

God's Grace, Noah's Faith, The Great Flood, and Us

The English word "grace" is, in biblical context at least, translated from the Greek word "charis" (khar-eece). A pretty good idea of what this word means can be gleaned by how it is variously translated in the Bible. The word "grace" is often used to translate it, but so also are "favor," "thanks," and "pleasure." Technically, it is defined as "that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness" (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon). But it is also defined as "the merciful kindness by which God, exerting His holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of Christian virtues" (Ibid). Less specifically, most people think of grace as the "unmerited favor" of God toward man, or perhaps sometimes the "unmerited favor" man shows to others. But for a few moments, let's concentrate on the manifestation of grace by God to man, and seek to ask and answer some important questions about this vital subject- we are, after all, "saved by grace" if saved at all! So...

Is God's saving grace unilaterally given to everyone? Well, "Yes" and "No." Let me explain. Think about the Great Flood of Gen.6-9. Gen.6:9 tells us that "Noah found favor (or grace) in the eyes of the Lord" and was saved along with his immediate family while everyone else perished, Gen.7:23. For now, let's not worry about the "hows" and "whys" and just concentrate on the "who." Obviously, God's saving "grace" was NOT applied to everyone! Conservative estimates suggest 3 billion people died in the Flood. Eight were saved, cf. 1Pet.3:20. So, "No"- God's grace wasn't unilaterally given to everyone... at least it wasn't **applied** to everyone. What does that mean? Let's ask and answer another critical question...

Is God's grace available to everyone? Consider again that precursor to universal judgment, the Great Flood. Back in Gen.6:9 it says that Noah (the recipient of God's grace) "was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God." Could others have done the same? Of course, but they didn't for Gen.6:5 says that "the Lord saw (with the same eyes in which Noah found "favor"!) that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was on evil continually." Additionally, could these people that the Lord saw as "evil" have repented (changed their minds and thus their course/direction) and gotten into the ark? The text says Noah tried to get them to do just that by both *example* and *preaching* (2Pet.2:5) for apparently 120 years before the Flood actually occurred, Gen.6:3. And yet, this manifestation of God's grace was spurned by the mass of humanity, Matt.24:38. So, "Yes" the grace of God that saved Noah was **available** to everyone, but it was not **applied** to everyone. Now let's ask and answer one additional and relevant question...

Does God's grace still work this way? Basically, "Yes." Let's return to the Flood, Noah, and God one more time, and think carefully. How did God's grace save Noah? What did God's grace actually **do** to save Noah? **It did two very important things: 1)** God's grace **informed Noah of the coming destruction**, Gen.6:13, "Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.'" And then, **2)** God's grace **instructed Noah how to prepare for (or be saved from) the coming destruction**, Gen.6:14-21, "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood... and you shall enter the ark..." That's it. God's grace *informed* and *instructed*- the rest was up to

Noah. Would he, *in faith* believe God and *in obedience* do as instructed? If so, God's grace would save him- if not, he would perish with the rest of humanity. Obviously, Noah chose the latter, for "*Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did,*" Gen.6:22. So, **God's grace informed Noah regarding a coming destruction and instructed Him on how to prepare for it; Noah's faith believed God and obeyed instructions.** Note Heb.11:7's inspired commentary in these regards, "*By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*" Isn't this what Paul wrote in Eph.2:8, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith...*"?

But that was Noah, "**What about us?**" Now that we've understood these things about God's grace, Noah's *faith*, and the Great Flood, **please, please**, read carefully Titus 2:11-14, "*For the grace of God has appeared bring salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*" See? God's grace **informs us of a coming destruction** (cf. 2Pet.2:5 and 2Pet.3:8-13) and **instructs us regarding how to prepare for and be saved from it** (Mark 15:15-16). It's the same formula and just that simple. Will you, like Noah, **in faith believe God and do what He says?** If so, God's grace will save you! If not, you will perish just like the world in the days of the Great Flood. (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)