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SALVATION

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world- he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

Sin Versus Human Good

*“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures” 1 Corinthians 15:3*

Intro:

There are certain things concerning the gospel that need to be clarified. One of them has to do with the atoning death of Jesus Christ concerning human sin and human good. It is common for Christians to look at the unsaved from the standpoint of sin, while overlooking their human good. And, at the same time, the unsaved look at their good works, while overlooking their sin!

There are many unsaved people out there that lead lives of integrity, morality and good works. There are many non Christians who can put some Christians to shame in the lives they live. The problem is that their good works have mislead many of them and given them a false sense of security about their relationship with God and the future.

Human good refers to the qualities of morality that many unsaved do possess and it refers to the good works that they do; the good and beneficial activities that they occupy themselves with. **Human sin**, or just sin, refers to the bad things that man does.

But what the unsaved fail to see, and tragically what so many Christians are also unaware of, is that when Christ died on the cross he died only for human sin, not human good! When he bore our sins he bore the penalty for our sins. That is, God punished him for every sin that every human has ever committed.

In fact, sin is no longer the issue between man and God. Many preachers mistakenly harp on people's sins in presenting the gospel to them, but sin is no longer the issue. Faith in Christ is the only issue! But there is still the matter of human good. What is there to be done about it?

A. The First Family

When we look at the first family God instructed Adam to offer up a sacrifice to him. This sacrifice was to be a slain lamb which pointed the way to the Lamb of God that would be slain for our sins. There were only two things in view here and they are the sins of Adam and his family, which included all of Adam's race, and the slain lamb to bear our punishment. Nothing is said about human good.

We must bear in mind that Adam's race is capable of not only sin, but also human good. But bear in mind that all of the good that man is capable of doing, and actually does at times, does not compare to the absolute good of a righteous God.

The first family consisted of: Adam, his wife Eve, their firstborn son Cain and then Abel their second son. Now we come down to Cain. When it came time to offer the sacrifice to God, the rest of the family brought the sacrifice that God required, a slain lamb, which was an acknowledgment of their sin and the need for forgiveness. *“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:”* Genesis 4:4

But Cain refused to do so! Instead Cain brought some vegetables that he had raised from the field. *“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.”* Genesis 4:3 When he did this the Lord rejected his offering! *“But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.”* Genesis 4:5

His anger, *wroth*, is the word *charah*, which meant to burn with intense anger, but the idea of anger was multiplied in the original, so we can only imagine how livid with rage Cain was over God rejecting his sacrifice. And remember, anger proceeds out of arrogance, so it gives us an indicator of the pride of Cain! The greater the pride, the greater the anger.

So why did Cain offer up vegetables to the Lord and not the sacrifice that God required? It goes back to human sin versus human good. By refusing to offer up the animal sacrifice Cain was saying that he rejected the concept of human sin! He refused to acknowledge the fact that he was a sinner before God. He was also saying that his good works, as symbolized by his offering, were good enough for God to accept!

So the question is, are man's good works good enough for God to accept? This question, and certainly a major issue for all humans on earth, is promptly answered by God himself in person. *“But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.”* **God rejected Cain's offering of good works.** God was saying that man's goodness and man's good works are not at the level for him to accept.

But then we see God trying to persuade Cain to do the right thing by giving him the doctrines on the matter. He didn't tell him that he was wrong and then leave it at that, but went further to try to get through to Cain. *“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”* Genesis 4:7

One of the things that Cain was not aware of was the deceitfulness of sin. **Sin deceives us!** It deceives us into thinking that we're something we're not! *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”* Hebrews 3:13 Cain didn't think there was anything wrong with him, therefore, in his own mind, there was no reason to require a sacrifice for sin. He thought that he was good enough to be accepted by God in his own person, but he wasn't!

How many people are there like that today? How many people fail or refuse to see themselves in their true light? They think that because they're a good person they don't need to be saved. That their good works are good enough, but they're not!

Was Cain a sinner like the rest of his family? Yes! Aside from the fact that he had acquired his father's sinful nature, and aside from the fact that God is standing there and telling him he is, there are two things that really stand out. One, is his unbridled fierce rage that he had for the Lord. That should have told him something. And two, there is the matter that he murdered his brother. Pride, anger, hate and murder are certainly evidence of a fallen, sinful nature.

