

CHAPTER XV

THE GRACE OF GOD (Concluded)

PRACTICALLY all professing Christians profess to believe that salvation is of grace. You can hardly find a member of any denomination who will out and out deny that salvation is by grace. The Bible so often and so positively declares salvation to be by grace that few men will boldly deny it. But the trouble is that many think and speak of grace in such a way as to frustrate it. The grace they think of and talk about is not grace at all. It is so mixed with human work and merit that it is no more 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 it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work"* (Rom. 11:6). There is quite as much in Roman Catholic literature about grace as there is in Baptist literature, but there is wide difference as to what the two groups mean by grace. In preceding chapters we have sought to tell what grace is, and where grace reigns, and what grace provides; and in this chapter we shall endeavour to show

How Grace Saves

Before coming directly to the question, we shall lay down some principles from which to reason:

1. Salvation by grace destroys all room for boasting. No man is sound on grace who boasts of anything he has ever done or can do as the ground of his salvation. If your idea of salvation allows you to boast you may be sure it is wrong. No man can even boast of his repentance and faith, for they are the gifts of His grace. *"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins"* (Acts 5:31); *"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"* (Acts 11:17); *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"* (1 Cor. 3:5); *"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power"* (Eph. 1:19); *"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (1 Jno. 5:4). All of our graces are fruit of the Spirit. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law"* (Gal. 5 :22, 23).

2. Salvation by grace means that God is to have all the praise for our salvation. The Father is to have all praise for providing the Savior; the Son is to have all the praise for performing the work of salvation; and the Holy Spirit is to have all the praise for promoting salvation in us by

convicting us of sin and bringing us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Salvation by grace does not give license to sin. There are two dangers concerning grace: one is the danger of frustrating it, the other is the danger of abusing it. We frustrate grace when we teach that righteousness comes by keeping the law: "*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*" (Gal. 2:21). We abuse grace when we use it to justify a life of sin. One is the danger of Arminianism, the other is the danger of Antinomianism. The one sets grace aside, the other uses grace wrongly.

He who justifies his sinning on the ground that he is not under law but under grace, does not have the grace of God in him. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6:14,15). The child of grace hates sin and strives against it, and when he falls into it, confesses it and forsakes it. Sin is not the habit and practice of his life. There is no sin that he hugs to his bosom and takes to glory with him. There is no sin that is a sweet morsel under his tongue. The man of grace neither boasts of keeping out of sin, nor justifies himself when he falls into sin. In approaching our question:

How Does Grace Save?

We make a negative approach:

1. Grace does not save by enabling us to perfectly keep the law of God. It is our judgment that this is the way many people think grace saves. They confess that no man can of himself keep the law, but that grace enables him to keep it, and in this way grace saves. To be logical and consistent, and to have any place for grace in their plan, this must be the position of all who believe in salvation by keeping the law. Now, it is admitted, that if God should eradicate every vestige of our sinful nature, and cause us to live without sin, that would be grace indeed that would be the unmerited favor of God. It would be grace for it would be doing for us that which we do not deserve. But this is not the way grace saves, and we must voice our objections to it:

(1) That would not satisfy justice for sins already committed. God is just as well as gracious, and grace never acts contrary to justice. If the sinner should quit sinning justice would condemn him for sins he had committed in the past.

(2) That would rob Christ of any part in our salvation. If grace saves by making us sinless in character and conduct, then salvation would be by grace, but apart from Jesus Christ, for "*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*" (Gal. 2:21).

(3) If grace saves by enabling us to keep the law, then the Holy Spirit would be the Savior rather than Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Administrator of inward grace; it is by His strength we worship and serve God. The Holy Spirit, through the word, shows us the Savior, and makes Him precious to us, but the Holy Spirit is not the Savior. In announcing the birth of the Savior, the angel said, *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins"* (Matt. 1:21).

(4) In the new birth the sinful nature is not eradicated, but a sinless nature is implanted. In the saved man there is a warfare between two conflicting natures; *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would"* (Gal. 5:17). And Paul said, *"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."* (Rom. 7:21). *And this is the testimony of every true child of God, for "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jno. 1:8).*

2. Grace does not save by overlooking our sins. If God took no account of our sins, that would be grace indeed but in doing that He would abdicate His throne in favor of His enemies. Our sins deserve punishment, but if God overlooked them and never punished them, that certainly would be grace that would be the unmerited favor of God. But this is not the way grace saves, for several reasons:

(1) Because it would be at the expense of justice. There can be no sacrifice of justice in salvation. Sin must and will be punished. If God overlooked sin He would be gracious, but at the same time unjust.

(2) There would have been no need of Christ's coming to earth and dying on the cross. There is forgiveness with God, but it is on the ground of satisfied justice. *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities"* (Isa. 53:11). Grace saves by satisfying justice. *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Eph. 1:7).

(3) It would cause man to admire one attribute of God and despise another attribute. If grace saves apart from the satisfaction of Divine justice, the sinner would naturally admire the grace of God, and at the same time despise His justice. To deal with sinners in such a way, God would be putting a premium on sin. We would not think much of a human judge who would overlook the crimes of men and let them all go free. Such a judge would be despised and deposed. Such procedure would be an invitation for everybody to commit all the crimes he pleased, because they

would be overlooked, and no harm would come to the criminal. How would you, dear reader, like to live in a country like that?

