**“This Grace In Which We Stand”**

*by Joe R. Price*

Grace (*charis*) is defined as “favor” bestowed upon another (*Vine, Thayer)*. As used in Scripture, God’s grace (favor) toward sinners is unmerited, undeserved; but it is not unconditional (else there would be universal salvation, 1 Tim. 2:3-4; Matt. 7:13-14, 21-23). God loves sinners and offered us grace in Christ, even when we were dead in our sins (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4-5; Titus 2:11-12; 3:4-7). “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” explains the unmerited nature of God’s grace (Rom. 3:24). Furthermore, God is the “justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus,” assuring us that the condition upon which grace is obtained is “faith in Jesus” (necessarily including obedience, Jas. 2:17-24; Heb. 5:8-9), and not “the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:26-28).

Through Jesus Christ “we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2). As we rejoice in hope, let us think upon this grace in which we stand.

***Grace is not a license to continue to sin.*** Even though grace is greater than sin, we cannot continue in sin so that grace will abound (Rom. 5:20-6:2). We cannot take a careless, cavalier attitude toward sin, mistakenly exalting grace at the expense of repentance and denial of the flesh. “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” focuses our attention on God’s grace that saves us as well as the obedient faith required to stand in grace through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:13-14; 5:1-2).

***Grace does not excuse unrepented sin in the judgment.*** We should not think we can ignore, rationalize, minimize, or redefine sin until the day of judgment, at which time God’s grace will allow us entrance into eternal life anyway (2 Cor. 5:10). Instead, “as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

*God’s grace cannot be separated from God’s word.* Grace brought salvation to the world. Grace also teaches us to deny sin and live “soberly, righteously and godly” (Titus 2:11-12). The lost are saved by “the gospel of the grace of God” and the saved are built up and given an inheritance by “the word of His grace” (Acts 20:24, 32).

*The grace of God includes the commands of God.* The apostle Peter wrote, “By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand” (1 Pet. 5:12). What Peter briefly wrote to the saints (the epistle of 1 Peter) contained instruction about the “true grace of God.” So, by learning what the apostle wrote in his epistle, we can understand components of “true grace of God.”

1 Peter explains the grace of God in which we stand. God’s grace expects us to obey and live holy (1 Pet. 1:13-16), to abstain from fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2:11-12), to submit to civil government (1 Pet. 2:13-17), to meet our spousal responsibilities (1 Pet. 3:1-7), to put away worldliness (sexual immorality, drinking, drunkenness and associated riotous conduct, 1 Pet. 4:1-3), to abstain from idolatry (1 Pet. 4:3), to be hospitable (1 Pet. 4:9), as elders oversee local churches (1 Pet. 5:1-3). These are but some of the instructions God’s grace teaches us so that we may stand in the true grace of God (Acts 20:32; Tit. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:12). We cannot violate “the word of His grace” and still abide in “the true grace of God" (Acts 20:28-32; 1 Pet. 5:12). Any attempt to extend the blessings of fellowship and unity among God’s people beyond the boundaries of revealed truth, and then justify that broadening upon the basis of God’s grace, has failed to properly define the grace of God. One cannot disobey the teachings of God and legitimately claim to stand in His grace.

*When we obey Jesus we are not establishing a righteousness of our own that is contrary to grace.* Noah did not establish his own means of righteousness when he obeyed God and built the ark. Neither did Abraham when he prepared to offer Isaac as God commanded  (Heb. 11:7, 17; Jas. 2:22-24). These men obtained God’s grace because in faith, they obeyed God’s word. So shall we.

Now, for an application that has drawn a lot of attention among brethren: Marriage, divorce and remarriage. The Christian who disobeys Christ’s teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage has ceased to live by faith, thereby forfeiting fellowship with Christ and the salvation “by grace, through faith” once obtained in Him (2 Jn. 9; Eph. 2:8-10). Due to practicing sin, this Christian is no longer standing in the true grace of God. When one moves away from obeying and teaching the revealed gospel of Christ, he removes himself from the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). He has fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4, 7). That includes one’s practice (and teaching) on marriage, divorce and remarriage. (Remember, Peter wrote about marriage in his discourse on the “true grace of God,” 1 Peter 3:1-7.)

*Standing in grace does not mean God will accept us in spite of our sin* (1 Jn. 2:1-2, 1:9). We cannot “agree to disagree” with God and still be saved (Amos 3:3; Jn. 17:20-21).

*We stand in the true grace of God when we obey God’s commands in faith* (Acts 20:32; Rom. 5:1-2). By doing so, we are not saved by our own righteousness (which would require sinless perfection, Rom. 4:1-5). We are but unprofitable servants doing our duty to our Master (Lk. 17:10). Like Abraham, we are sinners, saved by grace through faith.

Let us “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). Live by faith, and stand in grace (Rom. 5:2).

**Just a Few Thoughts on Having Children**

*“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate”* (Psa. 127:3-5).

As we live day to day in the world around us, we hear some speak of their children as an encumbrance to their lifestyle or a burden on their time. Yet, God tells us that our children should be seen as a blessing. Surely, if parents think for a few moments, they can recall the great number of times their children brought love, laughter, joy, cheer, wonder and delight into their lives. When difficult times come with our children, we must remember that every blessing comes with a responsibility attached. If we forget the blessings brought by our children when we discipline them, we are prone to over-reaction. If we remember they are a blessing, but need to be properly directed when they go astray, we will be more likely to administer effective discipline. Let us remember to take proper care of those arrows in our hands and aim them towards the target – Heaven! ***HRO***