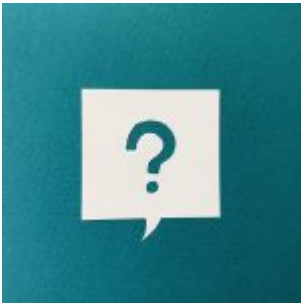


How is God's grace received?

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Todd Clippard

In spite of allegations to the contrary, no gospel preacher I know denies that all men who are saved are saved by grace. The Bible clearly teaches this (cf Acts 15:11; Eph 2:5, 8). However, disagreements arise between the Lord's church and denominational teaching in three main areas:

- 1) How is the grace of God received?;
- 2) Is man saved by grace only? and
- 3) Is it possible for a man to fall from grace?

Perhaps a definition of grace is in order. Simply stated, grace means "unmerited favor." Thayer's Lexicon has the following definition, "kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved." This well-defines the saving grace of God as found in Scripture.

So, how is God's grace received? According to some theology, particularly Calvinism, God's grace is miraculously and irresistibly bestowed upon man without any effort on man's part, even without man's desire to receive it.

This doctrine arises out of the false idea of total hereditary depravity. That is, man has been utterly and hopelessly depraved since Adam's fall in the garden. And being in such a condition, it is impossible for him to even desire to be saved. Therefore, God steps in, and through the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit, imparts His grace unto sinful man, thus forever saving him from his sin.

This false premise leads to the false conclusion that man, once saved by the miraculous and irresistible power of God, cannot "undo" what God has done, and thus can never fall from grace (., "once saved, always saved").

The Bible teaches that God's grace is extended to all men (Titus 2:11). But not everyone will be saved (Matt 7:13-27). Through God's grace men receive instruction on how to live in such a way as to be saved. God's grace is a gift that must be accepted and appropriated through obedience to God's commands.

For example, Noah was saved from the flood by God's grace (Gen 6:8). God instructed Noah to build an ark to save himself from the flood. This is the appearance of the grace of God. Noah obeyed the voice of God and did everything according to the commandment of God (Gen 6:22). This is the acceptance of the grace of God. Hebrews 11:7 says "Noah prepared the ark to the saving of his household." This is the appropriation of the grace of God. Noah did not deserve to be saved, neither did his actions place God in his debt. But only through the appearance, acceptance, and the appropriation of God's grace were Noah and his family delivered. Similar examples can be seen in

the fall of Jericho (Josh 6); and the healings of Naaman (2 Ki 5) and the blind man (John 9).

Today, we are saved by God's grace when we obey the gospel. It is only by God's grace that we are instructed on how to live so as to please Him (Titus 2:12-14). Obeying the gospel requires:

- 1) faith in Jesus as the Son of God (John 8:24);
- 2) repenting of sins (Acts 17:30-31);
- 3) confessing our faith in Jesus before men (Matt 10:32-33);
- 4) being immersed in water in order to receive the forgiveness of sins/salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38, 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21);
- 5) remaining faithful to Jesus until or even to the point of death (Matt 10:22; Rev 2:10).

Our obedience does not earn us salvation nor does it place God in our debt. In the words of Jesus, "When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which is our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).