We also want to notice in passing the reaction of pride when one's good works are rejected. The world is full of sweet, polite and really nice people. But when their human good is rejected, when they are brought around to a face to face confrontation with the Word of God over their sinful condition, all that human nicety is **turns to anger**.

B. God's View of our Goodness

God says that, to him, all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. “*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*” Isaiah 64:6 The word *righteousness* is *tsedeqah* and it refers to a quality or being upright, pure, holy, good and things along that line. With *kol*, *all*, it means to sum up the best that man has, all his righteousnesses, all the good things about him.

Now in the world of men, we are prone to look at things one way. We say, he's a good man, or what an honorable man, or look at all the good things they do in the community, or how they help the poor and so on But in the final judgment it is not our fellow man who will be judging us, but an holy God! So it is not important what we think of ourselves, or what others think of us, **but what this holy God thinks of us!**

How does this holy God view our righteousness and our righteous acts, or good deeds? And the word used here is the word for menstrual rags. It refers to the soiling that takes place during the woman's menstrual period. The comparison is between standing there in a pure, unsoiled, white robe or garment, and standing there with a garment soiled by the cycle of one's period.

So what God is saying is that the best that man has to offer; the collective best of all the good things to be found in the best of a man or a woman, in the eyes of a holy God is like standing there in a garment soiled by menstrual blood!

Now we get down to the issue of Christ dying for our sins. Every place you find this in the old and new testament it is always the same; Christ paid the penalty for our sins. **But there is no place in Scripture that you will find that Christ died for human good!** This becomes a very important point in the final judgment and is brought out very clearly as we go into the book of Revelations.

C. Divine Good Versus Human Good

The difference between the two is that **human good** is that which man, saved or unsaved, can produce out of his flesh nature. Saved and unsaved can be good, moral, philanthropic, give to charities, feed the poor, save the whales and all that. But **divine good** can only come from the new nature, as the believer in Christ is empowered by the Holy Spirit, as he or she is doing the will of God. The difference between the two is that the will, the ideas and the power behind it all in divine good proceeds from a new nature, while the other one proceeds out of the flesh nature.

There is a pseudo righteousness, just as there is a pseudo love, a pseudo filling of the Holy Spirit, a pseudo “*holy spirit*” and a pseudo spiritual dynamic. These five are rampant throughout Christianity today. Many Christians are ignorant of the spiritual dynamic found in the new nature and the Holy Spirit and have created an alternate concept. This too is human good motivated by the flesh nature.

The unsaved of America are pushing human good ideas on every aspect of our society. Now there are words you cannot say, political beliefs that you cannot have, cigarette smoking is looked down upon as one of the worse things one can do. In many subdivisions you can't have toys out in the front yard, certain types of grasses have to be planted and hundreds of ridiculous laws people have to obey as human good people seek to create an Utopian society full of Utopian people.

Mankind, like Cain in the beginning, is trying to cover up his sinfulness; he's saying that he is not sinful, as evidenced by all the human good that he does. He has become like the “*white-washed sepulchres*” in the gospels. White on the outside, but full of dead men's bones on the inside. He's like the man who has a house that is full of wood rot, mold and termites, but paints the outside to make people think that it's good. You say that you would rather live in a society of good people rather than bad ones. I think most of us would too. But remember, that there is a tyranny that comes with human good, as well as the tyranny of bad people. In time human good can take over a nation to the place that it chokes the life and freedom out of it!

One of the problems of human good is that it blinds the unsaved for their need of salvation in Christ. Because they are so good, and do so many good things, they, like Cain, don't see their need of salvation. It also blinds Christians of their need for Bible Doctrine, the doctrines of grace, the true filling of the true Holy spirit, confession of sin biblically, and so many other things pertaining to the true Christian way of life.

We see so much human good manifesting itself in churches today passing itself off as biblical Christianity. Instead of assembling together in a local church for the sole purpose of sitting under the teaching ministry of a man with the spiritual gift of Pastor-Teacher; we find instead, programs, committee meetings, entertainment, stage productions, the dog and pony show and things that are outright insane! Where did these ideas come from? They came out of the human good of these believers!

D. The Final Judgment

The sins of all mankind, every sin that has been committed, or ever will be committed, was borne by Jesus Christ on the cross. He paid the penalty for **sin**, for man's bad deeds. **But he did not die for human good!**

I imagine there will be many surprised people at the final judgment who will be shocked that their sinful acts will never be brought up! The reason why is that God had already punished his Son as their substitute on the cross. But something will be brought up and that is their good works.

