

## **The Wednesday Word, Jan. 15, 2014: Misunderstood Matters about Grace, Part 2**

Another thing about grace is that it is completely undeserved! I question if we really understand this. I suspect that many of us pay lip service to the undeserved nature of grace, but often the power of this truth has not permeated the depths of our being.

If we don't believe that grace is entirely undeserved, we should consider how utterly worthless we were when grace first saved us. We were enemies of God and without strength (Romans 5:6, 5:10). We were as John McNeill graphically put it, "Ownerless dogs prowling the garbage heaps of humanity." Now ask yourself this; have you, through the years, become so wonderful that you are now worth saving? I hope you answer no! The truth is that grace saves people who have absolutely, "no good thing" in them worth saving (Romans 7:18). If we think there is one good thing about us ... one shred of perfect, unadulterated goodness that deserves to be saved, there is no room for grace.

If we believe in salvation by grace alone, we have recognized that we are, in ourselves, destitute of everything. We are in agreement with the scripture when it says, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint" (Isaiah 1:5). Believing this, we have no difficulty accepting that grace both sent the gospel to us, and opened our eyes to it.

Grace is both the seeker and the finder. It was the personification of grace who sought and found Zacchaeus in Luke 19. It was grace that found Noah and by grace that Noah was saved (Genesis 6:8). Indeed, the sole reason that any of us love the Lord is because of grace and grace alone.

If God withdrew His gracious hand from us, then we would be exposed, naked and undone before the awful holiness of God. But grace saves those who cannot, by their own efforts, produce one continuing trace of goodness or even one suggestion of holiness that could recommend them to Heaven. This is good news for people like me! Grace is for the lost, the guilty and the hopeless. Grace is for those who were too weak to walk towards God, but who were abundantly energetic when it came to running away from Him. These are the only people whom grace saves!

By the way, in this day and age when absolute right and wrong have been almost entirely dispensed with, it is, humanly speaking, very difficult to get people saved since so few will admit that they are actually lost, incurably lost and entirely dependent on someone else to save them. Why, after all, consent to someone else saving you when you don't know you need to be saved in the first place? When it comes to evangelism, we can get people to raise their hands at the end of a meeting because they want to go to heaven, but let's face it, who in their right mind wants to go to hell? This kind of 'soul winning' activity can often be a long way off from bringing salvation! Salvation is for lost people, for ruined sinners and for hopeless cases. Salvation is only for those who need grace.

The Lord gives us grace upon grace (John 1:16; James 4:6). In other words, we both start and continue this Christian life by grace alone. Grace is the great changer of lives and the subduer of indwelling sin. A man may spend his entire life trying to reform, but we are saved from beginning to end by grace, pure grace, righteous grace and that alone. John Newton, the author of the grand old hymn, "Amazing Grace", said it like this,

"By various maxims, forms and rules-  
That pass for wisdom in our schools-  
I sought my passions to restrain,  
But all my efforts proved in vain.

But since my Saviour I have known  
Are all my rules reduced to one-  
To keep my Lord by faith in view-  
This faith supplies, and motive too.”

And that's the Gospel Truth!