being given is something that enables us to “fear not”, and not cower in doubt and uncertainty. It is the Father’s “good pleasure” to give us the kingdom, and so we must trust in faith that it will indeed be given to us.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the love of Christ as something that is definite and unchanging:

“who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35, 38-39).

The only thing that can separate us from the love of God is if we deny Him, and turn back to fulfilling our own lusts and desires. If we choose to leave the narrow way, and walk down the broad way which is more interesting to the flesh. “Every man is tempted, when ***he is drawn away*** of his own lust, and enticed” (Jas. 1:14). If we choose to be drawn away by our lusts, that is the only thing which can jeopardize our standing before God. So long as we stay in the antitypical Ark and remain on the Way of Life, our salvation is absolute, and guaranteed. As we already cited, truly we have “a ***strong consolation***, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, ***both sure and steadfast***” (Heb. 6:18-19).

### ***ARE WE SAVED ALREADY?***

We have heard the voice of rebuke from those who should know better, concerning the certainty of the hope we have in Christ’s coming kingdom. To say that we believe

unwaveringly that by the Grace of God we shall be given a place in the kingdom, is to render us liable to be called “arrogant”, “presumptuous”, “conceited” and other epithets. But not only do the Scriptures clearly speak of our hope as an absolute certainty, it also speaks of eternal life in terms of being a present possession. Consider the following testimonies:

“... this is the record, that God *hath given to us* eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1Jno 5:11).

“... these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that *ye have* eternal life, and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 Jno. 5:13).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; *but is* passed from death unto life” (Jno. 5:24).

“giving thanks unto the Father, which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:12-13).

There is a principle in Scripture, that when things are of an absolute certainty, God speaks of them as though they were already so. An example of this is the promise God gave to Abraham, “who is the father of us all (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, *and calleth those things which be not as though they were*” (Rom. 5:16-17). Though in chronology the promises to Abraham would not take place until the future, such was the certainty of them being fulfilled, that God speaks as though they were actually accomplished. This is the sense in which the testimonies cited above speak of our Hope as if we were already in possession of its fulfillment. Other Scriptures speak of it as something yet to come:

“If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we *shall be* saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10).

“every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s *at his coming*” (1 Cor. 15:23).

And so on, examples could be multiplied. The system and process of salvation as appointed by our Father does not conclude until the resurrection of the dead, and the bestowal of immortality. Until then, we are *being* saved, and the only sense in which we are saved already, is in a prospective sense. But so long as we do not stray from the path of life, our salvation is so certain, and so absolute, that it is as though we were already saved in the purpose of God.

Linked with these ideas, is the Bible doctrine of predestination, whereby God has “marked out before” (the meaning of the word “predestination”) from the foundation of the world those who shall be saved, upon the basis of His Foreknowledge of their belief and conduct. So we read:

“for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate (*mark out before – CAM*) to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, who he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he

called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29-30).

Notice again, that glory is spoken of as a present possession: “them he also glorified” - when in actual fact, Messiah’s brethren remain the offscouring of the world, and do not have glory. But based upon God’s foreknowledge it is as good as done already; their redemption and salvation is certain and absolute in His Purpose, and He sees the end from the beginning.

An interesting passage in this context is Hebrews 3:14:

“for we *are* made partakers of Christ, *if* we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:14).

In this verse, the certainty of our Hope is again expressed in the present tense – we are already made partakers of Christ – but it is not unconditional. It is only *if* we have confidence, and remain steadfast unto the end. There is a warning: we must take heed, lest we “fail of the grace of God” (Heb. 12:15) by turning aside from the Way of Life.

### ***PEACE AND JOY***

We saw earlier that salvation is by Grace in order for “the promise *might be sure* ...” (Rom. 4:16). A little reflection on these things reveals the wisdom of this arrangement. If left to our own devices, we would truly be in a miserable state, being constantly unable to achieve a satisfactory standard of righteousness. But we are not left to our own devices: the promise is “sure” because it is based upon God’s own Grace extended to us, and not of ourselves and our feeble abilities. It is not dependent upon human endeavours. From time to time, we might lament our own inabilities, and with the Apostle Paul, say “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Sometimes the burden of sin seems to be so great and we feel so unworthy that we cannot see ourselves being in the Kingdom. But it is precisely because salvation is not of ourselves, but of Grace, that we can lift up our heads in hope – a sure and certain hope, not reflective of our own personal failures.

The Master told a parable of two men who went to pray – a Pharisee and a Publican, and they both approached God with two different attitudes of mind. The Pharisee sought salvation by works, saying: “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” The publican however, was too weighed down by his sense of sin that all he could do was to throw himself upon the mercy of the Lord. His prayer was: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner”. The Master concludes the parable, saying, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Lu. 18:9-14).

