

Saved by Grace

*“We then, as
workers together
with him, beseech
you also that ye
receive not the
grace of God in
vain.”*

—II Corinthians 6:1

MERCY IS ONE OF THE

wonderful attributes of our loving Heavenly Father’s boundless character. An unbelieving world, condemned through the transgression of Adam in Eden, suffering the awful effects of sin and death, is not yet convinced of that truth. The Lord Jesus himself declared that he was the chosen instrument through which Divine mercy was to be expressed to the world, saying: “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (John 3:17) In due time, the world will be brought to the certain knowledge that it was saved from ruin solely by the favor of God. It will come to know that, through his beloved Son, it will have received the highest and fullest expression of God’s mercy. “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Hab. 2:14

THE GRACE OF GOD DEFINED

In the second chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul declares that the favor of

God will be shown to the human family according to a foreordained Divine plan. Paul masterfully summarizes that plan of salvation in a single sentence—the Lord’s preexistence as a spirit being, his being made human on earth, his suffering, death and subsequent resurrection to spiritual glory and honor far beyond that which he had previously enjoyed. The apostle says, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”—Heb. 2:9

In accord with his Father’s will, the Lord Jesus voluntarily took Adam’s place in death for everyone. Adam and his entire race will, in due time, be released from their collective condemnation—a release wrought, the apostle says, ‘by the grace of God.’ The grace of God is defined as Divine favor conferred upon or otherwise communicated to those who neither earn nor deserve it. If it were earned or deserved, it would be no longer favor but would be Divine obligation. The Apostle Paul confirms, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”—Rom. 4:4

THE GRACE OF GOD PERSONIFIED

Paul recounts the history of sin and the resulting condemnation of death that befell the human family through Adam. He wrote, “Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” (Rom. 5:12, *New International Version*) Through the ‘one man,’ Adam, a crushing burden of sin and death befell all mankind. Paul says that

through the gift of the one man Christ Jesus, God offers all men their only hope of relief from that burden. "The gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!"—Rom. 5:15, *NIV*

The phrase 'all men' in verse 12 is synonymous with the phrase 'the many' used twice in verse 15. In verses 18 and 19, the apostle uses these phrases interchangeably. He says, "As through one offence, sentence came on all men to condemnation; so also, through one righteous act, sentence came on all men to justification of life, for as through the disobedience of one man, the many were constituted sinners, so even through the obedience of the one, the many will be constituted righteous." (*Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) Thus has the Apostle Paul made his point—Through the righteous act of our Lord Jesus at Calvary, all mankind will be saved from the Adamic condemnation.

GRACE IN ADVANCE

However, not all men will be saved at the same time, and only a portion of the many will receive the grace of God in advance of the remainder of the world. He says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14) For its entire history, the great majority of mankind has resisted the influences of the Spirit of God, preferring instead the spirit of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. That preference continues unto this present Gospel Age. Therefore, in this age all men will not have benefit of the grace of God but, the

apostle says a small number who are led of the Spirit of God and counted as his sons with Christ Jesus will. Paul, including himself with these relatively few, addresses them in the following verses, saying, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."—Rom. 8:16,17,28,29

THE LORD'S MANY BRETHREN

The Lord Jesus is to have 'many brethren' associated with him, all of whom will have been led of the Spirit of God during this present Gospel Age. It is apparent that those will be only a small number when compared to the billions of earth's people who will subsequently receive the grace of God during the future age when Christ's kingdom is established over the earth. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32

The fulfillment of this marvelous declaration was seen of the Apostle John in a vision wherein the sheep of the flock were specifically numbered—all of the same spirit, all of the same Father, all members of the Divine family. John says, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having

his Father's name written in their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth."—Rev. 14:1,3

SKEPTICS REFUTED

Critics, skeptics and unbelievers, not understanding the larger purpose involved, often view the conferring of such favor upon the few as an injustice perpetrated upon the many. The character of God is thereby brought into question. In his epistle to the brethren in Rome, Paul explains and refers to the ancient occasion when Divine favor was conferred upon but one of Rebecca's twin sons even before their birth. He says, "for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.' What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." (Rom. 9:11-16, *New American Standard Bible*) The apostle says that the choosing of Jacob over Esau was used to illuminate a great truth, 'the purpose of God according to election.'

It is the grand purpose of God to save all mankind from Adamic condemnation though it is wholly

undeserving of such mercy. Salvation is to be wrought not by any works of Adam's race but solely by one, elect, chosen of God. That One is the Lord Jesus. This is the very fulfillment of prophecy pronounced in Isaiah 42:1, which Matthew confirms by quoting it in his Gospel, saying, "Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets."—Matt. 12:18,19, *NASB*

God is under no obligation to express mercy to the justly condemned members of the Adamic race. He is free to express it to whatever degree and to whomever he chooses in accordance with his grand purpose for mankind's salvation. Who, then, dares to claim injustice is perpetrated upon the many when favor bestowed upon the one or the few ultimately benefits all? The bestowal of favor is a Divine right.

A CAUTION

Lest any be overtaken by pride in being among the few chosen to be brethren with Christ Jesus, Paul cautions, "Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation." (Rom. 12:16, *NASB*) The apostle exhorts the chosen to keep in mind that no special qualities recommended them for such great favor; they have been chosen precisely because they lack many of the qualities the world esteems.

