



**B**y grace are ye saved!" (Eph. 2:8). "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men!" (Titus 2:11). These are two of a number of scriptures that relate human salvation to "grace." If something as eternally important as our salvation depends on "grace," it is of prime concern that we know what "grace" is.

### GRACE AS A WORD

First of all, "grace" is a word. We cannot overestimate the importance of this fact, for men communicate by the use of words. When commissioning Moses for his great task, God said to him, "Who hath made man's mouth . . . now therefore go, and I will be thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Ex. 4:11,12). God has ordained language as the means of conveying our thoughts to another.

What is more remarkable however, is that "God has spoken" to man (Heb. 1:1,2), communicating His mind and purpose by the use of human words. How can the infinite God impart divine knowledge using human words? Such words would seem inadequate to impart the ultimate truth in its totality, for "at present we seem to see only blurred reflections in a mirror" (Norlie Translation) and at best "know in part" (1 Cor. 13:12). "We do not see the things themselves,

but those things as set forth as symbols and words which imperfectly express them."<sup>1</sup> But thanks be to God, the "blurred reflection" is the measure of truth that God has given, which is sufficient to show us the way to Himself.

Grace is a word that "mirrors" some wonderful things about God, and life through His Son and Spirit. In fact, this word is one of the clearer reflections of God's truth, since its human meaning yields illuminating insights into God's loving intention for mankind. In addition to the definitions given the word by men, we have "grace" incarnated for us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The word "grace" occurs over 170 times in the New Testament, and "in both biblical and secular Greek it is used with far more meanings than can be represented in English."<sup>2</sup> This word had from its origin been used to express "joy, thanks, favor or gift . . . and on the fringe of it the clinging associations of charm and attractiveness. What rejoiced men was called 'grace.' Nothing thrilled life like beauty, and there was no beauty like kindness."<sup>3</sup>

Like all words brought into the divine lexicon of revelation from the human vocabulary, "grace" took on extended dimensions when used to define God's redemptive attitude and action toward men, and the resultant state of the redeemed individual and community. " 'Grace' from the first,

in the sense of kindness had carried with it a suggestion of free generosity." So, "when Paul taught the saving will and generous power of God in Jesus Christ, he had some language ready for his message."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Campbell Morgan sums it up when he writes, "The word 'grace' first refers to the whole realm of order and beauty. It was an intellectual word, an artistic word, beauty as against ugliness, health as against disease, order as against chaos, all the realm of that which is beautiful. That is its first meaning. Then, in the Greek language this word, in process of time, as is so often the case in our own language, gained new significances and meanings; and grace came to mean a desire on the part of God — for it is postulated of Him all through — to impart these things of order and beauty and life to others. That is grace, a giving. Until, finally, the ultimate meaning came in the New Testament, and in no other Greek literature. Grace became not merely the realm of order and beauty and loveliness, and the desire to impart to others; but also the activity that carries out the desire. That is the grace of God, the activity of God. Grace is ultimately the activity of God which puts at the disposal of sinning men and women all the things that give delight to Him."

### GRACE AND GIVING

We get some insight into the



meaning of "grace" by its usage in chapters 8 and 9 of the second letter to the Corinthians. Paul, writing to them concerning an offering of money for the critical needs of the Christians in Jerusalem, urges them to be liberal in their giving. As a challenge to them, he makes reference to the Macedonian Christians, who had responded to this same appeal with a remarkable generosity, out of "their deep poverty." "Now I want to tell you," writes Paul, "what God in His grace has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been through much trouble and hard times, they have mixed their wonderful joy with their deep poverty, and the result has been an overflow of giving to others. They gave not only what they could afford, but far more; and I can testify that they did it because they wanted to, and not because of nagging on my part" (2 Cor. 8:1-3, LB).

Pursuing his appeal to the Corinthians, Paul moves from the example of the generous unpressured giving of the Macedonians, to the highest motivation of all — the self-giving of our Lord Jesus Christ. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). And so, whatever else saving grace may be, it is the incomparable generosity of God toward man.

