

WHEN GRACE AND FAITH MEET (1)

BY KEITH GREER

The subject of God's grace is one of the most confusing and misunderstood under discussion in the religious world. Many believe that a man can do nothing to bring about his own salvation—it's all up to God. If this is true, it means that every person's salvation—or condemnation—is solely in God's hands. This is exactly what Calvin taught in his doctrine of predestination. How could a lost person possibly point the finger of blame for his condition at God? The fact that God is not a respecter of persons destroys such a theory: *"Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."*{Acts 10:34,35} God offers eternal salvation to every person—but it's on His terms, not ours.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." {Titus 2:11, 12} This passage makes it perfectly clear that God offers His grace to everyone. We need to know what grace does for us, and what God expects of us. The passage says that God's grace **TEACHES US** to live in a way that is different from the world. This means that one's obedient faith thus receives God's grace. Please consider *Hebrews 11*. Grace appears and teaches us; by faith, we accept that teaching, willingly obey, and receive the promises God gives through the grace. Consider the context of *Ephesians 2:8-10*. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* The truth is: neither grace alone nor faith alone is sufficient to procure God's blessings. If we fail to obey His will, we will not receive the promised benefits of His grace. Let us examine some examples of how grace and faith meet to bring about the salvation of souls.

Noah and God's Grace. *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."* {Genesis 6:8} God extended His grace to Noah when He appeared to and instructed him. Noah lived a different kind of life than did the rest of the world. Therefore, he obtained God's grace. *"Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did."* {Genesis 6:22} Because of Noah's obedient faith, God saved him. What reward did Noah receive? *"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."* {Hebrews 11:7}

Abraham and God's grace. *"...Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* {Genesis 12:1-3} What did Abraham do with God's instructions? *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* {Hebrews 11:8-10} According to James 2:21-24, Abraham's reward for his obedience was justification—he was acquitted and made right. Sometimes we read and study these stories of the men from the past and maybe we think they had some sort of "divine advantage." All of these characters of the Bible were flesh and blood—just like us. What is the difference between them and us? The depth of our faith and one's commitment to God.

Later, Abraham again demonstrated his obedient faith by offering Isaac on the altar, as God commanded {Genesis 22:1-12; Hebrews 11:17-19}. God did not simply extend His grace and favor to Abraham, he obeyed God's instructions. Because of this, he is sometimes called the Father of the Faithful. Can anyone deny the involvement of God's grace in the benefits Abraham received? Yet, it took Abraham's obedient faith to secure those benefits! Remember, these were our **EXAMPLES**. Can we do less than they did and still secure God's favor? ***