

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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This month's topic is one that should certainly be of interest to every Christian, for none of us could or would be Christians without it: **God's grace**.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary rightly defines **God's grace** as follows:

"The free unmerited love and favor of God, the spring and source of all the benefits men receive from Him." *The foregoing definition accords well with the original Biblical Hebrew and Greek words referring to God's grace— God's undeserved love and magnificent mercy shown to us in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ!*

Consider the following proof-passages from the Holy Bible:

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:9-10)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:1, 14)

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to 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 Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:11-14)

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Comment: Observe that God's love is freely given to us undeserving sinners in that God the Father sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sins— to provide us with salvation. Jesus is true God and true man, but one Christ. JESUS CHRIST IS THE GRACE OF GOD PERSONIFIED in that Jesus brings salvation, for Jesus Christ the only begotten of the Father is FULL OF GRACE. Indeed, God's mercies as shown to us in Christ Jesus prevent us from being utterly consumed— utterly destroyed and finished.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” (Romans 5:6-15)

Comment: Notice that the undeserved love of God toward us in Christ is equated with the grace of God, and the gift of eternal life by grace in Christ Jesus. Indeed, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior lovingly and mercifully came to earth, took upon Himself a real human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary, kept God's Law perfectly for us, and then willingly died for us on the cross of Calvary where He shed His holy, precious, and infinitely valuable blood to pay for all the sins of all people— that's God's grace in action!

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:5-11)

Comment: Jesus Christ is not only true man (sinless man), He is also true and very God, OUR LORD! Jesus Christ showed us the utmost in undeserved love – GRACE – when He willingly humbled Himself to redeem us sinners, as the foregoing Scripture verses clearly testify.

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:3)

Comment: Note that the SOURCE OF GRACE to us IS GOD OUR FATHER, AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them

that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Romans 3:19-26)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7)

Comment: Not only did God the Father graciously send His only begotten Son to pay for all the sins of all people; God also graciously gifts folks with the very faith in Jesus Christ which personally receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation earned by Christ for the whole world. Yes, “the gospel of Christ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 1:16-17; 10:17) The Gospel of Christ when read, preached, or attached to the waters of Holy Baptism is the means by which God the Holy Ghost graciously gifts folks with faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.” (Galatians 1:13-18)

“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:22-24)

Comment: Observe that the apostle Paul testifies how his own salvation was totally by God's grace in that He was graciously called to faith in Jesus Christ who then graciously called Paul to preach the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD— THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST: the good news that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, has kept God's Law perfectly for all people and has paid for the sins of all people with His own holy and infinitely valuable blood.

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”
(Ephesians 1:1-7)

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Hebrews 2:9)

Comment: Again and again we see that if we are Christians – if we are indeed sincere believers in Jesus Christ – it is by God’s grace that we have faith in Jesus Christ who has graciously tasted death for every man since Jesus suffered the pains of hell itself while He was nailed to the accursed tree of the cross. Take it to heart that Jesus was forsaken by God so that you and I never need to be forsaken by God!

We’ve briefly considered the rich topic of **God’s grace**. Let us be truly thankful and appreciative for God’s undeserved love and magnificent mercy – GOD’S GRACE – shown to us sinners! All praise, honor, and glory be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, the one true Triune God, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (1 John 5:7)

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