

GRACE-THE DIVINE SIDE OF PARDON (1)

By Keith Greer

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” {2 Peter 3:9}

The subject of salvation is part of every religion’s teaching. The Bible clearly explains that God loves mankind and desires his eternal salvation. Within the religious world, differences occur in explaining God’s plan for enabling sinners to achieve this goal. God’s word contains the Divine plan—the Scheme of Redemption. This study has four parts: (1) Our past relationship with God. (2) The challenges of living faithfully in an ungodly world. (3) The Divine promise of a future, eternal relationship with God. (4) How God’s revealed promise becomes a reality in a sinner’s life.

Why is it so difficult to understand God’s eternal plan of pardon? Unfortunately, many see only one of the equation’s sides—God and the Divine side. But a study of the Bible reveals a second part of the equation—the human side and man’s responsibility. The two work together to fulfill God’s desire—eternal life for mankind. In this article and the one that follows, we discuss both parts of God’s redemption scheme.

Savior. “And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” {2 Corinthians 5:15} Somebody had to pay the ransom price for sin. In Old-Testament times, God required the sinner to offer a blood sacrifice to gain forgiveness from his sins. But that blood (animal blood) could not forgive men’s sins forever. “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” {Hebrews 10:3,4} The OT sacrifices foreshadowed what God would later do to provide the means of eternal redemption. He would provide His own Lamb, a Lamb that would be sufficient to remove the stain of sin from men’s souls. “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” {Hebrews 9:28} Yes, Christ went to the cross and by His death, burial and resurrection paid the ultimate price for man’s sins—His precious blood {1 Peter 1:23}. This blood, which was powerful enough to remove the stains of sin, would be accepted by God as payment.

Spirit. The Spirit revealed those facts and the plan to mankind. “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” {1 Corinthians 2:10,11} This was always in God’s mind but how would men ever come to know unless the Spirit revealed His Divine wisdom to them? Jesus said the Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment {John 16:8-11}.

Scripture. God used the pages of the sacred word to impart the necessary information to mankind. It was to be a light to his path {Psalm 119:105}. It would instruct him in every work of

righteousness {2 Timothy 3:16,17}. The same word would provide the means of all things pertaining to life and godliness {2 Peter 1:3}. The word would be the only weapon of offense given to every soldier of the cross {Ephesians 6:17}. Each could use it to know and understand his sinful condition, his inability to save himself, and the provisions provided by God to accomplish his greatest need – remission of past sins.

Unfortunately, most religions just want to focus on God's part through His grace and the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. True, no man can or will be saved without the grace of a merciful God. The Divine side of the equation provided for man what he could not provide for himself. Most agree about this side, but what about man's part in the process. Does man have a part to play? Keep reading***