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HOW GRACE SAVES

By: C. D. Cole

Introduction: Practically all professing Christians profess to believe in salvation by grace. There are hardly any who will deny out and out that salvation is by grace. The Bible gives such emphasis to salvation by grace that few will boldly deny it. Literature of all Christian groups abound in the word grace. Practically as much in Roman Catholic literature about grace as in Baptist literature. but many think and speak of grace in such a way as to frustrate grace. The grace that some speak about is not grace at all. It is so mixed with human merit and works that it is no more grace. Galatians 2:21, *"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."*

There are some things of earth that no human pen or tongue can do justice to: storms, rainbows, cataracts, icebergs, dewdrops, snowflakes, sunsets. Because God made them, man cannot describe them. So grace is something in God that no human tongue can do justice to. No man can speak of it as he ought. But by grace we can keep from frustrating grace.

And none but children of grace can or will honour grace, in thought, word, and deed. It was only after Saul was saved by grace that he said, *"By the grace of God I am what I am."* Paul gave grace credit for his conversion. He did not think he had made himself to differ from others. A great change had taken place in his opinions, affections and ambitions and he attributes this change to the grace of God. Paul once believed in salvation by works and profited in the Jews religion, but it pleased God to call him by His grace and reveal His Son in him. He once

knew Christ after the flesh--he had a carnal or fleshly opinion of him and hated him and boasted that he would have nothing to do with him; but after grace wrought in his heart, he delighted to say, *"For me to live is Christ."*

WHAT IS GRACE?

It is the unmerited favor of God. Anything merited or deserved is not of grace. The man who thinks he deserves salvation does not believe in grace. He may talk about grace, but grace does not mean to him what it does to a poor, self-confessed sinner whose only hope is in Christ.

HOW DOES GRACE SAVE?

Some principles from which to reason:

1. Salvation by grace excludes boasting. Ephesians 2:8, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."*
2. Salvation by grace gives all glory and credit to God. The Father is to have all praise and credit for providing the Saviour; the Son to have all praise for purchasing salvation; and the Holy Spirit to have all the praise for promoting salvation.
3. Salvation by grace does not give license to sin. Grace does not justify a life of sin.

HOW DOES GRACE SAVE?

Negatively:

1. Not by enabling the sinner to perfectly keep the law. Here I am, a sinner by practice and a child of wrath by nature, with a carnal mind that is

not subject to the law of God, neither can be. Now if the Holy Spirit should reach down into my heart and mind and pull out that old sinful nature and cause me to live above sin, that would be grace indeed, for I would not deserve such a blessing; but that is not the way grace saves.

Why? Because that would not satisfy the justice of God for my sins of the past; because that would rob Christ of any part of my salvation--grace saves us through faith in Christ; because the Holy Spirit would then be the Saviour rather than Christ.

2. Not by overlooking my sins. If God should overlook my sins--indulge me in sinning and not punish me for them, that would be grace, for that would be something I would not deserve. That would be putting a premium on sin, but that is not the way grace saves.

Why? Because that would be at the expense of justice. Think of a court or judge who would say, "I am going to overlook crime; nobody will be punished in my court." That would be grace but it would not be justice.

Because there would be no need of Christ. If God lets people off because they cry and beg not to be punished, then it would be useless for Christ to have died.

Because such a plan would cause the sinner to love grace and at the same time despise God's law and defy His justice.

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LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

John 14:15

By: C. D. Cole

"If ye love me, keep my commandments," John 14:15.

Love to Christ and obedience to Him are inseparably and infallibly connected. Love to Christ is both a duty and a grace. Every man ought to love Christ and failure to love Him will result in the direst tragedy. I Corinthians 16:22, *"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."* I John 4:7, *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."* Love is not natural to the human heart. Romans 8:7, *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."* These truths may be hard to harmonize but if both are believed there will be a feeling of responsibility and a sense of our weakness. A sense of responsibility will turn the wheels of conduct and duty and a sense of weakness will drive us to our knees.

In religion, nothing can take the place of love to Christ. Talent, money, service, sociability, sacrifice without love will profit nothing. See I Corinthians, chapter 13. The great need in our churches is for members who love Christ. Success is measured by obedience. I Samuel 15:22, *"...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..."* There is the ever present danger of exalting an affable and sociable spirit above the spirit of obedience.

We have here the all-sufficient ideal and guide to life. We do not become Christians by keeping commandments, but we are successful and happy Christians by keeping commandments. It is true that none of us keep His commandments perfectly, but he who makes this an excuse to openly disregard any commandment of Christ is to betray a bad state of heart.

