

# A Good Steward of God's Grace

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***"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."—I Pet. 4:10.***

Down through the history of the church, men have sought to define the grace of God, the unmerited favor of God, the kindness and love of God, etc.

To understand about God's grace and what the Lord is talking about when He speaks of us "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," we have to know that grace is divided into two great sections or systems of truth: the grace of God as it applies to the unsaved and the grace of God as it is evidenced in the Christian.

First we consider the grace of God as it applies to the unsaved. The Bible has much teaching that we are saved by God's grace. One example is Genesis 6:8, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Why Noah found grace and many thousands of others didn't, we don't know.

As far as our salvation is concerned, grace is the unmerited, undeserved favor of God to us. This is made plain in Ephesians 2:8,9:

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

Another verse on this is Titus 2:11: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men."

I am not primarily interested at this time in the grace of God in salvation but in the grace of God as demonstrated in Christians.

After we are saved by grace, God exhorts us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

While the grace of God in salvation is His unmerited favor, the grace of God in a Christian is God's method of dealing with us, working in and through us to make us Christlike.

I found seven things true about God's grace as demonstrated in His people.

## **1. The Grace of Holy Living**

God's grace in demonstration shows that He can not only save, but He can evidence His grace in a Christian's living for the glory of God. A great verse on this is John 1:17: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Two great sections of the Bible are the dispensation of law and the dispensation of grace. Under law, only the good were blessed; under grace, the bad can be saved. Under the law, one was in good standing by keeping the law; under grace, we are in good standing by the favor of God.

Many are living under the law. The closing verses of Romans 5 and the opening verses of chapter 6 show how the grace of God can be manifested in holy, dedicated living.

In 5:20 we read, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." In 6:1 Paul says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Then Paul uses a statement he uses many times when strongly emphasizing something: "God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (vs. 2). That is what God is talking about.

Some may say, "If we are saved by grace and not of works, then under grace we are at liberty to do as we please."

That is true in a sense. You are not under law now, and you don't have to live under law. But someone truly saved by the grace of God should long to do right. And that is what Paul is saying: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Paul answers his own question: "God forbid." We are to serve God, love God, live for God because we want to, not because we have to.

There is a great illustration of grace in the Old Testament, grace in the life of a believer. In the Pentateuch God deals with every phase of the religious life, the social life, the spiritual life of His people.

Back in those days people had servants—slaves, if you wish to call them such—but God said in every sabbatical year (every seventh year), every slave owner was to free all his slaves and start over.

God knew that some slaves would not want to go free. In seven years they had learned to love their masters. In seven years their masters had provided for their every need. In seven years the masters had made the servants supremely happy. In seven years the slaves had found a blessed home with them. So God said if they didn't want to go free when released, each master could take an awl, put the slave's ear against a hard surface, and put a hole in the ear, marking the slave as his.

Spiritually speaking, every Christian should have his ear bored, meaning he serves God under grace because he loves Him and wants to serve Him.

A slave set free would say, "I love my master, and I am free because I am loved."

How true of a Christian! Under grace he is free in the Lord and is what God wants him to be because he wants to please God, not because he has to.

So we find grace for holy living.

## **2. The Grace of Surrender**

Here is something that needs to be heard by God's people:

*"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."—Rom. 12:3.*

What is God saying? That no one should ever be conceited or high-minded about himself. Why? Because we are just old sinners saved by grace.

You may say, "I have lots of talent." But you are still just an old sinner brought out of sin by God's grace. So don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Much heartache and trouble through the years have been brought on because people have thought too highly of themselves, forgetting God's grace.

James 4:6 deals with it again: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." There is no limit to God's grace—"he giveth more grace." But God's grace is given to the humble, not to the proud.

Here is a contrast that a proud Christian has to face. God says, 'I resist him. I oppose him. I make it difficult for him'; but to the humble Christian—"I will gladly give him all the grace he needs.'

We read in I Peter 5:5,6:

*"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."*

Peter, who said this, surely knew what he was talking about. Being cocky and proud, high-minded, heady and self-willed, stubborn and unsundered—Peter had gone through it all.

There needs to be more preaching on the younger submitting to the elder. Respect gray hair. Just because someone has a little more knowledge than you, don't call him square. Just because someone, through experience and heartache, has learned something you may not know, respect him. Submit to him. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another."

Some 113 times in this New Testament is the expression "one to another." God wants Christians to serve one another, to respect one another, to love one another, to honor one another; 113 times God tells us how to live with one another under grace.

"...be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

Grace causes us to say, "Well, who am I? Nothing but an old sinner saved by grace. I ought to do right, think right, live peaceably with other people and show humility."

I heard of a young preacher just starting in the ministry. He hadn't yet learned that sometimes when you get up to preach, your tongue is thick in your mouth and your brain, numb. He hadn't yet learned that sometimes you aren't able to think and that it is hard to preach. He didn't know that, so he proudly paraded across the platform to the pulpit. He reared back like a Philadelphia lawyer and began his address.

Then suddenly the well went dry. He couldn't think; he could not speak. The people got drowsy. Some even went to sleep, like people sometimes do.

This proud peacock of a preacher now thought, Well, I sure am in trouble! He felt like preachers sometimes feel: Oh, for a little button to push so an opening would swallow me up and I wouldn't see anyone and no one could see me! I know; I've been there!

By the time this young preacher got to the end of his sermon, he was mighty humble! He didn't march off the platform proud and cocky; this time his head was down, and his chin, on his chest. As he sneaked down off the platform, a dear saint was waiting to say, "Son, if you had gone up like you came down, you could have come down like you went up."

Oh, how much truth there is in that!

God promotes those willing to take a backseat. He promotes those to the top of the ladder who are willing to start at the bottom.

One principle in Christian living is the grace of surrender.

### **3. The Grace of Giving**

Anytime there are seven points in one of my sermons, one will be on giving. Don't you enjoy hearing what the Bible says about giving! Some of you do; many of you don't!

Really, the grace of giving is just what the Bible teaches. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said:

*"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."— II Cor. 8:1,2.*