

this great opportunity to be saved (Matthew 7:13-14), as He has left the choice to each one.

**There is something we must do to be saved.** Many people have suggested that since eternal life in Heaven is God's gift, we do not have to do anything to receive it. However, if there was nothing people needed to do to receive it, then everyone would be saved (contrary to what Matthew 7:13-14 teaches). In fact, even gifts can have conditions attached to them (consider how receiving a \$50 check in a birthday card has the conditions of going to the mailbox, opening the envelop, signing the check, taking the check to the bank, etc.). In the same way, although we can never earn salvation, God has placed conditions on receiving it (Acts 2:37-38). For, true faith in God involves works of obedience (Ephesians 2:8-9; James 2:14-26). God has placed the following commands on receiving His grace: Hear His word (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized (immersed) in water for the forgiveness of sins (1 Peter 3:21). While God has required these things, we still do not *earn* our salvation through them (Luke 17:10)!

**We must continue in the grace of God.** Once we have gained access into God's grace, we must recognize there is continued responsibility in living for the Lord (Acts 13:43). For, it is possible to turn back to sin and fall from grace (Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 10:26-39)! In fact, God plainly teaches that accessing His grace is not a license to continue sinning against God (Romans 6:1-2, 15). Therefore, we must continue in the grace of God by remaining faithful to Jesus Christ and obeying His commandments so God's grace will not be shown to us for nothing (1 Corinthians 15:10; Revelation 2:10)!

### Conclusion

God's grace gives us the opportunity to partake of the greatest gift that has ever been available to mankind (Titus 2:11)! This is the gift of eternal life in Heaven and it is offered through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Everyone has the opportunity to partake of this gift. But, it is possible to refuse this gift and be eternally lost in Hell. Therefore, we must all be diligent to obey the conditions God has placed on receiving His gift so we will be saved!



The subject of God's "grace" is one that is frequently seen throughout a study of the Scriptures. And, we are especially interested in the grace that God promises to show to people under the new covenant through Jesus Christ. Interestingly, those who lived before this grace appeared to mankind and angels desired to understand this grace we can now enjoy (1 Peter 1:10-12). Unfortunately, many people have either never considered the grace of God, misunderstood the grace of God, or misapplied the grace of God.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn what God's grace is, why it is relevant to our lives, and to answer three key questions about God's grace.

### Understanding God's Grace

**God's gift.** Think of grace as a gift (something you have not earned). For, God's grace is the kindness and favor God chooses to show to us that we do not deserve (Romans 6:23). Notice the two contrasting words in this verse: Wages and gift. A wage is something you have earned in exchange for your work, while a gift is something that you cannot earn through your own efforts. Particularly, we all deserve to experience spiritual death (separation from God and eternal punishment in Hell, Revelation 21:8) because of our sin. Yet, God has provided the gift of salvation (eternal life in Heaven) that is freely available in and through Jesus Christ!

**Not of ourselves.** Consider Ephesians 2:1-10. We were spiritually dead because of sin. Because of this, we deserved to experience the wrath of God (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)! Yet, God demonstrated His love by sending His only Son to be the sacrifice so that we can have the opportunity to not perish in our sins and have eternal life (John 3:16). So, God is merciful in that He is willing to *not* give us what we actually deserve (i.e. punishment in Hell). And, God is gracious in that He is willing to *give* us what we do not actually deserve (i.e. eternal salvation in Heaven). Concerning this grace,

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notice that God is not said to have it in short supply. Rather, God's grace is immeasurably rich through His kindness! Certainly, there is no gift that has ever been offered to us that is greater than this one. Now, we must recognize that it is by God's grace that we can be saved and that it is not (and cannot be) of ourselves (our own good works). The only way we could experience eternity in Heaven rather than Hell is if God gave it to us! Thankfully, God has given us this opportunity through Jesus if we have true faith in Him!

**Three important questions about God's grace.** While these two passages (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-10) help us understand a great deal about God's grace, we need to dig deeper and investigate how the Bible answers three critical questions that are fundamental to how we understand and apply God's grace. They are: Is God's grace available to everyone? Can God's grace be resisted? What is our responsibility to God's grace?

#### **The Availability Of God's Grace**

**Jesus died for everyone.** Some believe and teach that God has predetermined which individuals will be saved and which individuals will be lost. Therefore, they believe that only those God has preselected to be saved have access to the grace of God. Yet, this is false teaching. God did not choose to only save certain *individuals* (by name) and not others, contrary to their own will. Instead, God chose the location of salvation in that those who are in Christ would be the ones who would be adopted as His children and saved (Ephesians 1:4-6). Yet, He has left it up to each individual to choose either to be in Christ or not. For, one of the ways we can see that God's grace is available for everyone is that Jesus Christ died for everyone so everyone could have the opportunity be saved eternally in Heaven (John 3:16; Hebrews 2:9)!

**God wants everyone to be saved.** If God had preselected certain people to be saved and certain people to be lost (contrary to their free will), He could not say that He desires for everyone to be saved! However, the Scriptures teach that God does want everyone to be saved – and this opportunity has not just been given to certain people (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9).

**God's grace has appeared to all mankind.** Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the preaching of the gospel's message, God has made His gift of salvation available to every person (Titus 2:11). The idea of God's grace having "appeared" is that it has been made visible and to shine on each person. Therefore, all people can know about the opportunity of salvation the grace of God has made available and partake in it! It leaves

no one in the dark and unable to partake of it, no matter how great a sinner he/she may be (1 Corinthians 15:9-10)!

#### **The Possibility Of Resisting God's Grace**

**The Bible teaches personal responsibility.** The entirety of the Bible demonstrates that people possess free will to either choose to be obedient to God or to be disobedient to God. He does not force either on us. For example, consider the choice Adam and Eve had (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6). Or, consider the choice Moses presented to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). Or, consider the choice Joshua presented the Israelites (Joshua 24:14-16). Then, consider the choice God gives you. Although the salvation-bringing grace of God has been made readily available, you can either choose to receive it or not. He has not forced either choice on you. Instead, He simply invites you to come and partake in these eternal blessings (Matthew 11:28-30; Revelation 22:17)!

**It is possible to receive the grace of God.** The Scriptures clearly show that it is possible for people to make the choice to receive the grace of God so as to be saved. For example, Acts 2 shows some being obedient to the gospel's message that was preached to them (vv. 37-41)! The same can be seen in Acts 18:8 regarding people in the city of Corinth when the gospel was presented there – and in many places throughout the book of Acts. Those who heard God's gospel message could then decide whether to believe and obey it or not because they each had personal responsibility to receive the grace of God and be saved!

**It is possible to resist the grace of God.** Although the Scriptures teach it is possible to accept the grace of God and be saved, they also teach it is possible to reject the grace of God and be lost. In fact, there are many examples of people hearing the saving gospel message and choosing not to be obedient to it so as to be saved. For example, Acts 7 shows the Jews resisting the message of the Holy Spirit (vv. 51-53), thereby rejecting God's grace. Then, Acts 13 shows other Jews opposing and rejecting the gospel so as not to experience the eternal life God had offered (vv. 42-46). Notice that, while these had the opportunity to hear the gospel and access the grace of God, they did not take advantage of that opportunity.

#### **Personal Responsibility Toward God's Grace**

**God has only done His part in salvation.** God has done for us what we could not possibly do for ourselves regarding salvation (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-10). There is simply no way that we could save ourselves from the consequences of our sins. Thankfully, God has provided this opportunity for us all to be saved. Yet, the majority of people will still reject