Do You Understand Grace?

I. Introduction:

A. Grace might be the most misunderstood word in the entire Bible. Some believe grace means that it doesn't matter what you believe – God will accept you. Others believe that grace excuses all sin. Still others say salvation is by grace alone; obedience is not necessary. But what does God's Word really teach about this all important word?

B. The Word "Grace".

1. The usual definition of grace is "unmerited favor." That is probably too narrow a meaning of the word. Vine's Expository Dictionary defines it as, "That which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight, or causes favorable regard . . . on the part of the bestower, the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds; graciousness, loving kindness, good will."

2. In the time of Homer (several centuries before Christ), it meant "sweetness" or "attractiveness." It can also include the idea of "rejoicing."

3. In the New Testament, the Greek word is translated variously to words such as "grace", "thanks", "favor", "pleasure", "benefit", and "joy".

4. As we've seen, the word has a broader meaning than is supposed.

II. What grace has done and will do.

A. **Grace appeared to all people.** (Titus 2:11) "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,*".

1. God's grace is available to all who are willing to access it through Jesus Christ.

2. This scripture is a reference to the first appearance of the Son of God, who came directly to this planet solely from the grace of God. With his birth at Bethlehem, it was appropriate to say that salvation had indeed been brought to all men.

3. As Simeon said in Luke 2:29-30, "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,*".

4. When Simeon said this, all men had not been saved; and also not at the time of Paul's writing here, nor at any time ever, was it ever true that all men are saved. Yet God has established salvation in dimensions large enough to be accomplished of every man ever born on earth. The mystery of why so many are still unsaved is not ours to unravel; its availability is there for anyone to grasp.

5. This is another of those hard sayings which many people have shut their eyes to the many unmistakable sayings in the Bible which warn the impenitent and hardened sinner of the sad doom of eternal death.

B. **Grace instructs.** In Titus 2:11, the grace of God that bringeth salvation comes and then in verse 12 (what does grace do?) "*Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*"

1. God's grace is connected with knowledge; it comes teaching us.

2. Teaching is involved.

3. (John 6:45) "*It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*"

4. (1 Cor. 1:18) "*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*"

5. (Rom. 1:16) "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*"

6. The power of salvation that grace came to give us is in the preaching of the gospel.

7. The grace of God only comes about through instruction.

8. It is the grace of God (through the gospel) which instructs men regarding those conditions which must be fulfilled by them in order to partake of that grace; and rejection of these instructions is equivalent to the rejection of God's grace. The conditions are plainly laid out.

9. **Denying ungodliness...** (in Titus 2:12) We are taught by grace do deny ungodliness and to live righteously in this present world. This refers to the denial in one's life of irreligion. Salvation is promised to the religious persons who seek and find the true way of the Lord. The person who boasts that "I am not religious" has already forfeited the grace of God as it pertains to him. Such persons have "fallen short of it".

   a) Heb. 12:15, "*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*".

10. The sins of the flesh must be rejected. Even the apostle Paul "buffeted his body" to bring it under subjection to the will of Christ. 1 Cor. 9:27, "*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*"

11. This is "where the rubber meets the road. All of the evils that perplex humanity (in very large part) are due to the unbridled seeking on the part of sinful men to fulfill the lustful appetites of their bodies. The true doctrine of Christ confronts the problems squarely, enabling the Christian with divine help to overcome. There can never be any hope for any such thing as peace and tranquility upon this earth as long as human lusts are unsubdued.

C. **Grace justifies.** (Rom. 3:23-25) "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*"

1. This is Paul's statement of the fact of God's justice in making salvation to all those who complied with the terms upon which it was extended. All people are in fact sinners; and the same basis for saving one, or making salvation available, is the basis for extending it to all.

2. It is a gift from God to those who will accept it.

D. **By grace God revealed His plan for man's salvation.** (Eph. 3:1-5) "*For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;*".

1. The Scriptural definition of "mystery" is apparent here; the mystery being God's plan of redeeming man, once concealed, was now revealed.

2. What Paul said here is not that the present revelation of the mystery of God's grace is final and complete, but that the previous generations did not possess a revelation of it "as it hath now been revealed."

E. **Grace raises believers to a new life.** (Eph. 2:4-6) "*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*"

1. This describes the existing state from which we were made alive with Christ.

2. The same thought is in Romans 5:10 where our being enemies was the existing state from which we were reconciled to God.

a) Rom. 5:10, "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*"

3. **By grace ye are saved** in Eph. 2:4-6... In this Paul referred to salvation from past sins and induction into the kingdom of Christ. The apostle Peter mentioned this as salvation from one's "old sins".

a) 2 Pet. 1:9, "*But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*"

b) Through baptism we are already saved from our past sins, but we must continue faithful to the end; for the Saviour says in Rev. 2:10, "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*"

4. Paul's reference to salvation in the past perfect tense as something done and accomplished already has no reference to final destiny but to the primary obedience that makes a true child of God.

a) What do I mean by past perfect tense? Example: If she had studied hard, she would have passed the English language exam.

b) Eph. 2:8, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*"

c) God's whole plan of salvation is His gift to us, but we have to act upon its conditions before we can receive it.

III. Grace includes obedience.

A. **Grace does not exclude law.** Everyone is subject to the law of Christ.

1. (1 Cor. 9:20-21) "*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*"

2. **I became as a Jew ...** has the meaning that Paul did not then any longer consider himself as a Jew. At a time when it is being alleged that Jews do not have to give up their Jewry to become Christians, it is significant here that Paul did, in some very real sense, consider that he was no longer a Jew. If not, he could not have declared that "to the Jews he became as a Jew."

3. **Not being myself under the law ...** This is "a remarkable statement which emphasizes how completely Paul had broken with the Law of Moses." This is one of the strongest statements in his writings.

4. On all matters of indifference, Paul accommodated himself to the life-style of those whom he hoped to win for the gospel. In keeping with such conduct, he ate with Gentiles without raising any question of where they had purchased the meat; and when in the homes of Jews, Paul avoided flaunting any of the liberty which he enjoyed in Christ.

B. "*To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.*

1. This was the limitation which was never waived or relaxed. Whatever adaptation marked Paul's conduct, it never involved disobeying the word of the Lord, or violating his allegiance to the law of Christ.

2. The law of Christ is also called the "Law of faith."

a) Rom. 3:23, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*"

b) Law of works was a reference to the Old Law of Moses. Paul says we now are to live under the Law of Faith which <u>He</u> has given us.

c) Gal. 3:23-24, "*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*"

d) Rom. 10:17, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"

C. **Grace must be conditional.**

1. Rom. 6:14-18. "*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart*

that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

2. They were servants of sin before they obeyed and became servants of righteousness after they obeyed. Note also that they were freed from sin when they obeyed. God's grace is only accessible when one obeys the gospel and is raised to walk in newness of life.

   a) (Rom. 6:1-4) "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*"

   b) Recall that it is by God's grace that we are raised to walk in a new life. We are made alive.

      1) (Eph. 2:4-6) "*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*"

      2) Have you been saved from your past sins?

IV. Conclusion.

A. This lesson has shown us that God saves man by grace when man obeys by faith.