In the phrase — "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor" — we have an echo of another revealing passage about God's grace towards man. "Christ Jesus, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself ("laid aside His privileges," marginal note), taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8, NAS). Our Lord had left the incomputable *riches* of heaven for the *poverty* of the incarnation, that through His coming and His self-giving, He might make available to us the

*riches* released by His total redeeming act.

The Macedonian generosity had been motivated by the example of divine generosity. Paul refers to their unselfish liberality as "the manifestation of God's grace" (2 Cor. 8:1, Conybeare Translation). As Paul indicates, their giving of money was only one expression of the giving of their total selves. "Nor was their gift, as I must confess I had expected, a mere cash payment. Instead they made a complete dedication of themselves first to the Lord and then to us, as God's appointed ministers" (2 Cor. 8:5, JBP).

The Macedonian generosity was a "manifestation of God's grace." They had given themselves to God, made themselves available to serve God's ministers, and unselfishly given their money. All of this was only a reflection of the divine giving. They could not give mankind a Savior, or precious redeeming blood, or forgiveness of sins, or righteousness, or eternal life, or immortality. Only God could do these things. And so we see how "grace" takes on a higher meaning than it ever had in the human vocabulary.

### THE SUPREME EXPRESSION

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme expression of God's grace. We have already seen the Incarnation in terms of grace (2 Cor. 8:9). John records that the whole earth-life of our Lord was characterized by grace, as he writes, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Early in His public ministry, "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). Opening the sacred scroll containing the prophet Isaiah, He chose to read a passage in which the prophet, many hundreds of years before, had described the nature and purpose of

Messiah's mission. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18,19). Closing the scroll, His opening comment was, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bear Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:21,22).

Two things seemed to impress His audience that day: first, the words that described God's loving favor and redeeming activity toward the needy, and also the charming and magnetic manner with which Jesus spoke. This grace, so characteristic of our Lord's whole earth ministry, found its culmination in His last great act of self-giving in sin-bearing death at Calvary. It is through His dying on the cross that "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). This is "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," which "hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). "Grace hath abounded unto many" and now "reigns through righteousness" as God's continuing attitude to all men who stand in such desperate need of "eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:15-21). Through "faith in His blood" we may be "justified [declared righteous] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:25,24).

### THE PROVISION OF GRACE

The same grace that provides the way to be right with God, also provides the way to be right in ourselves, delivering us from "the inclination in our nature to self-gratifying behaviour." Grace teaches us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

"The Word" and "the Spirit" are associated with "grace" and would



seem to be synonymous with it. We read of "the word of His grace" (Acts 14:3; 20:32), and of "the spirit of grace" (Zech. 12:10; Heb. 10:29). Therefore, as we receive God's justifying grace through Christ's precious blood, so we are regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit and Word of grace. Grace is not only attitude but action. It is God's loving purpose toward sinful men actualized in His whole movement toward them in the history of divine redemption.

It is grace that planned redemption, provided a Savior, sent the Holy Spirit, gave us the Word, delivers us from sin, Satan, and self-gratification; endows us with eternal life, opens the door of access to God's throne (called "the throne of grace" in Hebrews 4:16), and gives every believer a divinely selected place and gift of service (Rom. 12:3). And it is grace that teaches us that the future is bright with a "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

"No truth is more plainly taught in God's Word than this," said Mr. Spurgeon, "that the salvation of the sinner is entirely owing to the grace of God. . . . It is man's star of hope, the well spring of his eternal life, and the seed of future bliss."

Songs and sonnets, poems and essays, hymns and anthems, sermons and lectures, have all been employed to define, describe, declare, and celebrate "the exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph. 2:7). But there will always be more to be said, sung, and celebrated, as grace continues its triumphant march into all of God's tomorrows.

"Of for a thousand tongues to sing,  
My great redeemer's praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of His grace!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 2, p. 1290.

<sup>3</sup> James Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25,26.

## GRACE

by Bob Mumford

Father of this,  
and the life to come —  
Who knows all hearts,  
and dwells in some;  
To you I write  
this poem of love,  
And know by the Spirit  
it will reach above.

I like many  
have failed to do  
All the things  
we've seen of you.  
Yet in thy Word,  
in print so clear,  
I've read these words  
I hold so dear.