*“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” Revelation 20:12,13*

Sin has been paid for; personal sin is not an issue, so what they are going to be judged by is their works? Are they good enough to get into heaven? The word for *according to* is *kata*, which denotes a norm or standard. But what is that standard by which their good works will be judged? The standard is Jesus Christ! They will have to be as good as Christ is, as righteous as he is, and their good works will have to measure up to the standard of his works of righteousness.

And here's why. The issue is living forever, living with God forever and living with God forever in the place where God lives. And it goes back to the nature of God. If we're going to live forever with God, then we're going to have to possess the same moral quality, if you will, that God possesses.

We would agree that God is good, that he is absolutely good; we call that his righteousness. So, if we're going to live with God, then we're going to have to qualify for that. To qualify then we're going to have to meet a certain standard of righteousness. Now for the believer in Christ this standard has already been met the very moment they believed on Christ as their Savior.

When we believed on Christ God counted (imputation) that faith in Christ as righteousness. "*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" Romans 4:5 Faith isn't righteousness, but God counts it as righteousness. And then God justifies, declares us to be righteous, in his heavenly court. "*Therefore being justified (declared righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Romans 5:1

This imputation of righteousness and our subsequent declaration of righteousness by God in his heavenly court qualifies us to live in his kingdom of righteousness. God grants to believers in Christ the standard of righteousness that gives them entrance into eternity.

Now we see the picture of the Great White Throne judgment where all will be judged by God. "*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*" Revelation 20:11 But what is going on here? What is this judgment all about? What is going on here is that all those who had not believed on Christ as their Savior in life will be **judged according to their works!** They are not going to be judged for their sins! Their sins were judged by God on the cross and his Son paid the penalty for them – he died for their sins! But their works, their activities will be judged.

You see, God has a record of every single thing that every single person has done in their life, whether good or bad. They have all been recorded in the Books of Works, or literally, in the Scrolls of Works. The name of the person has been entered into them and everything that he or she has done. The question is why?

Remember, it goes back to what we were discussing concerning the matter of being able to live forever with God in his eternal peace. One does not gain entrance into God's kingdom simply because he was a human being and had lived life on this planet. He has to meet a certain standard, a standard of righteousness.

So how is this person supposed to be judged? Well he or she says that they are basically good and have done good things in this life. Fair enough, but let's look at the record. Let's see what the record of their activities have to say about this. The record of their good works on this earth will not only show exactly what they have done, but why. It will even reveal the true motive behind their actions.

So after bringing out every single thing about every single human being, then it goes to the next phase and that is the one of a standard. There has to be a standard by which one's goodness and one's good deeds are judged. And it has to be a standard that is admissible into heaven. The only standard that exists, by which all others are to be judged by, and it's not you or me; it's by the standard of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the only human being to enter into heaven and be accepted by this holy, righteous God. This tells us that **he has met the standard for the quality of righteousness that God requires.** And because he has met God's standard of righteousness, and has been accepted by God, then he becomes the standard by which all others are judged!

What this means that all of these people, who are going to be judged by their works to see if they qualify to enter into God's righteous kingdom, will be compared to the righteous standard of Jesus Christ. They will have to be **as righteous as Jesus Christ** is in every area, in every act, in every word, in every thought. And **no one can compare to Christ's righteousness! He is the Righteous One**, "*Jesus Christ the righteous:*" 1 John 2:1 Every thought, every word, every act, every motive will be carefully scrutinized to see if it's at the level of Christ's righteousness. And every human will fail this evaluation! We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

This takes us down to the next phase of the judgment. They have completely failed to meet the standard that their good works have qualified them to possess a standing of righteousness sufficient to get into heaven, so another book is opened to see if their name is found there; the Lamb's Book of Life. "*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*" Revelation 20:12

So there stands the individual before God's court to ascertain if he or she is righteous enough to live forever with God in eternity. The Books of Works are opened to evaluate their good deeds in life. Then their good deeds are compared to the standard of Jesus Christ's righteousness and good deeds. Once this comparison is made then it is evident to all that they fail the test. That is, based upon their good works, they do not possess the quality of righteousness sufficient to enter into God's kingdom.

