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The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XVII
Issue 404

God's Power for Salvation

Part 1

by — Don Bast

THE EVANGEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Travelling on the Damascus Road, breathing out threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord, Saul of Tarsus was literally knocked off of his religious high-horse (Acts 9:1). It was there that the glorified Christ apprehended him; the very One he had been persecuting. A bright light out of heaven flashed about him (:3), and he was blinded for three days (:9). Not only did his natural eyesight return, his view of life and purpose was drastically altered. It was made known to him that he was a chosen vessel of God (:15) to proclaim the good news he had been trying to wipe out.



I am already being poured out, and the time of my release hath arrived; I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith (II Timothy 4:6-7).

The good news given to the apostle Paul almost 2000 years ago is still God's power for salvation to everyone who believes today (Romans 1:16). The word of the cross is stupidity, indeed, to those who are perishing, yet it is the power of God to us who are being saved (I Corinthians 1:18). This message is not in accord with the wisdom of men. It is God's wisdom, for the mature, wisdom in a secret, which has been concealed in God until revealed to Paul (cf. I Corinthians 2:5-7).

Saul, later called Paul (13:9), the foremost sinner, was shown mercy so that Jesus Christ should be displaying all of His patience in him, as a pattern of those who are about to be believing (I Timothy 1:16). Paul's life was transformed. Not only did he become the model of God's saving grace, but he was also given by revelation the secret of the administration of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:2-3).

Christ Jesus assigned to Paul a service and invigorated him to accomplish it. The assignment he was entrusted with was the heralding of the evangel of the glory of the happy God (I Timothy 1:11-12). Upon receiving this revelation of the grace of God, he immediately became consumed with his calling and service. He vowed not to let anything, even his own soul, be precious to him until he should fulfill his career, and the dispensation which he received directly from the Lord Jesus to certify the evangel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Through years of almost unbelievable hardship and persecution he endured to the end. Shortly before his death he penned these words,

However, this simple but powerful message of Christ crucified, and God's amazing grace, is so misunderstood by many who claim to believe it. This fact only makes the realization of the grace of God even more precious. For those of us who truly grasp it and love the truth in it, our faith is anchored in the power of God revealed therein.

ACQUIRING POWER FOR SALVATION

The truth about the power of the grace of God for salvation is not complicated. It is simple enough for a child to understand, but like all of God's truths it comes by revelation. We are speaking, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit (I Corinthians 2:13). If anyone does not have the spirit of God making its home in him or her they are not His.

Let us start by quoting one sentence, one of the most profound and comprehensive statements in all Holy Writ on this glorious topic.

(see **POWER**, page 3631)

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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POWER (continued from front page)

In grace, through faith, are you saved, and this is not out of you; it is God's approach present, not of works, lest anyone should be boasting (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Understandably, the whole idea of being saved in grace will have no appeal to an unbeliever. The soulish man is not receiving the things which are of the spirit of God, for they are stupidity to him, and he is not able to know them (I Corinthians 2:14). We understand this fact, for we, too, were once in the same boat. It is quite another matter, and it is disturbing, to realize that many who name the name of Christ do not accept these plain words at face value.

I can't imagine why a believer in Christ Jesus who is seeking for truth would not cheerfully embrace this clear declaration, unless their heart has been hardened by the creeds of Christendom and the false doctrines of demons. The man-centered gospel of this era has all but rendered void these powerful words of spirit and life. Singlehandedly, it has possibly brought more shame to the character of God and the truth about His ways than all other human philosophy. Regardless of who believes it or not, we do well to acknowledge God's Word as being true and any who differ as being a liar (Romans 3:4).

Let us break down our main text into sections, five easy pieces to examine in the simplest of terms how one is saved. The first and primary element is the fact that it is *in grace* that we are saved. Salvation takes place in the sphere of grace. We will look at the meaning of grace in depth shortly. The second element is salvation is *through faith*. Faith is the medium or vehicle that delivers the realization or reality of our salvation. We will presently look closer at faith, also. Thirdly, our salvation, including our faith, the act of believing, was *not out of us*. It did not originate in us. Fourthly, we see that our salvation was actually *God's present* to us, a gift graciously granted. Paul reinforces this truth by adding a fifth phrase, "*not of works*." Salvation had nothing to do with our works, anything we did or could do.