The point we wish to make from this is that perhaps the Judgment Seat will be different to what we might imagine. Sometimes the idea is presented that acceptance is based on what works we have done, and that if we have marked up more good works than bad, that will result in us being granted entry into the kingdom. Conversely, if we have more bad than good points, we will be rejected. But through the weakness of human nature, this concept will inevitably lead to a sense of failing and uncertainty about the Judgment Seat, with all the depression and anxiety that such a state of mind brings. This parable suggests that the accepted ones are not who we might think – not those who trust in their own perceived righteousness, but those who trust in the Grace of God to save them from their sins.

Being that our salvation is secured, and made sure and certain by the sacrifice of Christ, there is no need for us to feel inadequate, for the Grace of God will cover all of our sins. There is not need for us to lament our position as ‘miserable sinners’, but we can rejoice with peace of mind that the Sacrifice of Christ – the greatest extension of Grace to man is all sufficient to cover our sins. So the Apostle speaks of our situation in our Lord Jesus Christ:

“By whom also we have access by faith into *this grace* wherein we stand, *and rejoice* in the hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

And again,

“*Rejoice* in the Lord alway: and again I say, *Rejoice*” (Phil. 4:4)

The Hope that we have is not shrouded in doubt and uncertainty. It is written in the Proverbs: “the desire of the righteous *shall be* granted” (Prov. 10:24). Our desire to be with the Master in his kingdom “shall be granted”. This being so, we can truly “rejoice” in the hope that we share with each other. Once we recognize and understand the Bible doctrine of Grace, there needs to be no uncertainty about our salvation: as we said earlier, if we walk along the narrow way, there is only one destination that it will bring us to. There is no need for us to fear the Judgment Seat, for we trust in the power of God to save us, rather than to wallow in self-pity for our own inadequacies.

#### ***THE ROLE OF WORKS***

Speaking of our salvation, the Apostle writes:

“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

This being so, belief and confession go together for our salvation. We confess our belief in Messiah when we are baptized, and the life that we live subsequently. Comparing our salvation with that of Noah, the Apostle speaks of “the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). Being that baptism “saves us” it is logically necessary for us to be baptized to be saved. But notice that here again, we have our salvation spoken of in the present tense: “... doth also *now* save us”. Such is the certainty of our salvation if we remain in the Ark.

The comparison in 1 Peter is with the Ark that Noah built. Noah and his household, we are told, were saved by faith:

“By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, *prepared an ark to the saving of his house*; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb. 11:7).

Notice that in Noah we have another example of justification “by faith.” But notice also, that Noah had to act upon that faith. In order for him to be saved, he needed to construct the ark. Truly it was his faith that saved him, and motivated him to build - but work of building was also necessary also: not to earn salvation by works, but rather to manifest the faith that he had. So James tells us:

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew my thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works: (Jas. 2:18).

What we are required to do to have salvation is to believe and be baptized. And the joy of knowing this will provoke us to keep Christ's commandments and do good works. It is the logical outworking and extension of our faith that we will seek to please the One who has called us by His Grace, out of love and joy for the salvation that we have in Him. Again, Abraham is an example:

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how ***faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*** And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed in God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (Jas. 2:21-23).

Abraham believed in God, and because of that belief, he trusted in Yahweh's power to save his son, and raise him up from the dead (Heb. 11:19) – hence his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Even so, we must show our belief in the promises of God, by actions that demonstrate our faith. Our works by themselves are not enough to save us, for “by grace ye are saved through faith, ***and that not of yourselves ...***” but however feeble they may seem, they will nevertheless testify to the hope that is within us, as rejoicing in faith we seek to show that faith to those around us, by the way that we live our lives.

#### ***SHOWING GRACE TO OTHERS***

Just as we stand in the Grace of God, we must endeavor to show that Grace in our relationships with others. So, the Apostle exhorts: “Let your speech be always with Grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:6). In the things we do, and the things we say, we should show forth the Grace of God to those around us. Again, it is written: “as every man hath received the gift, even so ***minister the same one to another,*** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10). We must forgive as we have been forgiven for Christ's sake, and rejoice in the hope of coming glory.

In our considerations, we have sought to present the basic principles that lie behind the Bible's doctrine of Grace. The system of salvation appointed by Yahweh rests upon the extension of His Grace, or Favour, in providing Messiah as a sacrifice for our sins, and in bringing us to hope in his Promises for the future. But there is also a practical outworking of the doctrine of Grace: we need not look to the future judgment seat with fear and uncertainty, and angst, thinking that perhaps we are not good enough. Our being accepted is predicated upon faith, not the merits of our works, and because of this, it is “made sure” – guaranteed to all who choose to walk along the Way of life. Let us therefore rejoice in the certainty of our Hope, believing and trusting that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom, and that it will be granted to us in due course, that we might live and reign with our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the ages to come.

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