

(Peaks of Salvation 2) AUGUSTINE & GRACE

Ephesians 2: 1 – 10

Grace is a keyword of Christianity. God is *the God of all grace* and the One who said to Paul: *my grace is sufficient for you*; and John 1: 17, *grace came by Jesus Christ*. The grace of God is love shown towards guilty sinners contrary to what they deserve. [JIP] 'It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity, and had no reason to expect anything but severity ... grace and salvation belong together as cause and effect; *by grace you are saved*; v 5 & 8. If I am not amazed by God's grace, can I really be savoring & delighting living in it? **1 Peter 5: 10**.

WHAT WE WERE; v 1 – 3. Paul begins by reminding the believers [saints] that they were dead in transgressions and sins; they lived in them when they followed the ways of the world whether religious or pagan. Ephesians 5: 8 *for at one time you were darkness, [darkness was in them] but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.*

John Calvin; 'We are all born as dead men and we live as dead men until we are made partakers of Christ ... out of Christ we are altogether dead, because sin, the cause of death, reigns in us'. --- Sin is trespass, separation, and alienation from God. The picture of dead, cold corpses in a cemetery. Even some church attendees are cold in their worship, no emotion like robots. — When the prodigal son returned home his father exclaimed; *this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate.* The prodigal had been immersed in the pleasures of another country with women and drink, but he was dead to his father and his home and dead to God and to himself. V 3 *among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh...* A devastating picture of being outside of Christ; a stranger to grace, our desires are egoistical and selfish. Maybe good living in family and community but lost to God for all eternity. Outside the salvation of the Cross and nothing they can do to get right with God.

Augustine; 354, North Africa – 430, Bishop of Hippo (Algeria). Christian mother, Monica & pagan father, Patricius. Good education, sex, concubine, son Adeodatus, abandoned concubine for ambition to hopefully marry an heiress. Taught rhetoric in Carthage, Cicero & philosophy, Bible problems, Manicheanism = dualistic good & evil (Gnosticism), an eclectic mix of contradictory principles & showed how easily those who wanted to appear clever could be led astray by utter foolishness; pear tree, theatre regarded as hotbed of wicked behaviour & soon lapping up its delights. 'I loved my own sin, not because of what it gave me, but for the pleasure of sinning in itself'. Continued to go to church occasionally, without experiencing the power of its message. Rome, inner conflicts, professor of rhetoric in Milan, bishop Ambrose, continued battle Christianity V world. In Milan garden & heard children – *'take & read, take & read'*; NT nearby: 'I grasped, opened & in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell; **Romans 13: 13 & 14**, no further would I read, nor did I need, for instantly, as the sentence ended, a light of assurance poured into my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away.' Adeodatus converted & both baptised Easter Sunday, returned to Africa, sold his land & founded monastery, ordained presbyter, became bishop of Hippo. (Adeodatus died 18)

All his family were now Christians and he was faced with teaching of Holy Scripture on which church was based. Faced heresies: Arianism, Manichaeism, Donatism - rigorous discipline for pure church; & they defined "impurity."

Pelagius: British monk, denied original sin from Adam, we are free to be right or sinful; Adam brought sin into world but no death from his disobedience. Infants are born innocent, without sin. Possible not to sin, God predestines no one but foresees who will believe and who reject Him, & when forgiven we have power in ourselves to please God, so no need of Holy Spirit. A Stoic asceticism; struck at basis of sin, grace & salvation. Humans can either save themselves or cooperate with God for salvation, [you take one step towards God and He'll take the 99 to you; heresy].

In contrast Augustine knew evil of his sin and greatness of salvation. He knew that only irresistible grace could cleanse him from evil and only Christ's constant grace could keep him. He taught that we are all 'in Adam,' incapable of any good, all deserving hell & God alone chooses those to receive grace by the work of Christ in His death & resurrection.

Two 'ecumenical' church councils; Nicea in 325 & Constantinople in 381: both agreed that the Father & the Son were of the same divine substance [essence] with which Augustine agreed. The standard formula: three divine persons in one substance; three in one and one in three – Trinity. Augustine was guided by his devotion to the Bible & believed that the scriptures were given by God to His people as the inerrant source of all true wisdom.

WHAT GOD DID; v 4 – 9. *But God ...* God's overwhelming love to us, His riches, mercy, and grace made us alive with Christ. He came to us in our deadness, killed us in the cross and brought us to life in His Son. Only through Christ can we enter salvation and be totally forgiven our trespasses and evil; **v 4.** Mercy as God's riches is effective action. The Lord does not wave at us from a distance or give glimpses of His love; He demonstrates the lavishness of His riches by His mercy and comes to us in our death and brings us into the family of His love.

Secular movements, good as they are, are based on the presumption that we are spiritually alive; but the presumption is wrong despite the assistance we give to one another. Are such community works wasted? No; but they do not lead to salvation. They assist in human living and we are grateful but they are not Christian. – So, are we saved by faith; no, by grace first through faith. Not our faith but His gift; **v 5 – 7.**

Where are we at this moment? *In Christ seated with him in the heavenly places.* **V 8** *by grace...* never by good works or bad works; and notice; *through faith* NOT by faith.

WHAT WE ARE NOW; v 9 & 10. Good works are the result of grace because we are in Christ. Works are not so we remain in Him or show we belong to the church. God has prepared good works in advance for us and they are His works because we are his workmanship. We focus on the God of all grace not on ourselves.

Are you truly amazed by God's grace? Or have you grown accustomed to it?