

The Comforter

Isaiah 40:1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people....."

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How Does Grace Relate To Works?

Elder Darle Siegel

Grace is the unmerited favor of God bestowed upon an unworthy recipient.

More than one preacher has been heard to say, trying to mix grace and works is like trying to mix water and oil. It just can't be done. You take a gallon of water and a gallon of oil, and they will never mix. You take a gallon of water and just one little drop of oil, and you can shake it, stir it, let it sit, but they still will not go together, they will always separate. One little drop of works by the sinner, then it would be no more grace. Grace and works just will not mix.

The Apostle says in Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Again the Apostle says in Ephesians 2:4-5, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,

(by grace ye are saved;)" . While dead in sins we were passive, inactive, unable, unwilling and uncaring. When it says that he "hath quickened us" it refers to being born again, making us alive and regenerating us.

Other scriptures that refer to this being regenerated are Ephesians 2:8-9, "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." Consider Titus 3:5 that states, "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;". When the scripture says "not by works of righteousness that we have done", it means that it is not of our choosing, nor our accepting, nor our believing, nor our being baptized, etc.,etc.

According to these scriptures, and of course many more, show us that our eternal salvation, (being His death on the cross, and His giving us eternal life through the new birth), is all the doings of a sovereign God, through His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now after a child of God has been given eternal life, the scriptures teach us then, that we are to believe, and trust in the works of our Lord, and to follow him in gospel obedience, and be examples to others, and serve Him here in this life that we might be saved. Saved, or delivered from the pitfalls of life, the discouragements of Satan, fears and unbelief. Certainly that is what the preaching of the gospel is for, and that is to tell the child of God what Jesus has done, that it might comfort, encourage us and instruct us in the things of God. The Apostle says in 2 Timothy 1:10, "...and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

To Whom Much is Given, Much is Required

Elder Ronnie Loudermilk

John 9:41, "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

As many of you know, my wife and I have been blessed to have two children, Joshua Benjamin and Sarah Elisabeth. As we've watched them grow, we've witnessed the grace of God in both their lives, and in that we rejoice. We've also seen the carnal nature inherited from Adam. While trying to follow biblical guidelines in training up our children (Proverbs 22:6), we

have required more of them as they grew. What we require of them today is much more than what we did when they were in their early years. Why? We know that they understand more today.

This very same principal can be found in scripture concerning the Lord's dealings with His people. If His children were ignorant of information, God will oftentimes show more gentleness than He does towards them who know better. In Luke 12:47-48 we read, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask more."

To further establish this principal, I would ask the reader to consider Lamentations 4:6, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her." In the destruction of Sodom, we clearly read it was in a moment, and no hands were laid upon them to distress with captivity and slavery. When Jerusalem was judged for her sins, the people being surrounded by the armies of Babylon went days without food and were taken into a 70-year captivity. Why was the judgment so severe? The answer is, they

were blessed with the light of God to know better.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the merciful God of heaven and earth has been good to us. The Lord has blessed the nation in which I am a citizen, but I am in fear at this time because many decisions are being made which are contrary to God's word. The lack of respect for life and for God's institution of marriage is sinful rebellion against God. The Lord has been merciful, but I fear His longsuffering may soon come to an end. What should I do? I should draw near to Him (James 4:8). Pray for His mercy and guidance in my life. Pray that He would bless me to see my errors and repent that I may be an example to my family and to the community in which I live. Pray that He would bless His Church to have effect on a world that grows darker and darker by the day. Remember His promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." Amen!

What in the World Is All This?

Elder Phillip Conley

Language is such a natural part of our lives that we many times don't think about where things come from or how things are commonly used. For example, have you ever

thought about sayings and clichés like "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse" or "That's too much sugar to make a dime."? They are thrown about so commonly we don't think about what they say in literal sense. Yet, when taken literally, many of these things could be considered absurd and ridiculous. And yet - funny enough - when we read the Scriptures, too many theological fancies have come about by not granting the same latitude when considering language. It has never ceased to amaze me that people will try to fable-ize Genesis 1 when the language is literal in scope (*the evening and the morning were the 1st day, etc.*) and then try to literal-ize the book of Revelation when the language is symbolic in scope (*1,000 years, etc.*).

When at least an equal sense of latitude is given to Scripture as we would our common expressions, I believe we will step into less theological black holes. For example, the word "world" is likely as misapplied as any word in Scripture due to the repetitious usage of the verse John 3:16. It is not only expressions that have multiple senses but singular words do as well. If I used the word "trunk" or "country," you would need context to know if I was talking about a suitcase, elephant's snout, base of a tree, or back of a car with the former and nationality, geographical area, or rural surroundings with the latter. Context matters, and language is a wonderful thing with

flavors, nuances, and layers of usage.

So, now you ask me - kind reader - "What in the world is all this you are talking about?" How nice of you to inquire! And in pun as well! Consider the word "world" as we would consider the words "trunk" or "country." At times the word might mean the globe on which we dwell. At others, it might refer to people in the earth, and yet at others, it might describe influences and manners that are observed and found. Scripture highlights these usages quite clearly with the proper context, and therefore, a verse like John 3:16 can be reasoned through with context, Scripture comparison, and a little common sense thrown in.