After Paul establishes the basis of salvation he also provides one good reason why it had to be this way. The reason we are saved in grace through faith is "*lest anyone should be boasting*." This gift from God is so costly and precious that He will not allow it to be sullied whatsoever by man's involvement. He left no room for boasting lest anyone should attempt to rob God of His glory. God, in love, designated us beforehand for the place of a son for the laud of the glory of His grace

(Ephesians 1:5-6). We who are the pre-expectant in the Christ are to be for the laud of His glory, alone (:12). He Himself has declared,

I am Yahweh [Jehovah]! That is My name, and I will not give My glory to another (Isaiah 42:8).

To remove all doubt about the source of salvation Paul calls it God's *approach present*. The term "approach present" refers back to particular animal sacrifices offered up to God by the priests of old. A study of the book of Leviticus would surely add insight into the term "approach present" but there is also one familiar reference in chapter two of Matthew's gospel account that should suffice as a clear illustration of this term. Here we discover that the gold, frankincense and myrrh which the three Magi offered to the babe in the manger are called "approach presents." Salvation is God's "approach present" to us.

Every aspect of salvation, including justification, is as free as the sunshine we see and the air we breathe. Even our faith is a gift; there is no merit in believing. Nothing is easier than for a child to believe in a loving father.

[Our] Faith creates nothing, does nothing, deserves nothing, and has no efficacy apart from its Object, for it is *not* a savior. If I entrust myself to an elevator that I may reach the tenth floor I contribute nothing to the power that raises me, nor does my ignorance of the mechanism prevent my being elevated to that floor. — George Rogers, *Studies in Romans*, p. 34

In fact, God's gifts are spoiled the moment that we connect them to any hint of merit or work. No one could pay the price for faith, salvation or justification – they are absolutely free. God will not be indebted to anyone. When we look into the eyes of our loving Savior, giving Him all of the glory will be the easiest thing we ever did.

ACCESS INTO GOD'S GRACE IS BY FAITH

Paul, in his writing to the eclessia at Rome, expounds on the term "*in grace through faith*." He first qualifies the faith he is speaking about when he writes,

Those who believe in the God, Who is justifying the irreverent, his faith is reckoned for righteousness (Romans.4:5).

He later confirms the relationship between grace and this faith. Here he reveals that *through Christ* we ►

have access by faith into this grace in which we stand (Romans 5:2). This is the faith that provides free and glorious access into God's grace. Salvation from beginning to end is of faith that it may accord with grace (cf. 4:16).

Faith is the key to unlock the door into the powerful realm of grace in which we stand. We did not initiate or manufacture faith in our heart by our own volition or otherwise. We obtained the spirit which is of God so that we may perceive that which is being graciously given to us by God (I Corinthians 2:12). The spirit was freely given to us to enable us to perceive this most precious gift, which was also freely given. Only in this sphere of grace is there power to really stand and to get hold of life in this present wicked age. Those ignorant of the power of grace and God's righteousness may seek to establish their own righteousness, and by doing so will find it impossible to be subject to or find enjoyment in the righteousness of God (cf. Romans 10:3). In fact, Paul declares to those who attempt to find acceptance with God through works of law that they actually fall out of the sphere where grace operates (cf. Galatians 5:4).

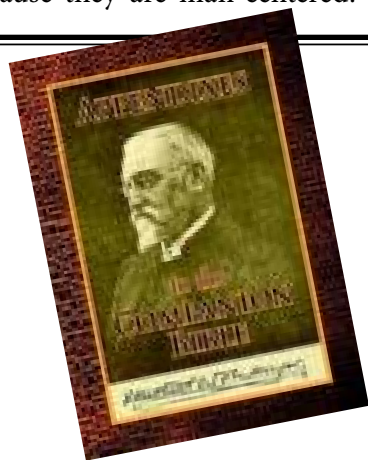
TRADITIONAL DEFINITIONS OF GRACE

The two traditional definitions of grace that I learned growing up in the Mennonite church were "unmerited favor to the unworthy" and "a favor rendered to those who deserve the opposite." Both of these are true statements, but are flawed and incomplete, mainly because they are man-centered. The word "unmerited"

