



The Good News

May 7th, 2017

Volume 17, Issue 19

God's Love, Grace, and Mercy

By Michael McCleary

If we were to switch on the televangelists this morning, no doubt one of them would be preaching a sermon on the grace of God. It is certainly a popular subject among the religious of our world. In fact, the concept of God's grace is probably the most appealed-to attribute of God's character, especially when connected to God's love. While God's grace and love are of the utmost importance when considering our salvation, it is important to make sure that they are defined by, and confined to, the Scriptures. If we were to simply walk up to the average John or Jane, how many would have an accurate understanding of God's grace and love as defined by the Scriptures? It is safe to assume that the vast majority of the people we converse with will not have Biblical definitions of grace and love, but rather man's definitions. It is important, therefore, that we maintain a constant understanding of God's love, grace, and mercy as defined by the Scriptures so that we may help our friends and loved ones to come to an accurate understanding of how they may please God.

Let's begin with the Biblical concept of love. The most basic and fundamental definition of God's love toward man is found in **Rom. 5:6, 8** in which Paul says "*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" It was God's love for His creation that prompted Him to send His Son. There was nothing redeemable in us, yet Christ still died for us, showing forth His love for us and for the Father. God's love, therefore, comes first in discussing love, grace, and mercy.

Next, let us consider the Biblical concept of grace. A fundamental definition of grace is "*the friendly disposition from which blessings flow; the state of being in God's favor*". For instance, in **Eph. 1:7** Paul says that we have forgiveness of sins through the grace of God. This forgiveness was not earned or deserved, yet through faith and obedience, the Ephesian saints found favor with God. Paul also

says in **Romans. 5:2**, that it is through Christ that we "*..also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand...*". Again, Paul says in **Eph. 2:8** that God's grace saves us, but only through faith. We find, then, that grace is a state of relationship, with regards to our being in favor with God. In **Gal. 5:4** Paul says that the Galatian saints had "*fallen from grace*" because of their sins. The concept of being in God's grace is dependent upon the individual, not God. God's grace is available to all who will submit obediently to the faith of Christ. Therefore God's love was unconditionally shown in the sending of His Son to die for us, yet the application of grace unto salvation is conditional upon the faithful obedience of man. In simpler terms, if we consistently obey the Gospel and His law in faith, God's grace (favor) will be upon us.

Mercy is the "*outward manifestation of pity or compassion*" that is shown to those who submit to God. It is a product, or manifestation, of God's love. In **Eph. 2:4** Paul says "*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.*" By the submitting of ourselves to God, we come into God's favor (grace). He then shows mercy to us in taking away our sins and making us alive with Christ. Paul tells Titus in **Titus 3:5**, that "*...according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit*". In every place where the terms "*grace*" and "*mercy*" appear together, (**I Tim. 1:2, II Tim. 1:2, Titus 1:4, and II John 3**), grace precedes mercy. Simply put, the mercy of God is upon those who submit to His will.

Let us always keep these concepts fresh in our minds and help our friends and loved ones to better understand what God desires from those who seek His favor (grace).