

## Faith: The Doorway to God's Grace

Sadly, many today either abuse or ignore God's grace. On the one hand, some excuse their own ungodliness and disobedience saying, "That's what grace is for," with a nonchalant wave of the hand. Others are so afraid God's grace will lead to disobedience and rebellion they almost act like it is a non-entity in our everyday lives. We've been trying to correct both of these mistakes and walk the biblically balanced line that grace is God's power to overcome our sins and that apart from it, we will not be saved because we will not overcome our sins on our own.

**Ephesians 2:5** is clear. We are saved by grace. **II Timothy 1:9** explains the same thing, going even further. God saves us because of His grace and not because of our works. In **Acts 15:11**, Peter rebuked the Pharisees among the Christians reminding them that Jews and Gentiles are saved by the exact same thing—the grace of the Lord.

But that leaves a huge question. Who has access to God's grace? Is it universally applied? Will everyone who has ever lived receive the saving grace of Jesus Christ? Will only some receive it? If only some, then who has access to God's grace and who doesn't? Who will be saved by God's grace and who won't?

First, we recognize that some will not be saved by God's grace. Notice **Matthew 25:31-46** and **John 5:28-29**. When judgment comes, some will be cast into outer darkness, some will be raised to judgment. Not all will be raised to life eternal. Some will not be saved by God's grace. It is not universally applied.

Second, we ask what's the difference? Who has access to God's grace and who doesn't?

**Romans 5:2** provides the key. "Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (ESV). How did we gain access to God's grace? By faith. It is no surprise then that **Ephesians 2:8** further clarified **vs. 5** by saying, "For by grace you have been saved *through faith*" (ESV). It is no wonder that before Paul talked about Timothy being saved by God's grace and not his works, he reminisced, "I am reminded of *your sincere faith*, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well" (**II Timothy 1:5**, ESV). It is no wonder that before Peter explained there was no distinction between Jews and Gentiles because they were both saved by grace, he had already said, "And God, who knows the heart...made no distinction between us and them, having *cleansed their hearts by faith*" (**Acts 15:8-9**, ESV). No wonder we are told that we are being guarded by God's power through our faith to receive our imperishable inheritance (**I Peter 1:3-5**).

Who has access to God's grace and who doesn't? Those who have faith have access to God's grace. Those who don't have faith, don't. Why? Perhaps Jesus' trip to His hometown can help us understand.

In **Matthew 13:53-58**, Jesus preached in Nazareth. The people there saw Him grow up. They knew His father and mother. They knew His siblings. They saw His childhood. They could not imagine that anyone from among them could be the Messiah. The text says, "And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.' And he did not do many mighty works there, *because of their unbelief*" (**Matthew 13:57-58**, ESV).

Why did Jesus not do many mighty works? Was it because He tried and tried but the people's lack of faith was just too powerful for Him? Was He like the modern frauds who hide behind other's lack of faith to cover up their own lack of power? That can't be it. Jesus raised people from the dead. Dead people have no faith. Jesus raised the centurion's servant. We know about the centurion's faith, but not the servant's? No, Jesus' power was not limited by anyone's faith. What was limited was His opportunity. Everyone could have the grace of healing if they would just come to Jesus for it. But when folks didn't have faith, they didn't come. They were denied access to the healing grace of Jesus, not because they came without enough faith, but because they didn't have enough faith to seek access to healing through Jesus.

Thus it is for us and salvation. Those who have faith in Jesus will turn to Him for salvation, surrendering their life to Him in faith (cf. **Galatians 2:20**). They believe His way works so they surrender to it through faith. Because of that faith, God's grace heals and saves them. Those who don't have faith, do not come to Jesus or, like the rich young ruler, do not believe what He says and so don't surrender to it. They may go away sad, but they go away and are denied the access to grace that faith would have given them.

This week, one of my best friends and our good brother, Terry Francis, will be teaching us about the victory that is in our faith. Don't miss a single opportunity to learn about the access you can have to God's grace. Pray for the success of this series and for our spiritual growth through it.

--Edwin L. Crozier