So the court now goes to another approach and that is to see if their name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. For contained in it are the names of all those who have believed on Christ as their Savior. Having failed to have the quality of righteousness sufficient to satisfy God, based upon their own works, they still have one more option and that is to see if they have righteousness due to faith in Christ.

It is evident from the Word of God that no one will be able to qualify to enter into heaven on the basis of their good deeds. The standard of righteousness that God requires can never be met by man. There is only one man that has ever met that standard and that is the man Christ Jesus! His Book of Life is the record of all those who have believed on him, and it is the record to whom he has imputed righteousness. Therefor it will only these people who will be able to go into heaven. "*And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*" Revelation 21:27

Now we come down to the tragic part of all this for the unsaved, for those who have not believed on Christ as their Savior; they will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. "*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was **cast into the lake of fire.***" Revelation 20:15

Christ died for human sin, but he did not die for human good. If an individual rejects believing on Christ, then he will be judged according to his works. His works will not meet the standard for entrance into heaven. His name will not be found in the Lamb's Book of Life showing that he had been declared to be righteous by God. He subsequently then will be taken and thrown into the Lake of Fire. But one can avoid this tragic end to their existence by trusting Christ as their Lord and Savior. Believe that he died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and was raised from the dead. If you do, God will declare you to be righteous guaranteeing that you will live forevermore.

Sin Versus Human Good - continued

“ But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” Isaiah 64:6

The flesh nature of the fallen human race is able to produce both good and bad in the four categories of thinking, emotions, speech and overt actions. The bad we call sin, while the good we call human good. When Christ died on the cross, he died for the sins of man, not his human good. Human good will be judged at the great white throne judgment, where all those who are expecting to be admitted into heaven will be judged for their good deeds and will be thrown into the lake of fire, because their good deeds did not measure up to the standard of the righteousness of Christ's good deeds.

Human good is produced by the flesh nature, while divine good is produced only out of the new natures of born again believers in Christ, under the filling of the Holy Spirit, with the Word of God that they have metabolized by faith. Our actions will be judged by Christ at the *Bema* seat, where not only the action itself will be judged, but the motive behind it.

There has been a trend in Christianity today departing from the teaching of the Word of God in the churches and toward believers being nice, friendly, appealing, affable, nice personalities, their own personal moral codes and a whole host of things that come under the heading of human good. How one can tell the difference is by what is their attitude toward Bible Doctrine?

This problem goes back to the beginning of the human race where the two brothers, Cain and Abel, brought their respective sacrifice to the Lord. Abel brought the animal sacrifice that God required, while Cain brought his own personal human view point, human good sacrifice of vegetables. We know the story of how God rejected Cain's sacrifice, but accepted Abel's sacrifice. God even instructed him personally, (the teaching of the Word of God), but Cain rejected it and murdered his brother.

This story has been played out over and over again throughout the centuries of the justice of God rejecting the human good of man. There is no way that our righteousnesses can ever be accepted by a holy God! To him they are like filthy rags! But God in his grace found a way that he could satisfy his righteousness and justice and deal with man on the basis of grace and he did this in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that God accepts. It is the finished work of Christ on the cross, that God accepts. It is the faith of Jesus Christ, that God accepts. It is the obedience of Christ, that God accepts. God, not us, satisfied his own justice.

Not only does God's justice reject our personal moral codes and good deeds, but so does his grace! Justice rejects them because there is no way that our righteousness can ever come close to the standard of God's holiness. His grace rejects them, because in grace it is God doing the work, not us. If we're doing the work, then he judges. But if he's doing the work, then he knows it will be up to his standard.

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” Romans 11:6 This passage is very clear; it is either all of grace, or it is all of works. The two cannot co-exist. If God is doing the work, then he rejects our works. And if we're doing the work, then we are rejecting God's grace.

The subject of God's grace must be continually emphasized in Christianity, so that believers in Christ will have a knowledge and deeper understanding of it, continue to live in it and not drift away from it. It is not only a recurring theme throughout the Bible, but one that holds a central position in it.

