

MISINTERPRETATIONS OF GRACE

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TEXT: Ephesians 2:8-9

INTENT OF LESSON:

1. To show the audience the true meaning of the term grace as used in the Bible.
2. To show the audience how the term grace has been misused in the religious world.
3. To show the audience how a person can obtain/receive God's grace.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The audience will have a clear understanding of what the term "grace" means.
2. The audience will have a clear understanding of how the word "grace" has been misused by many in the religious world.
3. The audience will have a clear understanding of how some in the Lord's church have abused the teaching of grace.
4. The audience will have a clear understanding of what the Word of God teaches about grace and salvation.

INTRODUCTION:

1. What a wonderful opportunity to speak about the grace of God – the means by which we are saved from our sins!
2. Such a magnificent subject is found from the beginning of the Bible (Genesis 6:8), all the way to the end (Revelation 22:21).
 - a. Nevertheless, I will not speak only the great things of grace, but the misuses of such by some.
3. God's Word has been under attack since the beginning of time!
 - a. Satan perverted the message of God at Eden (Genesis 3).
4. Attacks from Satan and his followers have always focused on the following areas:
 - a. Salvation
 - b. Worship
 - c. Etc.
5. This lesson will focus on salvation as it relates to the grace of God.
6. **This lesson will examine:**
 - a. The meaning of grace.
 - b. The misunderstandings of grace as it relates to the denominational world and some in the church.
 - c. The correct use of grace as taught within the inspired Scriptures.
7. Let me encourage you to take heed how you listen (Luke 8:18), and to let the words of this lesson sink into your ears (Luke 9:44).

THE BIBLE MEANING OF GRACE

1. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, grace (*χάρις*) has the following meanings:
 - a. Kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved.
 - b. Good will, loving-kindness, favor, charm, loveliness.
2. According to Louw & Nida, the term "grace" denotes the following:
 - a. To show kindness to someone, with the implication of graciousness on the part of the one showing such kindness.
3. According to BDAG, grace means:

- a. A winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction.
- b. A beneficent disposition toward someone, favor, grace, help, goodwill.
- 4. *According to Biblical authors, grace can mean:*
 - a. A favorable attitude or wish toward someone (Eph. 1:2; John 14:27).
 - b. The means by which God saves us (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11).
- 5. The noun “grace” must be interpreted within its context.
 - a. Just because a word appears many times in the New Testament does not imply that its meaning is the same across the table.
- 6. We must remember that man sinned against God (Genesis 3). As such, he was separated from having fellowship with God (Genesis 3; Isaiah 59:1-2).
 - a. God’s grace is what makes it possible for man to be saved from his sins and be restored to fellowship with Him.
 - b. God’s grace was planned in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:18-20).
- 7. This lesson will focus on how the word “grace” relates to salvation, that is, the undeserved or unmerited favor from God to the salvation of man and how such grace has been abused by many in the religious world.

Now, let us turn our attention to...

THE MISUSES OF GRACE IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD AND BY SOME IN THE CHURCH.

- 1. **Misuse of grace #1:** *We are saved by grace ONLY, not by works.*
 - a. Such view teaches that man cannot do anything that relates to his salvation.
 - b. Passages such as Ephesians 2:8-9 are used to advance this erroneous doctrine.
 - c. The misunderstanding comes because some do not understand the difference between the works related to the works of the Law of Moses (context of Romans 3:20, 28 and Galatians 2:16) and the works of obedience as a result of our obedient faith in Christ (Romans 1:5; 16:26; Galatians 5:6; James 2:24; Acts 10:35).
 - d. The book of Romans and Galatians deal a lot with the works of the Law of Moses. The Apostle Paul teaches that man is not saved or justified by such works, but by works of obedience (Rom. 3:20, 28).
 - e. “Grace only” excludes works of obedience!
 - f. Man must obey the plan of salvation stipulated by God in the pages of the New Testament.
 - g. Every example of conversion in the Book of Acts was saved by the grace of God, but not “by grace only.” They had to obey the plan of salvation (hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, and by so doing, also live a faithful life in Christ).
- 2. Yes, we are saved by grace, but not grace only! Works of obedience are required!
- 3. **Misuse of grace #2:** *The grace of God will save everyone in the world.*
 - a. Such view teaches that the grace of God is offered to the whole world and as a result of God’s grace, everyone will be saved. This is obviously an erroneous belief!
 - b. Passages such as Titus 2:11 and 1 John 4:8 are used to advance this erroneous belief.
 - c. The passage of Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches that we are saved by grace THROUGH faith! Faith in this context is used to denote an obedient faith that obeys God’s will.
 - d. Salvation is offered to all (Mark 16:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 2:2; Titus 2:11), but not all will obey (Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23).
 - e. Yes, God’s grace will save everyone, but everyone who has an obedient faith in Jesus Christ.

