

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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Terry Carter, Editor



Our
Professor's
Perspective!

Grace vs. Mercy

--By Shane Capps

What are the two most famous Scriptures in the New Testament?

The favorite Scripture for Christianity today is **John 3:16** which says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

It is true - this is a great verse but that is where the Scripture ends for most.

People that enjoy quoting this verse fail to know and understand **verses 1-8, verse 22**, as well as **verse 36**. **John 3:16** fits within the context of events that are going on.

The favorite Scripture for the world today is **Matthew 7:1** which says, "Do not judge lest you be judged."

The world fails to know or understand that there is a **verse 2** and following.

The text doesn't teach that Christians shouldn't judge, but it teaches that Christians should use right judgment when they do judge.

We need to be the "People of the Book" meaning we know the Scriptures. Not just **John 3:16**, or

Matthew 7:1, but we study the whole Bible. We shouldn't only study the topics in which we are interested. We shouldn't study only our favorite books of the Bible. We shouldn't study our pet doctrines that we think are the most important. We need to study all the topics of the Bible. We need to study all the different books of the Bible. We need to study all the different doctrines, or teachings of the Bible.

There are some topics that we stay away from within the Christian Church/Church of Christ. We tend to stay away from the topics of:

1. The Holy Spirit.
2. Holiness.
3. **Grace**.

For this article we will focus on the topic of "**Grace**." That is a topic that the denominational world focuses on more than any other topic. You would think they would get it right. That's what is sad. They get the topic of grace wrong. It has led them down the wrong road.

The denominational world does not understand what real New Testament grace is. Because of this, they stay out of the grace of God.

If you have the wrong definition of a word, then you will have the wrong meaning of the word. This is what has happened in the denominational world. For the Christian Church/Church of Christ, we don't talk about the topic at all.

What Most call "Grace" is Really "Mercy"!

Let's find out and see what the Bible has to say on this topic (from a book of the Bible) on this doctrine.

How we live as a Christian is by walking through life by grace. Our main text will be... **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

For me, I have faith in the Lord. What is faith? **Hebrews 11:1** says, "Now faith is the assurance (substance) of things hoped for, the conviction (evidence) of things not seen."

How did I get it? **Romans 10:17** says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

My faith is based on assurance, substance, real hope, conviction, and evidence. God hasn't spoken out audibly to me. He has shown Himself in creation, the Bible, history, archeology, in the lives of His people.

To be real honest, for me the Bible is enough to show me what God has done for me through His Son Jesus Christ.

It is because of faith that I believe what God has said in His word. Faith has moved me to confess Him as my Lord. Faith has moved me to repent of my sins. It was faith that moved me to be baptized into Christ for the remission of my sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was faith that caused me to want to become a Christian.

It is more than that!

- ~ It is faith that keeps me in the Bible reading and studying it every day.
- ~ It is faith that keeps me praying to the Lord who hears me every day.
- ~ It is faith that keeps me faithful by coming to church on the first day of the week.
- ~ It is faith that led me to Bible college, to be trained as a preacher/evangelist, to have been in full time ministry all these 24 years.
- ~ It is faith in Christ that keeps me going within the Christian life!

I serve the Lord not to get saved, but because I am saved. I got saved when I confessed, repented, and was baptized into Christ. I got saved when I obeyed the Gospel.

By the Lord's grace, I have continued the Christian walk ever since. **Revelation 2:10c** says, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Salvation is Not by Works of the Law. Ephesians 2:8-9

You can't earn the Lord's salvation. Jesus already paid the price.

- ~ He died on the cross for our sins.
- ~ He was laid in a tomb; dead for three days.
- ~ On the third day He was raised back to life.

This is the Gospel. This is why it is "Good News". **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** Jesus now offers salvation to everyone. Right now! It is offered right now!!! It is your free will choice. What will you do with the offer of salvation right now?

Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is promised to no man. Today and right now is all we have.

This is the Lord's mercy, His great mercy... not grace, but mercy!!! Just because Jesus offers salvation (it is offered to everyone, no matter whom) it doesn't mean everyone will be saved. It is a free will choice.

Everyone Has a Choice:

- ~ Some will reject it.
Due to that choice, they will go to hell.
- ~ Some will accept it.
If they will live a faithful Christian life, they will go to Heaven.

It is God's **mercy** that salvation is offered to everyone. It is God's **grace** that man can come to Him and accept Him.

His mercy is free without responsibility. His grace is free, but we do have a responsibility to obey the Gospel.

This is not a work, because God did the work. It is up to man to come to God! It is a free gift, but we have to unwrap the gift.

It doesn't mean we earn it. It doesn't mean we are doing a "work" in unwrapping the gift. God did the work by getting the gift and wrapping the gift. To say it another way...

Mercy is the fact that Jesus died for everyone, and salvation is now offered!

Grace is the fact that you can come into that salvation when you repent and are baptized, but not everyone is going to be saved.

The denominational world doesn't understand this. It is because they don't understand what the words "mercy" and "grace" mean. It is because they don't understand what Paul means by "works".

Ephesians 2:8 says, For by grace ("charis") you have been saved through faith ("pistis"); and that not of yourself, it is the gift of God; Side note: Paul repeats **Ephesians 2:5**.

This letter was written to the Church at Ephesus. They were already

saved. They were already New Testament Christians. They were part of the Church. They came to God's grace through faith. They were given God's great mercy because salvation was offered to them. They accepted God's grace when they obeyed the Gospel. **Ephesians 4:5** Their faith led them into God's grace.

