

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

Sept. 16, 2007 (Vol. 7)

FIRST PRINCIPLES: FAITH TOWARD GOD

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Continuing our study of "the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5:12-13) we now look at "faith toward God" (6:1). Faith, according to the Bible, is the standard, law or system by which we are justified (Rom. 3:27). Now many will object to calling "faith" a law, but the Bible does not have that difficulty. It is "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2). It is the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). It is the "law of faith" (Rom. 3:27). Hence, it is a law.

Those who object to calling the gospel a law generally do so because they want to separate works from the gospel. They cite passages, such as "We are saved by grace through faith not of yourselves... not of works that no man may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9) as proof that **all** works are excluded. Yet, when we remind them of the multitude of passages that commend and command works of faith; these respond by saying "We look at scripture as a whole and try to avoid isolated texts." What does this mean? It means that they do not have a sound response to the verses which connect faith and works. This kind of statement does not consider what scriptures say about faith and works, rather it just evades and avoids the issue.

Consider a parallel in daily life. If a woman wants to make a cake, would she begin by saying "I look at the recipe as a whole and try to avoid isolated ingredients"? We would find that statement quite strange. For, how do you

make a cake without looking at the "isolated ingredients"? It is impossible to have a cake without properly using each of the individual ingredients". So it is with faith.

The "perfect law, the law of liberty of liberty" says that we must have a living faith. What is a living faith? It is a faith that **works** (James 2:17). Again, some object by saying, "But this is the demonstration that you are already saved, not in order to be saved." But let us truly examine the "whole of the scripture" on that. The inspired writer clearly says that the faith under consideration in James 2 is one that affects salvation and justification (2:14, 21). Dear friend, will you accept "the whole of scripture" as God revealed it? Or will you avoid and reject this inspired "isolated text"?

Now some may not be able to understand immediately how works and faith are connected. This is usually because many have been taught that we are saved by "faith only, without any works." But, to state it plainly, the Bible never says salvation comes by "faith **ONLY**" or "without **ANY** works". Works of faith are different from works of the Old Law or "works of merit" wherein man may boast.

Also, while we definitely need to consider the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), that certainly does **NOT** mean we "avoid isolated texts". Rather, it means that we read **EVERY** text on each subject and remember how each is used in its context. An accurate view of the scriptures does not avoid any text.

So, when we look at passages such as Ephesians 2:8-9, we must remember that they have a specific context. The context is a contrast between the system of faith in Christ and the system of works of merit under the Law of Moses. We note this by the "you" (referring to the Jews - Eph. 2:3). Also, we should consider other texts on the same topic, such as Galatians 5:2-6 and Romans 2:17, 3:19, 21-22, 27-30.

Works are in fact essential to faith. They are the proof of our faith being alive (James 2:14ff). If we do not show that we believe by

obeying, then we demonstrate unbelief as Israel did (Heb. 3:18-19).

Friends, you may believe that you have the faith that pleases God. But I challenge you to show you faith without your works. It is simply impossible. Even faith in denominational teaching is demonstrated by what people **do**. Rather than "faith only" doctrine or denominational faith, let us show by our works genuine faith in God.

Does that mean that we are being saved by **our** perfect works? No. We have all sinned and fallen short of His glory (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, nothing we do in and of ourselves earns salvation. But God has graciously provided a "law of faith" in Christ, whereby we may receive pardon when we submit. In submitting, in truly surrendering ourselves to do His will, then our efforts will find worth because they are in Christ, not in ourselves. It is based upon God's promise that those who trust in Jesus and show it by obedience will be blessed (1 John 2:3-6; Rom. 6:17-18).

Friends, those who truly **believe** will not reason against and withstand submission to the will of God. How does undermining and combating what God reveals show faith in Him? Rather, yield yourself to Him. Come to Him on His terms. Friends, do you really believe?

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard, Wesley Geer, Mag Bumbalough, Thelma Cunningham (Master's HC in Algood, 407B), Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet (NHC 220), Robert & Betty England, Joe Smith, Mike Tenpenny, Thelma Klein, Nathan Hill, DeLeesa Price (expecting). Lydia Poe, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Ed & Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval. Matthew Taylor (leukemia), Joyce Simmons Wagner.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. Sept. 15th & 29th.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. Sept. 30th.
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

We Invite You To All Our Services!

Sunday @ 9am, 10am & 6pm
Wednesday @ 7pm

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Speaking As The Oracles Of God (1 Pet. 4:11)