Yet so many of the older generation of believers are greatly bothered by the departure from the principles of grace living by this generation of young converts to the Lord. **They not only are ignorant of the concepts of grace, but have substituted their human good and human works in its place.**

The introduction of the Apostle Peter's first letter sets the whole tone of our position and relationship to God and how we came to be there in the first place. *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”* 1 Peter 1:1,2

“The elect of God, the ones chosen by God, chosen according to the foreknowledge of him, foreknown because of his predetermining purpose, accomplished by the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit who, according to this plan of election, took us out of the world system to bring us to Christ, resulting in the obedience of faith in Jesus Christ and our covenant position in him: grace and peace to us in abundance.” (Expanded)

And then Peter goes on and finishes his letter with the command to grow and to keep on growing in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And for us to be able to do that, then it means that we're going to have to be taught on these subjects by men who understand them! And it also means that this is going to be a life long process of learning about grace and about Christ.

We're going to have to learn about God's grace and how it differs from man's works; we're going to have to be positive to these concepts; be committed toward them; and have the discipline to carry it through. We must understand what grace is, how it came about, how it operates and how it translates into our daily walk with the Lord.

And we need to see that grace is inclusive and exclusive of certain things, including the morality and works of man. Grace includes, embraces, faith, doctrine, election, the nature and character of God. And at the same time grace excludes, rejects, man's works, ideas, nature, character, self righteousness and his personal morality.

We need to see that God can deal with man on one of two bases, either his grace, or his justice. **If one rejects his grace, then God must deal with him on the basis of his justice.** And in justice God gives back to man according as his actions deserve. But in grace God deals with man, does things for man, blesses man, even though he doesn't deserve them!

Failure to understand the grace of God is a failure to understand the very nature of God himself! They may have a fabricated notion of what they think God is about, but it is not based upon the truth, but on an idea that they have created in their own mind. It is, in fact, an idol! It is ever much an idol that people create out of wood and stone, only it is in their mind.

They believe that God is powerful, but not that powerful. They believe that God is holy, but have no idea how holy he is. They believe that God is righteous and just, but have no idea what that means when it comes to dealing with man.

God's holiness demanded the sacrifice of a righteous man, the only righteous man who lived, Jesus Christ the righteous one. Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Now when it comes to judging human good, God will judge that at the great white throne judgment mentioned in Revelation 20:11-13, “*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*”

For the unbeliever, who has not accepted God's forgiveness for their sins through faith in Jesus Christ, there is only one thing left to judge them for and that is their good works. But the problem is that they think they will be judged based on the standard of other people, when the standard that they will be judged on is Jesus Christ! Are they as righteous as Jesus Christ in their person and their works? And the answer is a resounding no!

But grace is not only the way that God deals with unbelievers; it is the way that he deals with believers in Christ! It's the way that he deals with everybody! So it becomes of vital importance that the pulpits of America teach people about the grace of God. And it is important that the Christian learns about God's grace and lives in it in their lives.

And toward this end, there needs to be a revival in America by the churches to get away from the works of self righteousness, legalism and man made ideas of religion, away from the programism, entertainment, singing and appealing to the flesh natures of a variety of people, and get back to the simple, clear, accurate teaching of the Word of God from the pulpits about God's grace!

There are things associated with grace, that are an integral part of grace, and there are things that grace rejects! One of these things associated with grace is election. “*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work*” Romans 11:5,6

Grace chooses plain and simple. If you take God's election out of the equation, then you no longer have grace, but works. It says that there is a *remnant according to the standard of the election of grace!* But man's pride reacts against that; it does not want God to be the one who chooses; man wants to choose! But with God doing the choosing, he does so apart from the merit, or lack of merit, of the one chosen. All the merit lies with the one choosing, not the object chosen.

Grace chooses, not because of the character of the person, but because of his own character. It chooses, not because of the purpose of the person, but because of his own purpose. Paul wrote that we were saved according to the grace and purpose of God, not our works. “*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*” 2 Timothy 1:9

Grace rejects all of man's: works, ideas, opinions, activities, trying, striving, personalities, endeavors, sincerity, morality, strengths, weaknesses, feelings, intelligence, wisdom, position, accomplishments, character, energies, human good and human bad. Grace rejects them all, thereby bringing all of the human race down to the same level of sinners needing salvation by the grace of God!

As Paul illustrates in Romans 9:16, “*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*” Salvation does not come because of the will, nor desire, of the unbeliever, nor does it come from their striving and trying! It comes from the mercy of God!

In those days, when someone was brought before a court and found guilty, the law prescribed their punishment. Now the Semitic judge could meet out the punishment to that person and be totally fair, for it was their actions that brought the sentence upon themselves. But he could also be merciful to that individual, if he so chose. The choice of mercy belonged to the judge, not to the condemned.

