

Grace and Obedience

Many religious people err in their understanding of the relation between grace and obedience. This problem causes good and sincere individuals to hold inconsistent beliefs. An unbiased look at the scriptures will resolve this difficulty.

First, the Bible teaches that salvation is by grace but not by grace alone (Eph. 2:8; Matt. 7:21). If salvation be by grace alone, then faith, repentance, the love of God, and the blood of Christ are unnecessary. Yet the Bible implicitly teaches that without faith (Heb. 11:6) and repentance (Luke 13:3) there is no salvation.

Second, salvation by grace does not exclude obedience. God told Joshua in Josh. 6:2: "See I have given unto your hand Jericho." Did Joshua receive it unconditionally? Before God gave them Jericho, the Israelites had to march around the walls for six days, and seven times on the seventh day (Josh. 6:1-11). Naaman was told to dip seven times in the Jordan river before being cleansed of leprosy (1 Kings 5). His cleansing was a gift of God, but he did not receive it until he met God's conditions. If the Israelites with Joshua and Naaman had refused to obey God, would they have received God's grace?

Third, according to Titus 2:11-12, the grace of God has appeared to all men. If salvation is by grace alone, then God's grace will save all, because God's grace has appeared to all. No one, who accepts the Bible, accepts this conclusion.

Fourth, also according to Titus 2:11-12, God's grace teaches us. What does God's grace teach us? It teaches that "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Titus 2:11)." However it also instructs us "to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12). God's grace also teaches us that we are to be "zealous of good works (Titus 2:14)." God's grace goes only to those who live righteously and who are zealous of good works. To disobey God, is to reject His grace.

The Bible clearly and repeatedly sets forth the conditions upon which God extends His grace to us. We must believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Acts 17:30), confess the name of Christ before men (Matt. 10:32-33), be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16), and live sober, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

Let us all obey God's will and receive God's grace?