is redundant; favor means unmerited. The more serious problem is in the fact that the word "unmerited" refers to us sinners. We should not be in the forefront when grace is being defined. This incredible favor is from God! Our attention should be, first and foremost, on Him as the source of grace and all. Also, by adding more terms like "to the unworthy" and "those who deserve the opposite" fastens the attention on ourselves and therefore keeps our eyes off of God our Savior and the intended meaning. The power and beauty of grace is a display of God's character and His righteousness. Worthiness does not enter the equation of God's dealings with mankind. We cannot influence God's love for us! He already loves us more than we can apprehend. He cannot love us more than He already does. Neither can we win His favor, or influence Him to give us anything or do anything for us! He has already given us His most prized possession. He has purposed and is in the process of blessing us beyond anything we could ever ask for or even comprehend. Dwelling in the realm of grace through faith is the path that leads to the enjoyment of our allotment in Christ now, God's prescribed way to getting a hold of life in actuality.

THIS SIMPLE MESSAGE MISUNDERSTOOD

One reason why the absolute power of grace is misunderstood and discounted is due to the fact that there are other verses that appear to contradict it. For example, in I Corinthians 15:1-2 Paul states that we *are saved* through the evangel if we are retaining what he said in bringing the evangel. He goes on and declares that, if



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we do not retain what he said in bringing the evangel, our faith is artificial or counterfeit. Again, our apostle instructs us in Philippians 2:12-16 to work out (AV), or carry our own salvation into effect (CLV) with fear and trembling. To the casual observer, these and many other similar passages appear to be in stark contrast to our main text from Ephesians chapter two. We will take a closer look at this paradox in a moment, but first it will be helpful to consider another point.

OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SALVATION

Bishop Wescott, when accosted by a Salvation Army girl with the question: “Sir are you saved?” replied jocosely, [comically] “Do you mean esothern [I was saved] or sozomai [I am being saved] or sothesomai [I shall be saved]?” — George Rogers, *Studies in Romans*, pg. 34

Without getting too technical it will be helpful to view the three aspects of our salvation. All are based on the faithful suffering and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed by His resurrection.

Our Past Salvation:

We WERE saved!

I realize that one may not be able to find the exact terms “past salvation,” “present salvation” or “future salvation” anywhere in the Scriptures. These terms are used only to group together and identify the verses referring to different aspects of our salvation. They are only the packaging, the wrapping around the truth. You may discard the wrapping – but don’t deny the treasure inside. When speaking about our *past* salvation, I am referring to the fact that God chose us in Christ before the disruption of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5). Not only did God choose us long before we were born, but He also foreknew us and designated us beforehand. He then called us, and we are assured that those whom he calls He justifies also, and those whom He justifies He glorifies also (Romans 8:29-30). All of these treasures are not out of us. They are God’s gifts to us.

Jesus is the Lamb of God which is taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29)! In God’s mind and purpose the Lamb was slain from the disruption (CLV) or before the foundation (AV) of the world (Revelation 13:8). God does not dwell in time like we do. He has no beginning or ending. Before He created the eons or ages there was no day or night, no months or years and no such thing as time.

Christ was faithful to the end, giving His life a ransom for all (I Timothy 2:6), and on the cross before He died He uttered these words of glorious victory: “*It is accomplished*” (John 19:30). Christ died for the sins of the world, therefore the sins of the world are died for! These verses and many others reveal the absolute truth about our past salvation. We had no choice in the matter, and are literally eternally indebted to God for so great a salvation.

Our Future Salvation:

We SHALL BE Saved!

As great as our past and present salvation are, we must conclude that actually the greatest benefit from God’s saving grace will not be experienced until sometime in the future. Paul often refers to a further imminent and eminent salvation for the children of God: “... being aware of the era, that it is already the hour for us to be roused out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believe” (Romans 13:11).

