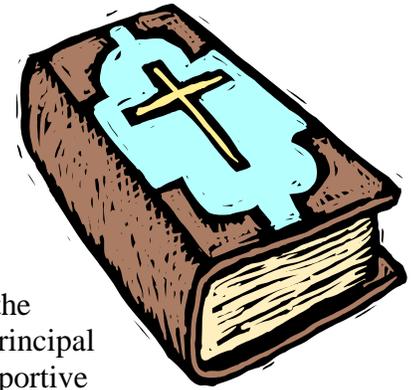


NOTES ON GRACE, MERCY & OBEDIENCE

Insights Counseling
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GRACE

What Is “Grace”?



- According to Baker’s Dictionary of Theology “Grace” is the word used to describe God’s commitment to us. It is the principal manifestation of God’s Love. God is “for us” – that is supportive and loving of us, even when we are not “for him” – that is not committed in our heart toward Him.
- Moreover, God’s grace is free. If it were not, it would no longer be “grace”.
- The Britannica Dictionary defines it as :
 - 1 a: unmerited divine assistance given humans for their regeneration or sanctification. 1b: a virtue coming from God. 1 c: a state of sanctification enjoyed through divine grace
 - 2 a: approval, favor ²stayed in his good graces³ 2b (archaic): mercy, pardon. 2 c: a special favor: privilege

One of the last Century’s great theologians, Millard Erickson, had this to say about “Grace”:

- God deals with us not on the basis of what we deserve as sinners, but on the basis of His goodness and generosity. God does not seek his own good, but rather what is good for others.
- Moreover, grace and mercy are linked. In Exodus 34:6 God revealed Himself to Moses saying: “The Lord, the Lord, A God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”
- Through “Grace”, God supplies us with underserved favors while requiring nothing from us in return. As Christ stated in Matthew 5:45 “.... that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Scriptures Revealing God’s Grace:

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.
Psa 84:11

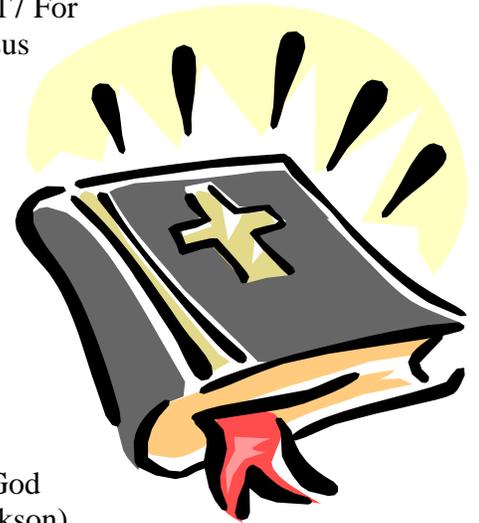
The LORD has founded the earth by wisdom; by understanding He has founded the heavens. 20 By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew. 21 My son, do not let them depart from your eyes; keep sound wisdom and judgment, 22 and they shall be life to your soul and grace to your neck.
Prov. 3:19-21

And out of His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:16-17

Grace will be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

3 John 1: 3



MERCY

- “Mercy” is another aspect of God’s Love, and further manifestation of His unlimited Grace. Through “mercy” God reveals his tender heart and loving compassion. (Ibid. Erickson)
- While Grace, flows from God’s willingness to overlook and forgive our sins, Mercy is His response to our misery and needs. Christ’s healing of the sick and meeting the people in their needs is direct reflection of the mercy and love of the Father.
- Dr. R.A.Torrey, 19th century head of the Moody Bible Institute and author of “What The Bible Teaches” (1898), writes: The same Hebrew word is translated sometimes “mercy” and sometimes “loving-kindness”. These two words, therefore, mean precisely the same thing. The primary meaning of the [Greek] word most frequently used is “kindness”, especially kindness exercised toward the suffering or the sinning.
- In his expository and commentary on the God’s Mercy, Torrey writes:

God’s mercy is manifested toward those who fear or love Him [fear being the Old Testament term for denoting loving respect]. Those who call on God, confess their sins and make a conscientious [diligent] effort to turn from them will experience God’s mercy. That “Mercy” comes in the form of –

- (a) the pardoning of sins when confessed (1 John 1:9)
- (b) the delivering from sickness, sorrow and oppression (Ex.15: 13; Philippians 2:27)

- The Britannica Dictionary defines Mercy as:

1 a : compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power; also : lenient or compassionate treatment ² begged for mercy ³ b : imprisonment rather than death imposed as penalty for first-degree murder
2 a : a blessing that is an act of divine favor or compassion b : a fortunate circumstance ² it was a mercy they found her before she froze ³
3 : compassionate treatment of those in distress ² works of mercy among the poor ³

Scriptures Revealing God's Mercy:

...but I trust in the LORD. 7 I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy ; for You have looked on my affliction; You have known my soul in troubles; 8 and have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a broad place.