"By GRACE are ye saved . . .  
through faith in me!  
You lack so much,  
but I'll add to thee.  
My righteousness  
won't come by force —  
I require that  
you know the source."

Now when I stumble,  
and often fall,  
"Hold, Oh hold my hand!"  
I call.  
Desiring with Thee  
in love to abide;  
I know, I've felt  
your strength provide.

And when in providence  
you permit a test;  
The Tempter tries  
from you to wrest;  
I know, I know  
that you can see,  
And through this,  
prove your love for me.

In the world to come,  
as we look back,  
We'll see much sin,  
our hearts as black;  
But this O Lord,  
as I see through,  
Pleases Thee,  
and makes our debt to you.

— Ephesians 2:7—9



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This month's answers by Ern Baxter.



**What quality do you feel God was trying to produce in Job's life by allowing him to experience suffering and hardship?**



God declared Job to be a righteous man, that is, a man walking in "His lights" (Job 1:1-8; Ezek. 14:14,20). "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). God is absolute light, while His children are "walking in the light" (1 John 1:7). "God is forever and unchangeably in perfect light." We walk, advancing in the light and by means of the light to more light." (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vincent, Vol. II, page 315.)

The New Testament contains one reference to Job, and twice quotes the book bearing his name. These references suggest some of the things God taught Job in and through his suffering. In Romans 11:35, Paul quotes Job 41:11, to show God's sovereign right to do what He will with His creation, including "the righteous." In 1 Corinthians 3:19 Paul refers to Job 5:13, in support of his affirmation that human wisdom is unable to understand God or His ways. James uses Job as an example of endurance through God's dealing, and seeing "what the Lord brought out of it (Goodspeed)."

The "brighter" light of the New Testament shows that the full purpose of God's dealings may not always be realized in this life. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Job's sufferings taught him that God was sovereign, inscrutable and ultimately good, and according to James the

"quality" produced was "patience."



**Are there specific reasons or definite circumstances for foot-washing, and should this be regularly practiced in a fellowship?**



Washing of the feet as a special act is first referred to in the Bible in Genesis, and recurs throughout the whole of Scripture. In Oriental countries where sandals were commonly worn, feet became soiled with the dust and dirt of the road. Upon entering a tent or house, one of the first things done by the traveler was to wash his feet, or have them washed by his host or his host's servant.

Not to offer water for the feet indicated a low regard for the foot-weary visitor. This is shown by our Lord's remark to Simon the Pharisee. Jesus was sitting in Simon's house when a woman "of the street" came in and "began to wash his feet with tears." Simon and his fellow Pharisees were shocked that Jesus, "if He were a prophet," would not know the kind of woman who was washing His feet, and forbid her. Jesus, knowing what they were thinking, spoke to Simon about forgiveness, and described the woman's act as one of love and respect. He then compared the act of the weeping penitent with the discourteous treatment He had received from Simon. One of the things our Lord mentioned was - "Thou gavest me no water for my feet."

During the Last Supper our Lord took off His robe, girded Himself with the towel of a servant and washed the

feet of His disciples (John 13:1-17). It appears that they had been arguing as to which of them was "the greatest." No servant being available to wash their feet, each disciple took his place at the table with unwashed feet. Not one of them felt that he ought to be the servant. In their minds such an act would detract from their "greatness." It seems from all of the material in the Gospels relating to this event, that it was while they were arguing about "who was the greatest," that Jesus rose from the table and "took the place of a servant," and washed their feet.

Jesus approached Peter first. Peter protested against Jesus' action, feeling it was beneath the Lord's "greatness" to do this thing. Jesus however insisted, and when He had finished washing the feet of all the disciples He said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you . . . the servant is not greater than his Lord . . . if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (verses 14-16). On another occasion He said to them "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. 23:11).

There are many ways we can wash one another's feet in acts of loving service. Washing of feet as a regular religious practice or ordinance, has been the custom of some small bodies of Christians. I have personally seen occasions where this has been done as a sincere expression of a desire to make oneself available to serve his brother. These have been very moving and meaningful times. However, I do not see sufficient biblical grounds to indicate that it should be a regular practice in a fellowship.