



Title: God's Antidote in a Sin-stricken World

Theme: Saving Grace

Series: Living in the Aroma of God's Grace

"One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made." (Psalm 145:4-9)

Christians have a wealth of praise to offer to the Lord

I would propose that Christians have a wealth of praise to offer to the Lord and that God wants the wealth of His grace shared with all who live the whole world.

This grace is available to everyone. Who gives the gift? How is it received? Who chooses to enjoy it? How is it obtained? And lastly, how long can it be enjoyed?

Psalm 145 is psalm of praise written by King David and sets for all Christians the heart that God wants to see in the Church of Jesus Christ. There are some powerful truths proclaimed by David in these passages of Scripture that must be briefly pointed out before we can proclaim with confidence the graciousness of our Lord. Notice I said with confidence, there are some people who mention that God is gracious only because it makes them sound religious.

Christians, who crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word of God, grow in their salvation and have tasted that the Lord is good. With confidence, "They will speak of the glorious splendor of [His] majesty, and they will tell of the power of [His] awesome works, and [they] proclaim [His] great deeds. They... celebrate [His] abundant goodness and joyfully sing of [His] righteousness."

Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the Christian's faithful High Priest who is able to sympathize with their weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15-6) they are confident in His goodness and generosity.

They know that the Lord is good and His compassion is on all He has made. This enables them to express a confidence that the Lord Jesus treats His creatures with kindness, His subjects with consideration, and His obedient children with favor. Christians who understand the benefits of God's grace know that it is impossible for Him to forget them or be to harsh with them. When He chastises His children it is for their own good. When He surrenders willful sinners over their own flesh, to the world's lures and even to the lies of the devil, He is still working out His saving grace to call all to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The New American Standard gives us this wonderful translation of Psalm 145:4, "One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts." There is much for the child of God to meditate upon and to share with the next generation that is Sin-stricken.

Saving grace

God's antidote to a sin-stricken world is "saving grace" and it is a gift that only comes from God. Romans 3:23-24 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by [God's] grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24)

The first truth that must be agreed upon is that God's free gift of saving grace is for everyone because everyone has sinned.

It is like everyone was on a ship and everyone on that ship had inherited the sinful nature. Sin caused the ship to sink and the people were able to make it to an island that is a mile wide. One day the people could see a huge wall of water coming at them that was several miles wide and tall enough to engulf the whole island, thus bringing sure death and total destruction. The nearest land that could secure their safety was 15 miles away, separated by shark invested frigid waters. Without assistance of some kind death was guaranteed to anyone who would venture in the water. No one could jump far enough or doing anything of his own accord to get where they could find safety.

Everyone who lives on this earth is on an Island that is going to be destroyed. There is a wave of death that is going to hit everyone on this earth if Jesus tarries another 120 years. Therefore, God intervened and made a way from escape from utter destruction. He knew that there was absolutely nothing that man could do on his own accord to overcome that sinful nature so He gave "Saving Grace."

This “grace” (*charis*) in Romans 3:24 comes only from the Lord and is not brought about by anything we have or can do. This grace is the supernatural move of God working through the power of the Holy Spirit affecting man’s sinfulness, not only offering forgiveness to the repentant sinner, but bringing joy and thankfulness. This mighty move of God in a man’s spiritual heart changes him into a new creation without destroying his individuality. (Barnes Notes; The Complete Word Study of the New Testament; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-9)

The second truth to enjoying God’s antidote for sin is to understand that God’s grace is free.

In my early days of training for ministry I was challenged by a man to go door to door here in Norton and ask the question, “If you were to die tonight where would you go?” To those who said heaven I was to ask, “Why do you believe that?” I was careful not to knock on doors of people who I knew were regular church attendees or exhibited the fruit of Christian faith. Most of the answers I received centered around two key thoughts. The first was works, and the second, religious affiliations. People would say, “I am just as good as the next guy” or “I have done the best I can” or “I have done more good things than bad things.” Others associated themselves with a Christian denomination of some kind.

These two attitudes found in the world of sinners is why the Holy Spirit moved the apostle to write so much about saving grace. The best way to enjoying God’s saving grace is to understand what justified freely means.

Sinners are in the wrong before God. They have broken His laws, they deserve punishment, but on the cross Christ took their place. Now, when they put their trust in Christ as Savior and Lord, they are declared in the right, acquitted, justified. The Cross of Christ shows God to be just, not simply in the fact He forgives, but in the way He forgives. To pass over sins would show mercy, but it would not show justice. Forgiveness by the way of Christ going to the Cross for the sins He did not commit shows both mercy and justice through sacrificial love. (The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook)

The Bible says, “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Hebrews 9:22) Jesus responded to His call to the Cross out of a love relationship to God His Father.