Under the standard of justice, it is required that one is treated fairly, according to the law, and that one gets exactly what's coming to them under the law. As the Judge and Ruler of all, it is required that God gives back to each one according as their actions deserve. This is being fair, this is justice. God has to be fair to everyone, but he doesn't have to be merciful to anyone!

So mercy was selective. The judge could be merciful to anyone he wanted to be merciful to; it was his sole prerogative. As God told Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. “*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*” Romans 9:15

In this matter of God granting a favor to man, everything connected with it, the favor itself, how it's done, why it's done, the means or mechanics of how it's done, lies solely with God, not man. **It is God who is granting the favor and man has no right to dictate how God does it!** The result is that man cannot boast and God gets all the glory.

God had designed a plan back in eternity past by which he can bless man and not compromise his righteousness and justice. But this plan of blessing is all according to his grace and man must learn to operate within that grace. And God's plan of blessing centers around grace, faith and truth.

So we need to learn about the grace of God, (which is what the pulpits of America should be teaching), understand and live by it, but we also need to learn about the importance of faith and Bible Doctrine, their need in the matter and how they are so importantly linked to his grace.

Do we know that we have been elected by his grace and elected to his grace? That grace is a gift bestowed on us, not out of our works, not working for it, nor deserving it, but a gift freely bestowed on us out of the wonder of his love? If a man works for a gift, is it a gift? No! It is wages earned. But if it's given without working for it, then it remains a gift.

In this grace plan of God faith is very important, in fact, it's crucial to the matter, for faith has no merit in it. What merit is there to believing something is true, or trusting someone? All the merit lies in the one you are trusting! In fact, even our faith to believe on the Lord has been supplied to us by God through the teaching of his Word! Specifically the doctrines concerning the atoning work of Christ! “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” Romans 10:17

Faith may motivate to actions, to ideas and other things, and it does, but in itself it has no merit or human works, thereby being totally compatible with grace. And one cannot brag about his faith, although it sounds like some try to do that. First of all, you can't brag about something that has no merit, second, you didn't do anything when you believed, and third, you can't brag about something that somebody else is doing, or that you have received as a gift.

Faith believes; it trusts, but what merit is there in that? When a critically injured man is wheeled into the emergency room trusting that the doctor can save his life, and he does, what does that man have to brag about? What did he do? Nothing! It was the doctor who did it. Therefore, if there is any praise, credit, or attention on the matter, it should go to the doctor, not the patient. And so it is with the sinner who comes to Christ in faith for salvation. Christ did all the work, all we did was trust him.

This is the relationship that the Christian has in his faith in Jesus Christ. There is no merit to his faith, (which was given to him by the Father in the first place), and there is no merit to his trusting in Christ. If anything, trusting in Christ is a sign of his absolute helplessness in the matter of his salvation. The result is that all praise, glory and credit goes to Jesus Christ who did the work in saving us.

Faith believes, that is, it accepts something as being true. It is a positive volition concept that says the Word is true, God is true, his promises are true, his doctrines are true. And faith trusts. Trust is the outcome of faith. If one believes all things about God are true, and his promises to us are true, then we can trust him. We can totally lean on him, rely on him to do what he said in the Bible that he would do.

The believer may be very active in his life, but in his soul he is at rest. His activity stems from his faith, but inside he is not relying on himself, his strengths, etc.; inside his soul he is relying upon God to protect him, to provide for him, therefore his soul is at rest.

So faith becomes extremely important in living this grace life that God has brought us into, “*For we walk by faith, not by sight*”. By faith, we believe the promises of God. By faith, we metabolize the doctrinal teaching of the Word of God to feed and strengthen our souls. By faith, we apply to our daily life, situations and problems the doctrinal teaching that we have learned and metabolized.

Sometimes our situations call for active faith, sometimes they call for passive faith. Doctrine gives us the wisdom to know which one to apply. Sometimes we have to actively keep on asking, keep on seeking and keep on knocking. And sometimes we just have to patiently wait. But which ever way we go, the heart of it is faith and trusting the Father!

In the metaphor of the rock, Christ is our rock! “*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*” 1 Corinthians 10:4 Now whether one goes to the rock, or leans on the rock, rests on the rock, or lays on the rock on one's back, or lays his head on the rock as a pillow to sleep, as Jacob did, they are all expressions of faith! **God's grace operates in the sphere of our faith.**

Grace is so intricately and completely connected to faith, that if one leaves off faith, if he departs from faith, then he has departed from grace! He is no longer looking to God to do anything for him, because he is going to do it now in his own works, in the strength of his own flesh. Once again we see the evil heart of pride rear its ugly head. All this to vaunt the ego and have something he can brag about.

