

THE CONCEPT OF GRACE IN PAULINE EPISTLES

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ABSTRACT

Grace is the unmerited favour of God shown unto man. Common grace is shown unto all but it cannot save. Saving grace comes freely from God to the elect through the work of Christ Jesus. Manifestation of grace varies in the lives of believers not because grace is given in degrees but individual's response to grace determines the level of grace that will manifest in one's life.

Chapter Two discusses various definitions of grace available to Paul and what he meant by the term grace. It is emphasized that grace is superior to law and freewill. Chapter Three discusses the power of grace. Grace can save. It can also sanctify and empower one to serve the Lord in the Church through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Four discusses positive ways to respond to grace. Spiritual means of response to grace are: Faith and obedience, meditation in the Word of God and Prayer. Character is a means to relationship. We should respond to grace in love, humility and sincerity in our daily relationship with God and others. Service is important because an idle hand is devil's workshop. Grace places responsibility of service on its recipients: service to the Church to the society and to the world.

Sin is discovered to be the negative response to grace. It hinders grace from manifesting. No genuine believer loves sin because sinning makes a believer sorrowful. Grace provides means of restoration to a backsliding believer, so believers are eternally saved through the power of grace.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is high time that pastors separate salvation and reward in heaven. We are saved by grace. It is free but after salvation we have works to do which are demonstrations of the grace we have received.

God will reward this to make salvation absolutely free on man's part because God had paid the cost in Christ's vicarious death. No one can get anybody saved. Our church members need to know that we are not working to be saved. Religious activities are not for salvation but our responsibility that will bring reward when we get to heaven.

Also, people should know that any work done before one receives grace for salvation is meaningless to God. Our works is just a love response to God's incomparable gift of salvation. God will reward our works (II Cor. 5:10).

Church members need to know that we are saved by the same grace and God can keep all of us to the end by grace that comes to us without our effort. Jude closes this epistles to Christians this way:

To him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and forevermore (amen) Jude 24,25.

C. CONCLUSION

Grace is powerful and freely flows from God to its recipients who of themselves do not qualify for grace because nobody can be qualified for it. Believers are saved, being saved and will be saved by grace.

Grace is powerful enough to make believers persevere. Grace does not require work before it comes into one's life because Christ's work alone is the work that is totally adequate and that can bring grace to man.

Grace makes believers saved that they may work with God. God will reward those who faithfully walk with him and allow Him to use them to make His world better. This same grace for salvation gives power to work for God. Though salvation is free and believers are not saved by works, believers are saved to work for eternal rewards. The work that is not done in the context of grace has no reward because we must work for God only as we walk with God. Therefore, only the saved are called to work and they only can enjoy the benefit of good works. Religious people who think they are saved by works should be pitied because they put the cart before the horse. It is only grace that gives approval or acceptance to any work.

Believers are saved by God-given relation and power call grace. Then, can they lose it? No, they cannot lose it, because it comes to them without their contribution. Grace is powerful. The manifestation of grace is just to tell the world that one has received grace. It does not equal to salvation. Believers are eternally secure in Christ because God is able to keep those whom he saved to the end, after all, he did not give them grace because they are righteous but on the basis of

the righteousness of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:21).

Jesus came not because we are worthy of his coming. He died for us not because we are righteous, infact, man crucified him. He came because he chose to come and he saved because he chose to save us. A drowning man cannot save himself and that is what all sinners are. But Jesus has brought a rescue boat. Jesus took the initiative. He also pulls us out of the water into the boat through grace. One may ask what of if one falls back into the sea? The rescue boat is secure and one cannot fall back but one may experience a kind of storm which may make one wet when one sins. However, one is definately secure. Elects who have been in the boat of Christ may fall into sin but they will definately come out of sin before death.