Christians who enjoy God's antidote for sin have Holy Spirit illumination of justification. It is the declared purpose of God to regard and treat sinners who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord as if they had not sinned. God does this only on the merits of the Christ who died for them not because Christians are successful in living out the laws of God.

Christians who have a Biblical understanding of God's true grace live out what God's Word says much differently than those who strive to obey God's Word in the fear of the flesh or as those in the world would perceive it should be lived out. Those who try to work out their salvation will strive to obey God's Word through fear or attempts to earn temporal advantages. However, works of true faith are done out of Holy Spirit inspired promptings. This enables Christians to enjoy liberty to say no to sinful desires purely out of love for Christ the one who died for them.

It is understood you can train an ape to closely imitate the actions of humans. But the ape is still not a human. An ape can not become human by any effort of his own, only the hand of God can bring that about. Only if the hand of God makes the miraculous change could the ape actually become human, thus enabling him to live truly as a human. (Martin Luther)

The whole of Scripture does not say that faith is without Christian character of good works. The whole of Scripture teaches that true works that glorify God and Christ only come about by the miraculous saving grace of God changing the sinner and creating him into the image of Christ. Man cannot bring Christ-like change by his own efforts.

Received by faith

God's antidote for a sin-stricken world is saving grace. It is only given by God and it must be received by faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."

"Faith" (*πιστις*) here primarily means to have a conviction based on what is heard. (Vines) Romans 10:17 says, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17) This faith is not a tool produced by man but simply a trustful response that is birthed by the Holy Spirit working in the spiritual heart of repentant sinners and enabling them to believe. Again this shows God's grace working and not man's ability to raise up faith by his own effort. However, it does show mankind's need to be responsive to the promptings of God upon his life.

The faith found here is the only element in a Christian's life that enables him to enjoy all that the Lord Jesus has for the children of God. It must be noted that this faith still comes from God and the only way anyone can get it is to allow themselves to be exposed to the teachings of God's Word and be hungry to hear and respond to it. If there is no longing to hear and be responsive to the teachings of Christ who is the incarnate Word of God, than there will never be any true saving faith found in that person's life.

A good definition of this faith is relying on what God has done through Christ rather than on one's ability to believe. In the Old Testament, faith is rarely mentioned. The word trust is used frequently, and verbs like believe and rely are used to express the right attitude to the Lord. At the heart of the Christian message is the story of the Cross of Calvary: Christ's dying to bring salvation.

This faith in Ephesians 2:8 is an attitude of trust that Christ died for our sins and because of His sacrificial death, we have salvation through the shed blood of Christ.

When a man goes ice fishing he takes something with him to check the thickness of the ice and once it has been confirmed that it is safe he steps out on the ice. It is not his faith that causes him to go out on the ice, it is faith that the ice is thick enough to hold his weight, thus he is not stepping out in faith, rather his faith is in the ice that holds him up.

Christians have the sure written Word of God, the writings about the works of Christ Jesus. The written Word teaches of His sacrificial death, His resurrection and promised return. The born again Christian can stand upon the Words of Christ, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die." (John 11:25-26)

It is everyone's choice

Faith in Christ Jesus is the determination of whether or not a person will enjoy God's saving grace and it is everyone's choice whether or not to walk in God saving grace. The Lord allows mankind to have a free will. This is a truth supported throughout Scripture.

Jesus referred to it clearly and so did Joshua. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:16-21)

God speaking through Joshua gave this charge to the people of God, "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

Service to the Lord Jesus Christ can only come from the free and willing allegiance of a spiritual heart. (Barnes Notes) It is clearly seen from these passages of Scripture as well as many others that the Lord gives people a choice. It is to the folly of most men that they would love darkness. People may choose to follow false teachings taught by blind guides or may follow the teachings of Christ and the whole of God's Word.

People are given the choice to confess their sins and put them under the blood of Christ or they may choose to love their man made idols and worship created things rather than the Creator. No one can be forced to take a million dollars, the one to whom it is offered to must reach and take it.

The Lord will not make anyone receive Him, but the Book of Acts gives this promise to those who choose Christ, "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Acts 2:21)

Only available through Christ

Saving grace is available to everyone, however it must be received and God's antidote for a sin-stricken world is only available through Christ. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

In Acts, Peter and John are standing before the Sanhedrin and they are asked, "...By what power or what name did you do this?" (Acts 4:7) Peter and John had been preaching to the people about the resurrection of the dead in Jesus' Name. This disturbed the priest and Sadducees, so they were arrested. (Acts 4:1-4) The Bible says, "...Peter [was] filled with the Holy Spirit..." while he taught them and spoke to them about the truth of salvation that had come to all men.