Pride is the rejector of grace and the enemy of grace, and it is something we always have to be on the watch for lest we too become an “**Evil-Heart**” believer. “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an **evil heart of unbelief**, in departing from the living God.*” Hebrews 3:12

It is either going to be the grace of God, or the works of man. It can't be both, for the two are mutually exclusive. “*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.*” Ephesians 2:8,9

John 3:36 tells us that the wrath of God abides on all unbelievers, “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*” The present tense of meno shows that it continually abides on them. Why? Because **there are only two ways that God can deal with mankind.** Either according to his **grace**, or according to his **justice**. If one rejects his grace by not believing on his Son, then he is left only with the justice of God expressing itself in his wrath.

Now an individual may not want God's grace. If that's their choice, then God will respect their decision. But they are still left with his justice! **Grace is still there for all regardless if anyone wants it! But know this full well, if they don't want it, then they will still have to face his justice!** God even raises up ministries in various areas throughout the world as a witness to his grace. If people want it, then they can learn about his grace from salvation on to completion. But if they don't want it, even if nobody wants it, God has still been gracious in providing them information about grace in their area.

God's grace is available to entire nations, if they want it. If they reject it, then that nation will deteriorate into immoral degeneracy, or moral degeneracy, as we are seeing presently in America, and then God has no choice but to deal with that nation out of justice. Which means that nation will come under his judgment. Jonah understood about God's grace in dealing with people, that's why he didn't want to go to Nineveh to preach the gospel! He wanted God to judge them! “*And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.*” Jonah 4:2

Grace, faith and truth come together as a cohesive package. If one rejects faith or truth, then he has rejected grace. This is brought out well in the OT in the book of Hosea in God's dealing with Israel in his justice. In verse one he gives us the problem that Israel had. “*Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth (Bible Doctrine), nor mercy (grace), nor knowledge (Bible Doctrine in the soul metabolized by faith) of God in the land.*” Hosea 4:1

In verses two and three he describes some of the sinful activities that were going on as the result of rejecting the spiritual dynamic and how that impacted the environment. “*By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall **the land mourn**, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.*” Hosea 4:2,3

And in verse six he states that the Israelites were being destroyed by God's judgment and the reason why. “*My people are destroyed **for lack of knowledge**: because thou hast rejected knowledge, (Bible Doctrine) I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*” Hosea 4:6

God wants to be gracious to us, he longs to be gracious to us. “*Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!*” Isaiah 30:18 NIV And he has found a way that he can deal with in his grace, without compromising his justice, and that is through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. **But know this full well, that he will deal with us one way or the other.** It will be according to his grace, or according to his justice. The choice is ours as to which one it will be.

Psalm 89:14 states, “*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*” Or, “*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness (grace and truth) go before you.*” (NIV) This passage tells us that *Yahweh's* rule over men and angels (his throne) is based upon his righteousness and justice. His *righteousness* refers to his impeccable integrity, his sinlessness, his holiness and purity. And he is also a God of justice, which means that he judges men and angels and he does so out of the standard of his absolute righteousness.

As ruler of the universe God is required to rule according to the principle of justice, that is, he must be fair to all and to give back to each one according as their actions deserve. But this presents a problem to us all, because who can stand before his justice? Who can measure up to his absolute standards of righteousness? No one!

And God knows that. That's why he came up with a plan whereby he can forgive us, give us eternal life with him and bless us in this life in a way that doesn't compromise his righteousness and justice. A plan where he can be gracious to us, for he longs to be gracious to us. And this plan centers around grace, faith and truth. Faith in the incarnate truth, Jesus Christ, and faith in his Word.

“*Grace and truth go before you*” are put in the ancient custom of when a conquering king would approach a nation with his army he would send out runners before him to that people with a message of mercy or wrath. If that people did what the messengers proclaimed, then they would receive mercy. But if they rejected it, then they would have to face the wrath of the king.

