

THE INSTRUCTION OF GRACE

Truly God's grace is amazing! That God would shower upon us—weak and sinful humanity—His divine favor is beyond comprehension. From Genesis to Revelation grace is the resounding theme of God's holy word. Man's greatest problem—sin—is also his greatest undoing. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23). A closer examination of this vital truth reveals that man chose to violate God's commandments, thus becoming a sinner according to divine law. Every individual who possesses the mental faculties to distinguish right from wrong has sinned! But, there is more to Romans 3:23 than merely man's past transgressions. The truth remains that man continues to fall short of God's will. Man has sinned, and continues to do so. The penalty of sin is also clearly stated: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom.6:23). However harsh this penalty may seem, it is the just reward for our willful rebellion against the law of the Lord. Thanks be to God that Romans 6:23 does not end with the statement of divine judgment against man for his sins! The verse continues, "...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Oh, the marvelous grace of our loving Lord! How wretched and miserable we would be without the unmerited favor of a benevolent and merciful God.

God's grace is not bestowed without expectation of reciprocation on the part of its recipients. In other words, grace must be received with humble obedience to the demands of its giver, and the recipient must continue to abide by the stipulations associated with remaining in grace. God's word instructs us concerning the nature of God's grace: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13). Grace teaches us how we are to conduct ourselves in this life, so that we may remain eternally in God's grace when our time upon earth is no more. We are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. We are not to be caught up in the sinning business any longer once we have come to know the grace of God (Rom.6:1). God's grace has never been a license for man to sin. We are to live soberly. This is the idea of being of sound mind. One cannot be of sound mind and judgment if his mind is clouded with worldly things. A sound (healthy) mind is a product of diligent study of the word of God (2 Tim.2:15), and of centering our minds on things above (Col.3:1-3). We are to live righteously. Righteousness is simply right living. A mind that has been filled with the good things of God's word must then be lived out before the world. Since all of God's commandments are righteousness (Psa.119:172), we must direct our lives according to the precepts of God's word. We are to live godly. A heart and mind overflowing with the word of God, and a manner of life where every thought, word, and deed is directed by the His holy commandments makes for one who is becoming more

like God (“godly”) every day (Matt.5:44-45). The more we understand the grace of God, the more we should desire to know of God and become like Him. Finally, grace teaches us to look for and long for the coming of our Lord. Because of God’s matchless grace, we live in hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2), and long for the time when that hope will become reality! “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev.22:20).

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