

ALL OF GRACE

Galatians 1:4-9

INTRODUCTION:

Salvation is by grace through faith. It is by the grace of God plus nothing. Teachers had come among the people of Galatia who were trying to add things to this grace. They proclaimed a salvation which required observance of certain religious ceremonies, and the keeping of certain religious rules. They made it Christ plus these other things. This little letter has as its theme a salvation that is all of grace.

That this was heavy on the Apostle's heart becomes obvious in this greeting to the letter. When he refers to the grace and peace that he desires for his readers, he immediately turns in a spirit of worship to the part that Jesus Christ has in this grace. That He is the source of grace is clear, but it must not be overlooked how he became the channel through which the grace of God comes to guilty sinners. Consideration of the part that Jesus played in this great drama of redemption only accents the part that grace plays in it.

Those of us who have been saved by grace never tire of hearing about it. The more we consider it the more amazing it becomes. With that in mind, I want us to consider these two verses that really open up to us the heart of this little letter. Almost everything found in the letter is implied in this part of the greeting. Consider with me---

I. THE EXPENSE OF GRACE---THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Who is Jesus Christ? Paul can never forget that He is the One who died for us. This is the most glorious thought. "Who gave himself for our sins." To be saved by grace is to be saved without any cost to yourself, but that does not mean that there is not a cost involved. It is to be saved from sin at Christ's expense. This simple statement of Paul implies the whole story.

You will never comprehend the seriousness of sin until you see it against the background of the Cross. Our sin is so serious that it required the death of Jesus Christ to deliver us from it. The wages of sin is death --- someone must die for your sin. Our tendency is to downplay the seriousness of sin. We choose to use other words like "mistake", or "failure", or "fault". God talks about sin. In the view of God your sin is so serious that it required the death of His Son. Before God could deal with you in mercy and grace, Jesus Christ had to give Himself for our sins.

This statement also gives us some insight into the Cross of Christ. We are to see Jesus as a willing sacrifice---not as a victim. Paul affirms that He gave Himself. The message is that Jesus Christ voluntarily, freely, at a point in history, gave

Himself over for us. The death of Jesus Christ on the Cross is uniquely His deed. It is not something that someone else did, but something that He did. He gave Himself.

This statement also gives us insight into the character of His death. The preposition "for" in this sentence is the preposition of substitution. The idea conveyed is that Jesus Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He died in our place. He became our sin offering. You will recall that beautiful ritual in the Old Testament that was associated with the sin offering. When a man knew himself to be a transgressor of the law of God, he found release from the guilt by bringing a sin offering to the tabernacle. Standing before the priest, he would lean on the lamb or goat or bullock, and would symbolically pass the sin from himself to the animal. Then the worshipper would watch as the priest cut the throat of the animal, catching its blood in a basin. He would watch as the pieces of the body of the animal were consumed on the brazen altar, and the blood was sprinkled at the altar. He was aware that the animal was dying in his place. This is the way that Paul is presenting the death of Jesus Christ. He died on the Cross with our sins on Him. He had willingly taken them on Himself, and & willingly became the Lamb of God, that would take away the sins of the world.

This is the expense of grace. If Jesus had not come, and Jesus had not died on the Cross, there could never have been any saving grace. Salvation by grace is salvation at His expense. The hymn writer wrote:

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe:
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

This is the affirmation of Paul. Our sin was so serious that nothing but the willing death of Jesus Christ could meet our need. This He did. Salvation is surely all of grace if it is by the death of Jesus Christ.

II. THE EFFECT OF GRACE --- THE DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD

"That he might deliver us from this evil world." This is what Jesus had in mind when He gave Himself over for our sins. The outcome of the whole deed is our freedom from this present evil world.

This statement gives us some more insight into the predicament of sinful man. Not only is he the sinner condemned by the law of God, he is also the captive of the age in which he lives. "World" is the translation of the Greek word for age. It means more than just the world of mankind. It is all that exists now in contrast with all that will be. This present age has about it a strange captivating and

enslaving power. It gets men so entangled that they cannot break free from it. The attitude of this age toward God is "evil". Paul so places this word in his sentence that it emphasizes that this is the character of the age. This age is in open rebellion against God. Because this is true, the attitude of the citizens of the age becomes evil toward each other. This is the present state of the age in which each of us live day by day.