Psa 31:6-8

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psa 23:6

MAT 9:13 But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' {Hosea 6:6} For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. "

MAT 23:23 ¶ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices-- mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law-- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.\

MAR 5:19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

LUK 1:58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

ROM 9:16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

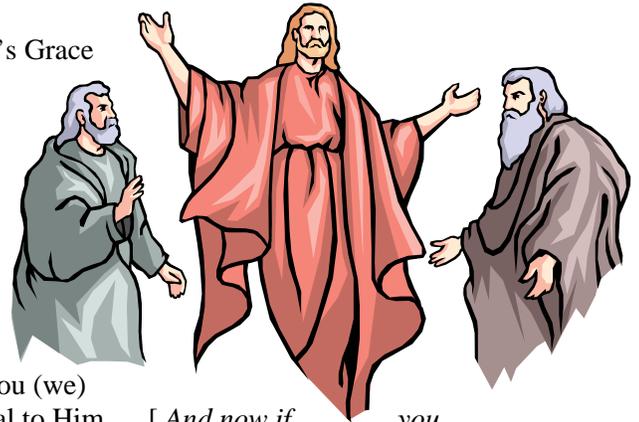
EPH 2:4 - 5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved.

TIT 3:5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,



OBEDIENCE

Now, the major question - the big question is this : Is God's Grace and Mercy dependent on our being obedient ? And , if so how obedient must we be? What happens in cases where one is engaged in something which they know to be a "sin" (A behavior or lifestyle contrary to God's Word) BUT seem unable to break free from it?



Now Baker's Dictionary of Theology stresses the point that "*obedience*" in the Hebrew mind is contextually related to "*Hearing*". It (obedience) is the active response to what one hears. In Exodus 19:5 God says: if you (we) will really hear his voice then you (we) will be (are) special to Him..... [*And now if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all the nations; for all the earth is Mine.*]

But such obedience is not always immediate, a fact recognized by the Apostle Paul. In Ephesians 4 he writes: 22 *For you ought to put off the old man (according to your way of living before) who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*

This is substantially a repeat of what Paul had advised the Church in his Epistle to the Romans (Rom.12:2a) : 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, ...

So even those who had the privilege to physically walk with Christ , or at least be directly in contact with those who had, did not expect instantaneous change. Furthermore they obviously saw the process as being partly God and partly human effort.

BUT WHAT IF I FAIL?

God knows full well that we will fail in our attempts at perfection. We are imperfect creatures. That is why he sent his Son as atonement for our sins. By Christ's selfless act of obedience, we now have the privilege of confession and forgiveness, a fact stated by the Apostle John : 9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9)*

We must also remember what Christ said : Matt.12:7 *But if you had known what this is, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice ,"*

What Jesus is saying here is that mercy - an attribute of God's Love- supersedes strict obedience to the letter of the Law. One Christian writer puts it this way: ***You may feel that there are things you have done that could not possibly be forgiven But you would be wrong. Christ died to pay for your sins... The debt of sin paid once and forever.(God's Daily Answer for Men, Elm Hill Books , 2003)***

MOREOVER, GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART

We must remember that God can see into our heart. It is not necessarily our actions that he looks at. Even if those actions are saintly – as with the Pharisees – they can cover up deceitful hearts. God is more interested in what is inside the man. God would prefer a man who is honest about his struggles with his humanity, but still has a heart after God. This we know because how God loved David....

God About David

1SA 13:14 But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command. "

ACT 13:22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

Christ on the Pharisees

MAT 6:5 ¶ "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

MAT 23:27 ¶ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

God To Us Through the Old and New Testament Writers

1SA 16:7 ¶ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

PSA 17:3 Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.

PSA 26:2 Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;

JER 17:10 "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."



HEB 4:12 ¶ For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

And How Christ Treated The Thief on the Cross

LUK 23:39 ¶ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

LUK 23:40 ¶ But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"

LUK 23:41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. "

LUK 23:42 ¶ Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. {Some manuscripts <come with your kingly power>}"

LUK 23:43 ¶ Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."



Lastly: God & The Apostle Paul

Further evidence of God forgiving someone who struggled with the “flesh” [an archaic term for natural biological human desires and needs] is the Apostle Paul who wrote:

ROM 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. {Or <my flesh>} For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

ROM 7:19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

ROM 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

ROM 7:21 ¶ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

ROM 7:22 For in my inner being I delight in God’s law;

ROM 7:23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

ROM 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

ROM 7:25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! ¶ So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

ROM 8:1 ¶ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, {Some later manuscripts <Jesus, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit,>}

ROM 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

So In Summary: We have these promises and assurances from God.

(1) Salvation and forgiveness of our sins is free. We cannot “do” anything to earn it or repay God for it. Nor are we expected to. All He asks is that we believe that he died for our sins. (John 3:16 -19)

(2) God is gracious and merciful. Moreover, His Mercy takes precedent over strict legalistic obedience to Religious Laws and customs .

HOS 6:6 For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

MAT 9:13 But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' {Hosea 6:6} For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. "

MAT 12:7 If you had known what these words mean, I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' {Hosea 6:6} you would not have condemned the innocent.

(3) God looks at the heart. He is only interested in whether or not we truly love Him and desire to see His Will Done on Earth. We may struggle and succumb to our baser human biological and physiological drives, from time –to-time, but we are forgiven if we ask , and we are still the instruments by which His Kingdom will advance in this present age.

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Prepared by:
Ron K Howard Ph.D.
Insights Counseling
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