To his Corinthian brethren, Paul adds, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise

men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”—I Cor. 1:26,27

FAVOR RECEIVED

The world still scorns and ridicules those who claim to have attained sonship with God. The Apostle Paul, on behalf of himself and his fellow workers Silvanus and Timothy, expresses deep affection for those who, against all opposition, remain steadfast in that assertion. “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” (I Thess. 1:2-4) To stimulate continued resolve in his beloved brethren, Paul recalls for them the magnitude of heavenly favor that they have thus far received, and the tender care with which they had hitherto been encouraged. He says, “We exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”—I Thess. 2:11,12

AN EARNEST HOPE

The Apostle Paul conveys his earnest hope that his brethren will, at the Lord’s return, be found to have attained the highest ideal of sanctification, the setting apart in the service of God of everything pertaining to their existence, withholding nothing,

neither in spirit, nor in soul, nor in body. The apostle prays, “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Thess. 5:23) With certainty and born of the Holy Spirit, the apostle assures the called and elected that their sanctification will be completed because God is faithful to finish that which he begins. “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”—vs. 24

The apostle addresses the subject of sanctification in his second epistle to the Thessalonians. He emphasizes that the work of sanctification advances toward completion only to the degree that the chosen submit to the influence of the Holy Spirit and maintain their belief in the Truth. “We ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” (II Thess. 2:13, *NIV*) He then adds the purpose for which God has sanctified the chosen, saying, “He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—vs. 14, *NIV*

THE ETERNAL EXAMPLE

In the ages to come, the resurrected and glorified Christ Jesus will be the eternal example of God’s infinite wisdom, mercy, and generosity. Paul states that the called and elected of the Gospel Age—the little flock of Christ’s brethren—are to share in that honor. Including himself in that sharing, the apostle reveals its purpose. “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made

us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:4-7, *NIV*) Those who persistently submit to the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit during the present Gospel Age will, in due time, join the Lord in glory, constituting thereby The Christ, an eternal collective memorial to the grace of God.

ANOINTED, MESSIAH, CHRIST

The Apostle Paul addresses the subject of The Christ in his epistle to the Colossians saying that hitherto it had constituted a Divine mystery, “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:26,27) The English word ‘Christ’ that is used by the apostle has its root in the Greek word *Christos* which means ‘anointed.’ The English word ‘Messiah’ has its root in the Hebrew word *Meshiach* which also means ‘anointed.’ Thus we find that ‘Christ,’ ‘Messiah’ and ‘Anointed’ are synonymous. In the Old Testament, anointing with fragrant oils signified the bestowal of Divine favor and authorization, most often upon kings and priests. It is to this that Paul alludes. The great mystery that the apostle reveals is that the called and chosen of God, anointed during this present

Gospel Age with his Holy Spirit, will, if faithful, become members of The Christ and united under Jesus, its glorified Lord and head.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

The apostle explains further, in his epistle to his Ephesian brethren, the great mystery of ‘Christ in you’ noting most especially its direct connection to the grace of God. He says, “Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”—Eph. 3:2-6, *NIV*

THE CHURCH, THE CHRIST

Having brought to light the prospect of ‘Christ in you,’ the Apostle Paul exhorts his brethren to grasp its full import and to continue to lay aside every encumbrance in pursuit of it even unto sacrificial death. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:1,2) Paul stresses that the many members of the body of

Christ are to be of a single mind dedicated to the service of the Divine will. "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."—vss. 4,5

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Further emphasizing the singleness of purpose for the collective body of The Christ, the apostle says, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (I Cor. 12:12-14,18-20,27) To both the Ephesians and the Colossians, Paul plainly states that the spiritual body of Christ Jesus is the church. He says, "[God] hath put all things under his [Jesus'] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body" (Eph. 1:22,23), and "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."—Col. 1:18

MEMBERSHIP CONDITIONAL

The apostle declares membership in the church, the body of Christ, to be conditional, namely sacrificial death like unto that of its head. Paul says, "As

it is written [Ps. 44:22], For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Rom. 8:36,37) The high value that God places upon the sacrificial death of the members of the church is directly stated by the psalmist, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”—Ps. 116:15

FELLOW CITIZENS

The members of the church have been admitted to God’s innermost sanctuary. The Apostle Paul, addressing the church, emphasizes that intimate spiritual relationship, saying, “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” (Eph. 2:19,20) Paul reminds his brethren that God had been long awaiting the due time to share with them his deepest mysteries, that the eventual conveying of those mysteries had been foretold centuries earlier. The apostle says, “As it is written [Isa. 64:4], Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—I Cor. 2:9,10

ONENESS WITH JESUS

Paul asks his fellow disciples to recall that which, by his grace, God has already performed on their behalf. He exhorts them to give “thanks unto the

Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Col. 1:12,13) The apostle says that Jesus himself declared his oneness with the called and elected saints of the Gospel Age; that he is unashamed to openly claim them as his own—“Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”—Heb. 2:11,12

KINGS AND PRIESTS OF GOD

The Apostle Peter, exhorting his brethren as had Paul to maintain confidence in the grace of God as they faced adversity in an unbelieving world, likewise emphasizes the nature of their relationship to God and their special purpose. Peter says, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased, *Marginal Translation*] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (I Pet. 2:9,10) The Apostle John joins Peter and Paul in encouraging their fellow members of the church. John declares that through the sacrificial efficacy of his blood the Lord Jesus “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”—Rev. 1:6

GRACE BEYOND IMAGINATION

To strengthen his saints, the glorified Lord Jesus declared unto the Apostle John the prospect that had been held in secret for untold ages. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. 3:21) That grand promise was echoed by Divine proclamation confirming thereby the perfect harmony of Father and Son in bestowing such magnificent grace and unmerited favor upon those who would follow Jesus unto death. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6