What makes this more serious is that as such the world is under the judgment of almighty and holy God. The destruction of this age has already been determined. Those who are the victims of the age are destined to be a part of the destruction of the age. We are like people in a burning house --- unless we find a way of escape we will perish with the house. This age is burning up under the wrath of holy God---but through the death of Jesus a way of escape has been provided.

"Deliver" means to rescue, to snatch out, to pluck out, to draw out. One interesting little thing about the verb is that in the original it implies that Jesus acted with some self interest in view. The idea would be that he delivered us from this present evil age that he might have a people for Himself. Is this not a beautiful thought? He delivered us for Himself. So instead of being the puppets of the age in which we live, through the death of Christ we become the free people who belong to Jesus Christ. We become His in a very personal and beautiful way.

III. THE EXPLANATION OF GRACE---THE WILL OF THE FATHER.

"According to the will of God and our Father." This explains everything! It explains "why" Jesus chose to die for us. You cannot find a "why" in yourself. The more you know of yourself the more you will wonder at His giving Himself for you. Obviously you do not deserve such a deed. You will find nothing in yourself to merit it. You must look for an explanation in God Himself. The giving of Himself for our deliverance was the will of God and the Father. It was what God wanted.

This reveals something beautiful to us about our God. So often we hear people associate the "will of God" with the ugly and mysterious things of life. We explain them by saying, "It is the will of God." This term is used in scripture to explain the good and gracious things. God is not one who wills the destruction of mankind, but rather the salvation of mankind. God willed the giving of His Son to die on our behalf on the tree. Surely if you believe this you must see that He is a God of grace.

This statement also stands in the text as a warning to those who seek salvation by some other means. To try another way is to tamper with God's plan. God's way of salvation is the grace way. It is free salvation at the expense of Jesus Christ. If you attempt to attach anything to this you are running counter to the will of the

Almighty God and Father. Surely this makes it a most serious matter to tamper with God's plan of salvation. This will explain some of the sternness of Paul as he deals with those who corrupt the Biblical message of salvation by Grace. They are tampering; with something the God of grace has personally provided and established. His plan is all of grace.

IV. THE END OF GRACE --- THE GLORY OF GOD

If you want to know whether or not a message gives proper emphasis to the grace of God, ask yourself the question, "How much credit does it give to man?" If it gives any credit, or leaves any place for man to receive glory, it is not grace. The salvation by grace message devastates human pride. Grace means the death of pride. It declares that man can do nothing to earn salvation, that man has nothing with which he can purchase salvation, and that man in and of himself is totally undeserving of salvation. Grace leaves man without anything in which He can boast except God.

This is where Paul's consideration of grace leads him. It leads him to a personal exclamation of praise to God. "To whom be glory for ever and ever." The word used by Paul for glory has the definite article before it. This means that all of the glory is to go to God and to Him alone. When salvation is all of grace, then all of the praise goes to God.

Can't you imagine the reaction of a man who worked out his own salvation on the basis of his observance of the religious rites and his good deeds? He would rightfully resent Jesus getting all of the credit, if he had contributed something. Unless God does it all, He should not get all of the glory. If my works contribute something, then I deserve some glory. If my religious activities contribute something, then I deserve some glory. If my participation in the church contributed something, then part of the glory goes to me. If God contributed everything through Jesus Christ, then all of the glory goes to Jesus Christ. Who is to get the glory? The recipient of grace declares "To Him be the glory, great things He hath done."

CONCLUSION:

Salvation is all of grace. Have you realized this? The truth is that the more we understand the salvation we have in Christ, the more we realize that all we did was receive it as a free gift.

Have you despaired of ever knowing salvation because you are sure that you could never live it? or because you know that you do not deserve it? or you have committed sins far too terrible for you to ever be saved? It is all by grace. All God asks of you is a repentant acknowledgement of your need, and a believing reception of the gift of salvation. You can acknowledge your sinful condition and

your need of salvation to God right now, and you can open your heart to receive this free salvation at the expense of Jesus right now.