Without taking anything away from the blessed intimacy we now enjoy with our Lord, we still are in need of a further salvation. We long for the time when our corruptible bodies put on incorruption and our mortality puts on immortality (I Corinthians 15:53). Along with the entire creation, we also, who have the firstfruit of the spirit are groaning in ourselves and ►

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travailing to be freed from the slavery of corruption, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance of our body (Romans 8:21-23). Therefore with patience we are waiting for His Son out of the heavens, Whom He rouses from among the dead, Jesus, our Rescuer out of the coming indignation (I Thessalonians 1:10). We have a permanent homeland in the heavens. It has always been there. The Lord Jesus Christ will transfigure our bodies of humiliation to conform them to the body of His glory (Philippians 3:20-21) in order to fit us for our celestial habitation.

The Lord knows those who are His own. He chose us; we did not choose Him (*cf.* John 15:16)! Whether we are sleeping or watching, rest assured that, when the trumpet sounds – in an instant, in the twinkle of an eye – at the last trump the dead will be roused incorruptible and we shall all be changed (I Corinthians 15:52). The Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall be rising first, then the living who are surviving shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. Console one another with these words (I Thessalonians 4:16-18). This is our ultimate salvation, and from that time forward we will ever be with the Lord.

Our Present Salvation: *We ARE BEING Saved!*

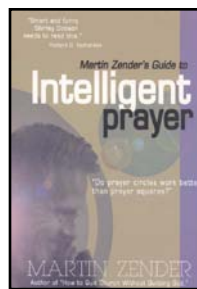
What about our present salvation: “we *are being saved*”? Much of the confusion regarding being saved is caused by misapplying verses to an aspect of our salvation that was not intended. Relatively speaking, there is little about these truths just discussed that we need to comprehend regarding the fact that we have been *saved*

from sin – we just need to believe them. We need a more thorough realization of God’s revelation of the power of grace in order to be saved from the stratagems of the Adversary during this present life. Rightly dividing the many passages is an excellent place to start.

Once we grasp the grace and glory in what God has accomplished on our behalf a long time ago, and what He has prepared for us (I Corinthians 2:9) in the future, then we are ready to approach the topic of our present salvation. God’s love for mankind, God’s desire to save, and His ability to do so are the foundational truths on which we build our complete belief system – including that of our present salvation. We live in the present, and life is difficult. We are members of the human race and are not exempt from the doubts, fears and pain common to all. We are continually, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, in need of God either to get us out of trouble or to keep us from getting into more trouble. We long to be saved daily, to live life being more than conquerors (*cf.* Romans 8:37) today. This is possible only one day at a time. Today is the only day we have, and it is a gift from God for us to enjoy and truly get a hold of life (I Timothy 6:19). By God’s grace, may we live it to the fullest?

It is true that meditating on the suffering and dying of Christ and our happy expectation, in time of need, will open the door to a bountiful storeroom of encouragement. We are foreigners here in a temporary existence that is quickly passing. Simply reminding ourselves that we have a heavenly allotment and that it is our permanent homeland can have a dynamic impact on our outlook on life. There is much blessing in continually turning our affections above and thanking God that we are sealed with the holy spirit of promise, the pledge of the enjoyment of our allotment (Ephesians 1:13-14). His spirit homing in us is the guarantee that the full payment of what was procured on our behalf will come when we are glorified. Meditating on these powerful truths is wonderful, but it is only the beginning. It is not a message only for the most disciplined amongst us, those who faithfully keep encouraging themselves in the Lord. It is more a matter of growing in knowledge and the realization of God’s amazing grace (*cf.* Colossians 1:6).

(To be continued.)



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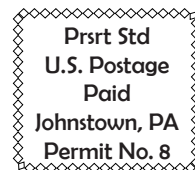
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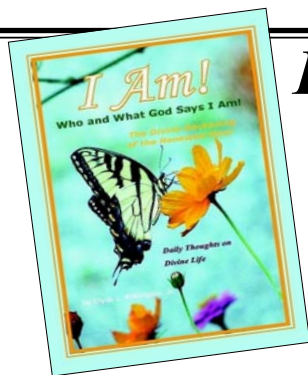


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