And we have God before the world enthroned upon his righteousness and justice, with the approaching day of his great white throne judgment of all mankind; a judgment that no man can withstand because who can stand before his awesome holiness! But he is also a God of mercy, so he sends out his *two runners*, **grace and truth**, who go before his coming to earth in judgment. Will we accept them? Will we heed their words? If we do, then we will receive his grace and mercy. But if we don't, then we will have to face his justice and wrath!

And these two concepts of grace and truth are now personified in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the incarnation of God's grace. He is the incarnation of truth. Grace and truth are wrapped up in him and only in him. If we accept him by faith, then we are accepting God's mercy. But if we reject him, then we are rejecting God's mercy and now must face his justice and wrath. “*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*” John 1:17

In grace, God provided his Son to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross; he provides the faith necessary to believe on Christ as our Savior; he provides the Gospel to show our need of Christ; he provides the Holy Spirit to bring us to Christ, indwell us and regenerate us. In grace, God provides every single thing that we need. All that is left for us to do is accept it!

Grace is a gift. It cannot be worked for, one does not merit it, nor does one deserve it. It is freely given by God apart from the character or merit of the individual. It rejects all activity or merit of the one receiving it. It rejects all morality or law-keeping endeavors of the one receiving it. And grace is appropriated through faith. First faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and then after you have become a believer in Christ, faith in his Word.

The justice of God demands that all of man's ideas, works, strengths and morality are judged. The righteousness of God is the standard by which they are judged. Because of this, God cannot bless us based on his justice. This is why it has to be by grace! But integral to the matter of grace is the dynamic of faith. We're saved by faith; we walk by faith; we approach the throne of grace by faith; we're blessed by faith; in fact, without faith it is impossible to please God!

It is imperative that believers understand these three concepts: grace, faith and truth. They are the foundation upon which everything else hinges in man's position before God. Christ came to us from the Father in heaven with grace and truth. And what is there on the part of man here on earth? Faith! In grace, God sends us the incarnate truth, Jesus Christ. So what is our part? Work for our salvation? No! Be good, moral people and then God will save us? No! Adopt some religion for our life? No! Our part is only to believe on Jesus Christ as our Savior, and he even gives us the faith to do that.

In grace, God sent us his written Word and its doctrines. So what is our part in this matter? Start a program in a church? No! Become religious? No! Touch not, taste not, handle not? Bring out our human good to impress God? No! Substitute emotionalism, music, or entertainment for what God has prescribed? No! Our part is to believe the promises and doctrines that come from his Word!

But oh no, people don't want that. Their pride is too great. (How pride rages at the grace of God and rejects it.) What would they have to brag about? How could they vaunt themselves above other people without having their works of self righteousness and human good? So they build themselves religious edifices to show how superior they are in their religion. They have great extravaganzas on stage to show how talented they are. They flaunt their morality and human good to show they're special.

But what did God do? What did God send? What does God have to say? Aren't these things important? Aren't these things the only issues for us in the churches today? God rejected both our human sin **and** our human good. God sent us his Son. God sent us grace and truth. But what did we do with those? Most today don't want the truth and they don't want his grace! And sad to say, even in most churches.

But what does God say? “*But **without faith it is impossible to please him**: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*” Hebrews 11:6 But this sentence goes in one ear and right out the other of most Christians today. What resounds in their minds is their human good activities, or their morality, or their church's programs, or the entertainment going on in their church, or their emotions, or what they've given up for God.

Becoming a grace believer, and living by grace in one's life, is not only restful for the soul, but freeing! No longer are we controlled by what others think of us, no longer are we kept in the bondage of trying to please others, or some religious system, no longer are we dependent upon the government, or a job, no longer do we need other people's approval, for God is the one that provides for us, takes care of us and will supply all our needs. It matters not if other people accept us, or reject us, because we know that we have been accepted by Jesus Christ and his Father.

But being a **grace believer** also means that you will be a **faith believer**. That is, you will live by faith in your life. Believing the promises; trusting the Father, his plan, his power, his provisions; claiming the promises of God by faith; making your decisions by faith; everything about your life will be by faith. It will be like *the faith of Jesus Christ* who instituted a new type of faith for God's people on earth to live by. A simple faith that trusts the Father for everything in your life. “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our (the) faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Hebrews 12:2 He began this type of faith; he personally lived by it himself; and he brought it to completion and perfection. It is this kind of faith that God wants us to live by, so that he can pour out his grace blessings for us and so that we can get into and complete his perfect plan for our lives.

Pastor Mike