Where are His commandments? They are in His word. The New Testament is the law of Christianity. Injunc-

tions found in the writings of Paul, Peter, and John and all the rest of the New Testament writers are the commandments of Christ. Remember that Christ did not write a single line of the New Testament, therefore, if His commandments are in the New Testament they must be found in the writings of others. Paul, because he wrote some things that men and women do not like, is set aside. Paul says in I Corinthians 14:37 that the things he writes are the commandments of the Lord.

I. Christ's commandments are not in harmony with the fashions of the world. He who keeps the commandments of Christ will have to break with the ways and customs of the world. I Corinthians 7:31, *"And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."* James 4:4, *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."*

2. Christ's commandments are not in harmony with human reason. He who keeps Christ's commandments will not follow his feeling or his conscience. People are forever saying that they do not see any harm in this or that when God's word plainly prohibits it. There would be no harm in doing certain things if God had not spoken against it. Why was it wrong for Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of a certain tree? Only because God forbade it. Why was it wrong for Uzzah to touch the ark? Only because God had said no man should touch it. Why was it wrong for Jezebel to teach publicly in the church at Thyatira? Only because God's word opposed it. Why is it wrong for women to cut their hair? Only because God's word says it is a shame for her to do so. Why is it wrong for a man to wear long hair and keep his hat on during public worship? Only because of what God's word says. Who is to be the judge of what is right or wrong, God or the con-

science? Why was it wrong for Saul to spare Agag and the best of the cattle? He gave good reasons, if conscience is to be the judge. He said he spared the best cattle to offer it in sacrifice to God. But it was wrong because God had said destroy them completely. Do we need to be told that it is wrong to do that which God says we must not do?

II. We have here the proof and evidence of love. *"If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments."* There are various attitudes towards the commandments of Christ. some murmur at them and call them grievous. Others set them aside as out of date and belonging to another age. Others ridicule them as impracticable. Some explain them away and ease their conscience. Some keep them reluctantly, but love's attitude is to keep them joyously. Some keep them out of regard to the preacher who proclaims them. If they like him they will keep Christ's commandments. If they lose their admiration or love for him they will cease to keep the commandments he preaches. But they ought to be kept out of love for Christ.

The commandment to give is one that many church members do not seem to know is in the Bible. Paul is writing about giving in II Corinthians 8:8, *"I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."* He declares that the evidence of sincerity of love to Christ is willingness to give. How would we like for God to judge us by that standard? How much do you really love Jesus? You can answer by what you are giving to His cause and the proclamation of His word. We sing, "My Jesus, I love thee," but what is the proof? Paul says it is your giving--what you do with your money. II Corinthians 8:24, *"Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf."*

It is so with human love. We prove it by our gifts. We show it by what we

do. Our actions speak louder than words. Love is service. We give because we love. It is so with divine love. God so loved that He gave. His love is measured by what He gave. His love is the greatest because He gave the greatest. The greater the love the greater the gift. We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving.

III. The all-powerful motive. The true motive of all obedience is love to Christ. We are to keep the commandments because they are Christ's commandments. Keeping them for any other reason is not keeping them at all.

HOW GRACE SAVES (continued from page 1)

3. Not by giving us ordinances or ceremonies to observe. Ordinances are for those already saved. Not sacramental and procurative, but symbolic and declarative.

Positively:

There are two things grace does in saving sinners:

1. Grace puts our sins on Christ and punishes him for them. God must punish sin, for He must be just. But if He punishes His Son for what I have done, surely that is grace. Ephesians 1:7, *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."* Romans 3:24, *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* Galatians 3:13, *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."* I Peter 2:24, *"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."*

2. This upholds the justice of God. God is so just that when He found the guilt of our sins upon His own dear Son, He did not spare one bit of punishment that our sins deserve.

3. Grace saves by making Christ and his atoning death precious to our hearts. The death of Christ does no man any good who lives and dies with-

out ever trusting it. He that believeth not shall be damned. On the cross Christ purchased our salvation but the Holy Spirit applies salvation. I was not saved the day Christ died on Calvary, for I had no existence then. I was saved the day I trusted what Christ did on Calvary. Now it was grace working in me that caused me to understand and appropriate what Christ did on the cross. It was grace in God that caused Him to convict me of sin and show me my desperate need of salvation. It was grace in God that caused him to show me that I could not save myself by my own works. It was in grace that God showed me that redemption was through the death of Christ. Grace makes us sick of self and fond of Christ.