There is no other name by which dead bodies will be resurrected back to life at the time of the resurrection of the church of Christ. Dr. Hammond rightly points out: First, our salvation is our chief concern, and that which ought to lie nearest to our hearts – our rescue from the wrath and curse and our restoration to God's favor and blessings rest solely on Christ's Name.

Second, our strength to serve and our merit or authority comes only under the Name of Jesus Christ. Third, there are many names and philosophies and institutions in religions that are trying to replace Christ. A missionary spirit will test all spirits to the authority of Christ name.

Christians are to recall the chief dangers of our present time. The pride of human intellect desires to sit on the throne of the heart.

The Word of God is being looked at as dry, unimportant in seeking God's will instead being viewed as the only authoritative direction for revealing Christ and giving direction to His church. Human arguments are being used to address issues of the day instead of presenting the truths of Scripture. A day is coming when all that has and sets itself against the Name of Christ will be judged, made known and destroyed. The Lord Jesus is King of kings and Lord of Lords. There is a day already appointed when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord. (Philippians 2:10-11) What determines a man's destiny is when he bows that knee. The wisest choice a man can ever make is to turn his spiritual heat into a throne for God, and allow it to become a place of worship to the Name of Christ.

Enjoyed for eternity

Saving grace is enjoyed under the authority of Christ and it will be enjoyed for eternity. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is eternal death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Jesus had spoken about Himself as being the resurrection and the life. (John 11:25) His emphasis is not on just the future but in the present experience of that future life. The life of the age to come is already available in Christians now, although it must be understood that it will be much better in heaven and we will have full revelation when we get there. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Jesus defined His own mission to us as becoming living water welling up to eternal life. (John 4:14) Jesus is saying that through the Holy Spirit of Christ He would indwell Christians giving supernatural energies and satisfaction. Jesus said, "[He was the] bread of life." (John 6:35) Jesus through the Holy Spirit would bring sustaining life as the children of God feed upon the written Word.

Jesus said that He is "...is the light of the world. Whoever follows [Him] will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) Darkness is a symbol of evil, sin and ignorance, however born again Christians who follow Christ have True Light. These Christians will not remain in evil or ignorance but will have the holiness of God in them as expressed in the way they live. Jesus says He is the good shepherd who brings abundant life. (John 10:10) Our Lord promise a fullness of life while in service to Him along with the freedom to overcome and say no to sinful desires that long to destroy fellowship with Jesus. Jesus said that abiding in Him will cause Christians to bear much fruit and remaining in Him will enable them to receive what they ask of Him. (John 15:5-8) The greatest value in remaining and feeding from Christ is being able to produce fruit in our lives that show we are disciples of Christ. (John 15:8)

Jesus added further content to the concept of enjoying eternal life here through what He prayed for us, "Now this is eternal life: That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3) In the Old Testament to know God was meant to experience, have close relationship with Him or fellowship and concern for His will to be done.

The intimate and mutual relationship of Father and Son is the model of Jesus and His disciples. Jesus stated, "I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me – just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father..." The ultimate experience down here is to know Christ Jesus, to know God's will for you, and to be able to walk in step with the Holy Spirit as He gives you revelation through the written Word. To enjoy God's saving grace is to be empowered by Him to walk in the center of His will.

What makes Christianity different from all the other religions of the world was the topic of discussion at a conference. Some of the participants argued that Christianity is unique in teaching that God became man. Someone objected, saying "other religions teach similar doctrines." Another person said "It is the resurrection," someone else objected saying, "other faiths believe that the dead rise again." The discussion grew heated.

C.S. Lewis, a strong defender of Christianity, came in late, sat down and asked, "What is the rumpus about?" When learned the debate was about the uniqueness of Christianity, he immediately commented, "Oh that's easy. It is God's grace."

How right he is. The very heart of the gospel is the supreme truth that God accepts us with no conditions whatever when we put our trust in the atoning sacrifice of His incarnate Son. Although we are sinful by nature, God, in grace forgives us completely. It is by His infinite grace we are saved, not by moral character, works of righteousness, commandment keeping, or churchgoing.

God's antidote for a sin-stricken world is total pardon upon the acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord. The drawing to Christ and the ability to accept Him all comes from God, God's grace is to be received by faith. Enjoying His grace is a matter of choice. His grace comes only through Christ and may be enjoyed throughout eternity.

Let us pray!