John 3:16 cannot use the word world to mean the globe itself based on the language of II Peter 3. Peter describes in some detail how the Lord will set fire to the globe itself and burn it up with the contents in it. This will happen in a moment, and all things still within this globe will dissolve forever. Does this sound like the action of a benevolent God toward that which He loves? Common sense answers that handily.

John 3:16 cannot refer to influences and manners due to the language of the verse itself. Too many verses in Scripture talk of Christ's death fulfilling His Father's will to be for people and not objects or intangible influences. Not only that, but John tells us in I John 2 that

there are many influences in the world that are "not of the Father:"*the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.*

Therefore, we are left with the definition of world from this verse to mean people. So, the simple proposition becomes, what people? Is it some or all? Another simple Scripture comparison should answer this from later in the same book (John 17:9). Jesus says He prays for "them" and not the "world." He then distinguishes who "them" are by describing them as those the Father gave Him. Therefore, the "world" from this verse could not possibly be the same people that God loved in John 3:16. What kind of sense would it make that Christ/God would love someone He wouldn't pray for? Again, common sense answers that handily.

So, now I ask you - kind reader - what in the world is all this? What we have attempted to do above is hopefully logical, easy to follow, and above all sound. What makes it so difficult for so many to see? Is it simply a matter of revelation? (Matthew 11:25) Is it a failure to understand rules and usage of language? Is it a lack of common sense? I am no expert, but I suspect it is a combination of all, and with current cultural observation the latter 2 factors sadly become more common. As an engineer in my secular occupation, I am not expected to know a lot about language, and

many of my peers seem amazed at my vocabulary and knowledge of language. I have tried to tell them numerous times that regular, devoted Bible reading can do more for that than other things I know. Sadly, I have observed trends where knowledge of language and understanding of its layers degrades as time marches on.

Now, what in the world do we do? I can think of no better method than to pray for those that God loved so much that His Son died for them if peradventure God may give them a little enlightening and refreshing down within their souls. Perhaps we may be the very tools He utilizes to assist them in coming to proper conclusions based on what the Scriptures teach. It has been and I hope will continue to be my fervent prayer that God would strengthen and add to Zion. Not for our glory, but for the edification of His dear people and the ultimate glory of His good name. While the world will one day be on fire and all the worldly influences gone forever, I'm supremely thankful to belong to a world of people "so loved" and adored by He who needs nothing that He gave everything for that world so that they would live forever at home with Him.

Intercession And Offering

Elder Ronnie Loudermilk

John 17:9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them

which thou hast given me; for they are thine."

In John chapter 17 we read the words the Savior prayed in the hearing of His disciples. These precious words were spoken by the Son of God before He crossed Cedron into Gethsemane and have been a tremendous comfort and blessing to the children of God throughout the generations. The words declare His perfect humility; His love for His children; and ultimate purpose of His coming into this world.

In our study verse we read how the Son of God prayed not for the "world, but for them which thou hast given me." (It might be interesting and profitable to note that the word "world" is found no less than nineteen times in this chapter of the Gospel of John). When reading this verse, our minds are drawn to the Old Testament and the Levitical laws and ordinances. The events which took place in Exodus through Deuteronomy (specifically in Leviticus) are filled with times when the Priests of Israel would make intercessions and offerings. But it should be noted that in each occurrence the offering, whether it be a lamb, goat, bullock or turtle dove, etc., would be made for the same people for whom that priest would make intercessions. In Leviticus chapters 1-6, it was for the people of Israel who had sinned and trespassed; in Leviticus chapter 14, it was a leper; in Leviticus chapter 16 it was for the

congregation of Israel. There is one example of this principal found in Numbers 16:47 that I would ask the reader to consider. In this chapter, through the ambitious counsel of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, many of the children of Israel sinned against the Lord. After the Lord judged the sin, the people which remained began to murmur and blame Moses for wrong rather than confess that their own brothers in Israel had committed a sin against the Lord (Numbers 16:41). When the people gathered together and came against Moses and Aaron, the Lord's glory appeared and covered the tabernacle. The Lord's anger was manifested against the sins of this people as a plague went out to consume them. In verses 46-48 we read: "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." Please notice that the "atonement" was made for the same people for whom Aaron "put on incense". Not a different group, but the same, and it was the same who were saved from the plague of judgement.

In conclusion, when we read John 17:9, we should easily notice the Lord did not pray for the "world". Since the Lord did not make intercession for the "world", it must needs be interpreted that He did not make a sacrifice for the entire "world" the next day on the cross. By us backing up to John 17:2, we can quickly reference the people the Savior would make atonement for on the cross, which is not the entire world, but "to as many as thou hast given him." The Lord's prayer/intercession and His sacrifice are for a common people, the elect (Ephesians 1:4); the predestinated (Romans 8:29-30); the covenant children of God (Psalms 111:9) and these three are the same. Amen!

Meeting Announcement

Smyrna Primitive Baptist Church at Bentley, Illinois, would like to invite you for our annual meeting beginning Friday, June 7, 2019. Service will begin at 7 p.m. on Friday with three services on Saturday with lunch and supper, and services concluding with two services on Sunday. Elder Danny Adcock of Heber Springs, AR, and Elder Ricky Myers of Brookhaven, MS, are the invited ministers. Elder Alan Curtis is the pastor.

The Comforter

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