

# The Grace of God



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

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## Grace Evangelical Society

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Years ago I attended a debate between a preacher and a man from the Grace Evangelical Society. The debate focused on faith and baptism, for this denominational group believes that salvation is "by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone." Aside from the ill logic of the statement that has **three things alone**, let us look at a recent article written by Mr. Robert Wilkin, Ph.D.

Repeatedly articles in the mail out "Grace In Focus" berate and condemn anything kin or cousin to obedience, especially obedience of faith as a condition of salvation. In the July/August 2007 edition, Wilkin reviews "The Way of the Master". I have never heard of this group before, but he quotes from them and then "refutes" them.

For example, Wilkin objects to this groups' approach because they begin by pointing out that people have sinned and need to repent. Wilkin's reply is:

THERE ARE TWO MAJOR WAYS IN WHICH THIS APPROACH FAILS TO REPRODUCE THE GOSPEL THAT JESUS PREACHED. FIRST, JESUS DIDN'T TEACH THAT THE CROSS *POTENTIALLY* DEALT WITH OUR SIN PROBLEM.

BECAUSE OF THE SHED BLOOD OF CHRIST, SIN IS NO LONGER A BARRIER FOR ANYONE. THE LAMB OF GOD TOOK AWAY THE SIN OF THE WHOLE WORLD (JOHN 1:29; 1 JOHN 2:2).

SECOND, THE CONDITION OF SPENDING ETERNITY IN JESUS' KINGDOM AND HAVING ETERNAL LIFE IS NOT TURNING FROM SINS AND COMMITTING ONE'S LIFE. THE SOLE CONDITION IS FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS (JOHN 3:16).

First off, the Gospel of Christ tells people they are sinners (Rom. 3:23). Secondly, Christ's death was the sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:26) that was "once" completed & accomplished (Heb. 9:26; 10:10). While His sacrifice accomplished everything God intended it to and does not need to be repeated, it still remains as a fact that a completed sacrifice still needs to be APPLIED to the recipient. As Hebrews 10:22 says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts**

**sprinkled** from an evil conscience, **and** our bodies washed with pure water." This passages links the "sprinkling of the blood on our heart" (our inner man, our spirit) with the time of washing our bodies in pure water. When was that? Romans 6 adds that when we are baptized we are "baptized into His death" (6:3). Jesus death, His sacrifice is applied to us spiritually in the moment of baptism. Ephesians 5:25-26 says that Jesus' sacrifice cleanses & sanctifies "by the washing of water with the word". In obedient faith, the Lord applies His sacrifice to us and purifies us.

Neither "The Way of the Master" nor Mr. Robert Wilkin Ph.D. get it right. The one teaches salvation at the point of repentance & giving one's life to Christ; while the other teaches salvation at the point of faith alone. Neither group speaks according to the word of God (1 Pet. 4:11). For, God said that belief is necessary, **as well as** repentance **and** baptism (Mark. 16:16; Lk. 24:47; John 3:3, 5; Acts 2:38; Etc.).

As for Wilkin's proof text, John 3:16, it does not prove faith alone at all. In fact, the word "alone" is not in the passage nor is it implied by the context! The context actually demands "obedient faith". Consider John 3:14-15. A comparison is made between Moses lifting up the brass serpent and faith in Christ. Thus, whatever kind of faith was involved in Numbers 21:4-9 is parallel to the faith that brings eternal life. Read Numbers 21. It says that those poisoned by snakebites had to look to be healed. This necessarily required an active, obedient faith. They had to come to the center of the camp and trust that what God said would work, even if it didn't make any sense to them about how a brass serpent could heal snake bites! Thus, John 3:16's faith is of the same kind and category – OBEDIENT faith. Down goes Wilkin's "faith alone" proposition...

Wilkin continues to dispute the approach of this group, in that they begin by pointing out people's sins. He replies:

THE EMPHASIS THE LORD JESUS GAVE WAS ON HIMSELF, NOT THE SINNER. HE REPEATEDLY CALLED FOR PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN HIM, THE SON OF GOD, IN ORDER TO HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE (E.G., JOHN 3:16; 5:24; 6:35, 47; 11:25-27).

JESUS OFTEN NEVER EVEN BROUGHT UP THE ISSUE OF SIN WHEN HE EVANGELIZED. LOOK AT WHAT HE TOLD NICODEMUS IN JOHN 3. HE NEVER EVEN MENTIONED SIN THERE. EVEN JOHN 4 WHEN HE SPOKE WITH THE WOMAN AT THE WELL, WHILE JESUS POINTED OUT ONE AREA OF SIN IN HER LIFE, HE DIDN'T CALL HER TO REPENT OF IT. INDEED, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE REASON HE POINTED OUT THAT AREA OF SIN WAS TO CONVINCER HER THAT HE WAS THE MESSIAH (COMPARE JOHN 4:16-19, 25-26, 39).

JESUS DIDN'T SAY THAT PEOPLE MUST BE SORRY FOR, OR TURN FROM, THEIR SINS TO BE BORN AGAIN. THE WORDS *REPENT* AND *REPENTANCE* AREN'T EVEN FOUND IN JOHN'S GOSPEL. NOR DID THE LORD SAY THAT PEOPLE NEED TO COMMIT THEIR LIVES TO HIM TO BE SAVED. HE TOLD PEOPLE THAT HE IS THE ONE

MAKING A COMMITMENT. HE COMMITS TO GIVE EVERLASTING LIFE THAT CAN NEVER BE LOST TO ALL WHO SIMPLY BELIEVE IN HIM...”