Ephesians 2:9 says, "Not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Work is the Greek word "ergon." It means "business." The denominational world doesn't understand what Paul means by "works". That's why Martin Luther could not harmonize Paul writings and the book of **James** together. He didn't like the book of **James** and called it "an Epistle of straw".

When James speaks of "works", he is speaking of the works we do within the Christian life. They are not "works" we do to get saved. They are "works" we do because we are saved.

The whole book of **James** is about what the Christian life looks like, or what we should be doing because we are Christians.

Normally when Paul writes about "works", he speaks of works of the Law.

For example, in the book of **Galatians**, Paul is dealing with the Judaizers who said that to remain a Christian one must obey the Law of Moses. In fact, it is Paul's terminology for the books of **Romans** and **Galatians**.

You can also see this in **Romans 4:2-9**. **Galatians 3:11** says, "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; 'The righteous man shall live by faith'." Paul is quoting **Habakkuk 2:4**.

The Pharisees thought they were saved by obeying the Law. That's where their pride was. **Matthew 23**.

God's grace does not come through works of the Law. If it did, we would be earning our salvation.

No, we are saved by God's grace. That doesn't mean that we don't have to obey the Gospel to get into that grace. That's where the denominational world gets lost and can't put it together.

The denominational world says that baptism does not have a part of the Plan of Salvation. Why? They said by a person being baptized they are doing a work to get into salvation. That's simply not true, and if you think about it, it doesn't make sense.

For Example...

- ~ **If I believe** and put my faith in the Lord, that's something I do. It's not a work, but it's something I do!
- ~ **If I confess** Jesus as my Lord, that's something I do. It's not a work, but it's something I do!
- ~ **If I repent of my sins**, that's something I do. It's not a work, but it's something I do!
- ~ **If I am baptized into Christ** for the remission of my sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is not something I do, but it is something that is done to me.

Baptism is a work! The question is, who is doing the work?

Colossians 2:12 says, "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

See!!! Baptism is a work. **It is the working of God.** When we are baptized, we are obeying the Gospel.

Because we have obeyed and been baptized, God forgives our sins and gives us the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

We are the ones who:

- * Have faith.
- * Believe
- * Confess
- * And repent

It is God, by His grace, that saves us when we are baptized into His Name.

We are not saved by works of the Law, but by the grace of God.

Grace means we have the responsibility to come to the Lord. We have been shown favor!!!

Salvation is Through Jesus Whom We Serve Ephesians 2:10

It has been clear to see...

Mercy is for everyone no matter what because today is the day of salvation.

Grace is for everyone no matter what because today they can come to Jesus for salvation.

Both are free. God's mercy should lead us to His grace.

Now if I am a Christian... I have His salvation. I have His grace. I can now live the Christian life. How are we faithful and obedient? By living the Christian life. By serving as a Christian. Not to **get** saved, but because we **are** saved.

Paul now moves into what we are to be doing as a Christian.

In **Ephesians 2:8-9** he is speaking of works of the Law like in the book of **Romans** and **Galatians**.

In **Ephesians 2:10** he sounds like James in his book speaking about works that a Christian is called to do.

Verse 10 is not how to get saved, but what we do as Christians because we are saved. We want to make this clear because the denominational world and her pastors do not understand this at all.

Verse 10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Because we are now a Christian, we are God's workmanship.

Workmanship means "what is made." We are made to serve the Lord.

We are saved to serve.

We are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. Why? So we can do good works. Not works of the Law but works of service.

Because we are saved by God's grace, we do have a responsibility to serve the Lord.

- ~ We are called to be faithful.
- ~ We are called to be obedient.
- ~ We are called to run a race.
- ~ We are called to live out Christianity.

Christianity is a lifestyle, not just a title. Christianity is not just something we are, but something we do. Paul sounds like James in **verse 10**. The point of the book of **James** is simple.

You say you're a Christian, then what do you do since you are a Christian? If you can't answer that question, you are not a Christian.

A Christian is one who is more than a baptized believer.

- ~ A Christian serves the Lord.
- ~ A Christian has service to the Lord.
- ~ A Christian has a ministry to the Lord's people.
- ~ A Christian takes the gospel to the lost.
- ~ A Christian is one who can be seen and heard.

The Christian life is a life walked with the Lord. The word "walk" was the same word used back in **Ephesians 2:2**. Before we were a Christian we walked like the world, for Satan, and for ourselves. Now we walk like a Christian, for the Lord, and for others. **Verse 2** is the destructive path and **verse 10** is the productive path.

We are the Lord's workmanship! We were created in Christ Jesus. Why?

We are to do good works. Why? God prepared beforehand that is what Christians should be doing. Why? That we would walk in this lifestyle. As a Christian I am a new creation. **2 Corinthians 5:17** I have a new life. I have a new lifestyle. I have a new way of doing things.

The fact that I am His workmanship means... there is work to do. These are the fruits of my salvation. Not the root, but the fruit. **John 15:5**

Do you live a life as a Christian that brings glory to our Lord?

Do you think you are only saved by grace to have no responsibility at all to the Lord?

Do you think you are only saved by grace to do nothing?

Do you think you don't have to:

- ~ Go to church?
- ~ Serve?
- ~ Be a part of a ministry?

If that's how you live as a Christian, you don't understand what biblical grace is. You have made grace cheap and worthless.

Grace is not cheap. Jesus had to go to the cross so He could offer it.

Do we need mercy? Yes, you better believe it.

Do we need God's grace? Yes, you better believe it.

God has done His part, but it's up to us what we do with God's grace.



Dr. Shane Capps is the preacher of the First Church of Christ and professor of Summit Theological Seminary in Peru, IN.

You can contact Shane at shanecapps34@gmail.com