4. **Misuse of grace #3:** *God's grace, according to Calvinistic doctrine, will only save the elect.*
 - a. The idea behind this doctrine is that God sends the Holy Spirit to some specific people in order to save them. This is done even if man does not want to be saved.
 - b. Such a doctrine is a clear attack on man's free will.
 - c. According to the Bible, man has the freedom to accept or reject God's salvation. This is clearly seen in almost every case of conversion in the Book of Acts.
 - d. Salvation is offered to all man, but not all man will accept God's gift of salvation! (cf. Jeremiah 6:16).
5. **Misuse of grace #4:** *Man can sin as much as he wants to because God's grace covers his sins (Jude 4)*
 - a. False teachers (Christians who had departed from the faith) in the context of the book of Jude and 2 Peter were turning the grace of God into lewdness. This word denotes a behavior completely lacking in moral restraint, usually with the implication of sexual licentiousness (Louw-Nida).
 - b. The idea of sinning as much as man wants to, may come from a misunderstanding of God's grace as explained by Paul in his letter to the Romans (5:28).
 - c. Paul makes it clear that man does not have a license to sin just because God's grace covers our sins (Romans 6:1-2).
 - d. 1 John 2:1 is also used to advance this erroneous belief that we can sin as much as we want to because Jesus is there for us! This mentality is wrong to the core!
 - e. God's grace demands holiness and obedience (Titus 2:11-13).
 - f. The "once saved, always saved" doctrine also advances such a misuse and abuse of God's grace! Salvation can be lost if we do not live a faithful life in Jesus Christ (Revelation 2:10; Philippians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 9:27).
6. **Misuse of grace #5:** *God's grace allows Christians to worship anyway they want to.*
 - a. Some in the denominational world believe that we can worship as we please!
 - b. Some argue that so long as we worship God, it does not matter HOW we do it!
 - c. Some argue that God's grace is an open door to worship God anyway we want to.
 - d. The New Testament teaches that man must worship according to God's will (John 4:24).
 - e. We do not have the liberty to worship God anyway we want to.
 - f. God has specified that in worship we are to...
 - i. Pray (Acts 2:42).
 - ii. Preach (2 Timothy 4:2).
 - iii. Partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11).
 - iv. Sing (Ephesians 5:19).
 - v. And participate of the weekly contribution (1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 9).
 - g. God's grace demands that we do things according to God's will!
7. These are five common misunderstandings of God's grace; nevertheless, a correct study of God's grace helps us to better understand how we must interpret it.

Finally, let us consider...

THE CORRECT TEACHING OF GRACE ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

1. *God's Word can be understood correctly (Ephesians 3:4; John 8:32; John 7:17).*
 - a. This is the reason why God's Word must be studied with diligence (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - b. We can correctly understand the teaching of God on grace!
2. *The correct teaching of God's grace is as follows:*
 - a. God's grace is how man can be saved from his sins (Ephesians 2:5, 8-9; Romans 3:24).
 - b. God's grace does not exclude works of obedience from man's part (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:12-13; Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8-9).

- c. God's grace is available to save all man, but only those who possess an obedient faith in Jesus Christ will be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; Galatians 2:16; Matthew 7:21).
3. *How can God's people benefit from God's grace?*
- a. According to Genesis 6:8, 22; 7:5, by obeying God's Will!
 - b. By living a faithful life in Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-13).
 - c. By following God's Word (Acts 20:32).
 - d. By allowing God's grace to work in our lives (1 Corinthians 15:10; Titus 2:13, "zealous of good works").
4. *How can non-Christians obtain God's grace?*
- a. By acknowledging the fact that man can be saved through God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - b. By acknowledging the fact that God's grace is available through Jesus Christ (John 1:17), the only way to salvation (John 10:9; 14:6; Acts 4:12).
 - c. By acknowledging the fact that an obedient faith is required to salvation (Mark 16:16; Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8).
 - d. By acknowledging the fact that man must obey the gospel of Christ, God's power to salvation (Romans 1:16): Hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and living a faithful life in Christ.

CONCLUSION:

1. Thank God for His grace by which we are saved from our sins!
2. In this lesson we have examined:
 - a. The meaning of grace
 - b. The misunderstandings of grace
 - c. The correct teaching of grace
3. May God help us to never misuse His grace!
4. If you have not been saved by God's grace, please do so, before it is eternally too late!