3. Grace does not save by giving us ordinances to observe. The ordinances of ceremonies of Christ are for those already saved. They are declarative and symbolical; not procurative and sacramental. They are for the saints; not for the world, The most terrible heresies have come from false conception of the ordinances. Millions of men have lost their lives because they would not subscribe to these false conceptions. I quote from an article on "The Sacraments," as found in the Roman Catholic Mass Book published by the Paulist Press, New York City:

"The sacraments are the ordinary means whereby God's grace is brought to one's soul. We depend on the grace of God not only to reach heaven after death, but to lead a life well pleasing to God on this earth. What the winds are to the sailing vessel, grace is to our soul.

The Sacraments are seven different ways by which special graces are applied to our soul. They are all instituted by Christ. By His death on the cross our Blessed Lord created a great reservoir of grace. From this reservoir there are seven channels, each carrying grace of a special quality, and when we need a particular kind of Divine help we go to the Sacrament which provides it. Baptism regenerates the soul and makes us children of God. It has the effect of washing away the sin we were born in, as well as any other sin we have committed. Confirmation strengthens the soul so as to enable it to fight valiantly. Holy Eucharist, being Christ Himself, the Living Bread, is the Food and Nourishment of the soul. Penance brings us God's pardon. Extreme Unction gives us grace to die well. Holy Orders raises men to the dignity of God's service and gives them strength to persevere. Matrimony gives grace to husband and wife to love each other and bring up their children in the grace and knowledge of God. Throughout our life on this earth the Sacraments provide spiritual nourishment without which it is impossible for us to merit the happiness and the glory which God has prepared for us in heaven."

What a strange medley of truth and error! What a frustration of the true grace of God! What an awful misrepresentation of grace! What a travesty of the truth! The article speaks of grace enabling one "to merit the happiness and the glory" of heaven. To merit a thing is to deserve it, or to get it by way of debt, and whatever is reckoned as a debt is not of grace. "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt*" (Rom. 4:4). The Bible says that salvation is of faith that it might be by grace: "*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all*" (Rom. 4:16). "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*" (Eph. 2:8), but this article

does not have the word faith in it.

We will now attempt a positive answer to our question: How Does Grace Save?" What is the "modus operandi" of grace? What does grace do in salvation?

1. Grace saves from the guilt and penalty of sins by placing them on Christ. Grace saves by punishing Christ instead of the sinner. He put away the guilt of our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"* (Heb. 9 :26). He bare our sins in His own body on the tree. *"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed"* (I Peter 2:24). He died as the Just One for the unjust ones that He might bring them to God, that is, into His favor. *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"* (I Peter 3:18).

Justice says that my sins must be punished, and they have been punished in my Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Surety of that better covenant *"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises"* (Heb. 8:6). *"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22). It was in matchless grace that the Lord Jesus liquidated our sin debt, and He shall have all the praise.

"Our sins, our quilt, in love Divine
Confessed and bourne by Thee;
The gall, the course, the wrath were Thine,
To set Thy members free."

"Grace," cried Spurgeon, "is everything for nothing; Christ free, pardon free, heaven free."

2. Grace saves us from the love of sin and from a darkened understanding. This may be called internal salvation, and is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. In this work the Holy Spirit opens the soul's blinded eyes to see the truth of the Gospel. Paul said that his gospel was hid to the lost because their minds were blinded. *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them"* (II Cor. 4:4). The death of Christ does not benefit the man who lives and dies without faith in it. And every man of us would so live were it not for the light giving and life giving work of the Spirit. Spiritual truths are foolishness to the natural man, "But the natural man receiveth

not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14), even though he be a university professor, and none but the Holy Spirit can make a man spiritual.

By nature and training Saul of Tarsus was a proud, persecuting, self righteous Pharisee, but grace wrought in him the graces of repentance and faith. It was grace that made him sick of self and fond of Christ. He had been depending for salvation upon his Hebrew ancestry and the rite of circumcision, and upon his orthodoxy as a Pharisee, his zeal as a persecuting patriot, and his law righteousness; but when grace revealed Christ to Him in all His worth, he counted all these things as "dung," rejoicing in the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. *"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"* (Phil. 3:1-9).

Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, and His work in us is as much of grace as was the work of Christ for us on the cross. Christ wrought for us on the cross to liquidate our sin debt; the Holy Spirit wrought in us conviction for sin, and faith in the blood of Christ as the one and only remedy for sin. "Grace," said Spurgeon again, "is the morning and evening star of our experience. Grace puts us in the way, helps us by the way, and takes us all the way."

Anna Steele, (1760), has memorialized the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in the following lines on the next page:

"How helpless guilty nature lies,
Unconscious of its load;
The heart, unchanged, can never rise
To happiness and God.
"Can ought beneath a power divine

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The stubborn will subdue?
'Tis thine, eternal Spirit, thine
To form the heart anew.
"Tis thine the passions to recall,
And upward bid them rise,
And make the scales of error fall
From reason's darkened eyes.
"To chase the shades of death away,
And, bid the sinner live;
A beam of heaven, a vital ray,
'Tis thine alone to give.
"O change the wretched hearts of men,
And give them life divine;
Then shall their passions and their powers,
Almighty Lord, be thine."