We've already dealt with the "faith alone" aspect, so let us look at the other errors in this section. Wilkin asserts Jesus often never even brought up the issue of sin when he evangelized. Really? What does Mr. Wilkin have is Ph.D. in? When you read the gospels, how long does it take before you realize that the reason people hated Jesus' guts was because He was constantly pointing out their sins and their need to repent? John preached "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2) in preparation for Christ. After Jesus' baptism, He himself went about preaching "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17).

Also, like many evangelicals, Mr. Wilkin likes to view the gospel of John as the only evangelical gospel. I.e., He arbitrarily says that the other gospels were not meant to teach what to do to be saved, only John does that. Evangelicals like this position because then they can make foolish arguments about the word "repent" not being in John's gospel, nor the word "baptism". Thus they think they have "proven" that these two items are not necessary, when all they have proven is that they can wholesale ignore the gospel of Jesus Christ (John 12:48).

But what they fail to recognize is that even though the words "repentance" & "baptism" are not in John, the **doctrines** are there. Consider John 3 with Nicodemus. Jesus told Nicodemus of his need to be "born again". If Nicodemus needed saving, it was because he was a sinner. Also, being born again is here connected with water baptism (3:5). And, did Jesus mention nothing to Nicodemus about sin? Just read John 3:16-21! Mr. Wilkin needs to get his money back on his Ph.D.

In John 4, Wilkin again asserts that while Jesus told the woman of "an area of sin" in her life, He only did this to prove who He was & that He didn't call her to repent. Wow. What can you say to that? When Jesus told the woman she **needed** spiritual water, of necessity that implied she was **lacking** spiritual life (4:10, 13-14). When Jesus told the woman about her immoral lifestyle (she had had 5 "husbands", and was now "with" a man) was that "just an area of sin" in her life? Or was this a constant pattern and major stain on her soul? When she asked about Samaritan versus Jewish worship, did Jesus tell her the Samaritan was right (4:22)? Sure, Jesus pointed to Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. There is no doubt of that. But He **also** pointed out the sins of people and brought them to understand that they were lost!

In John 5 Jesus healed a man at the pool of Bethesda. Later, Jesus found him and told him: "Behold, thou art made whole; **sin no more**, lest a worse thing befall thee." (5:14) The word "repentance" is not expressly stated, but it is **necessarily** implied from what Jesus said! Jesus here even spoke of hell, though He didn't say the word "hell".

Mr. Wilkin Ph.D. continues: "BECAUSE OF CALVARY NO ONE WILL EVER BE CONDEMNED DUE TO THEIR SINS. THE BASIS OF CONDEMNATION IS UNBELIEF, NOT SINFULNESS (SEE JOHN 1:29; 1 JOHN 2:2; REV. 20:11-15). IT

IS AN INSULT TO THE WORK OF THE LORD JESUS ON THE CROSS TO MAKE OUR SINS THE ISSUE IN EVANGELISM."

No one will be condemned for their sin? Tell that to Jesus (John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10)! And logically Wilkin Ph.D.'s statement seems to indicate that unbelief is not a sin. Surely he didn't mean to say that, but if you try to follow his statements you find that goofy conclusion. And it is an insult to Christ's work on the cross to make our sins the issue? This would be laughable, if it wasn't such a serious blunder! Christ went to the cross was **because** of our sins (Gen. 3:15; Is. 53:4-12)! If Mr. Ph.D. Wilkin can't figure out the difference between **making a remedy** for sin and **applying the remedy** for sin, then there is no wonder he can't figure out what faith is.

Wilkin concludes: "BUT WE MUST TAKE CARE TO MAKE SURE THAT WHAT WE ARE SAYING IS ACTUALLY WHAT THE LORD JESUS SAID." Yes, we must do that. But some who claim they are careful are in fact not. As Jesus said, "And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:6-9) Brethren, beware. For there are many Mr. Wilkins in the world and usually they can express themselves much more smoothly than he (Rom. 16:17-18).

#### PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

**Marilyn Langford** (foot), **Joyce Gardner** (eyes), **Johanna Fletcher**, **Othena Kinnard** (in Nashville), **Wesley Geer**, **Mag Bumbalough** (Life Care 519), **Thelma Cunningham**, **Mary Cox**, **Monie Petty** (breathing difficulties), **Dave Poteet** (NHC 212), **Dorris Williams**, **Robert & Betty England**, **Joe Smith**,

**Mike Tenpenny**, **Thelma Klein**, **Nathan Hill**, **DeLeesa Price** (expecting) and **Alisa Fletcher** (expecting). **Lydia Poe**, **Larry Bumbalough**, **Jake Hale**, **Joshua & Misty Poteet**, **Ed & Carolyn Williams**, **Kenley Streeval**. **Matthew Taylor** (Marci's friend's baby, leukemia).

#### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Door To Door** - Every Tuesday @ 6pm.
- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. Aug. 4th & 18th.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. July 29
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Brian Yeager, April 13-18, 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

#### **We Invite You To All Our Services!**

Sun. Bible Study 9 am Sun. Evening Worship 6 pm  
Sunday Worship 10 am Wed. Evening Study 7 pm

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