

MEDINA MESSENGER

HELPING MEDINA COUNTY DISCOVER THE TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD

HAS GOD SHOWN GRACE TO YOU IN VAIN?

ERIC KRIEG

Introduction. “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed” (1 Corinthians 15:9-11). As Paul reflected on his past life as an enemy of Christ and the opportunity he had now been given to be an apostle of Christ, he concluded that this had only been possible by the grace of God – and recognized the true magnitude of God’s grace which had been demonstrated to him. Thus, he determined that he would labor for the Lord faithfully, so that the grace that God had shown to him would not be in vain. But, this statement Paul makes concerning the *possibility* of God’s grace being shown in vain ought to cause each recipient of the grace of God to carefully reflect on his/her own life – to see whether God’s grace has been shown in vain.

The riches of God’s grace shown to you. In 1 Corinthians 15:9-11, Paul helps us to understand what God’s grace looks like! A similar passage to consider is found in 1 Timothy 1:12-17. In these two passages, Paul says that he had blasphemed God, acted violently against others, and even helped to murder Christians. But, that was then... Now, Paul said that God had shown His grace to him – and he could be an apostle of Jesus Christ and minister of the gospel of Christ! Even he found the forgiveness of all his past sins in Jesus Christ, by the grace of God. Therefore, Paul (the chief of sinners, 1 Timothy 1:15) is an example of the great power of God’s grace!

But, I highly doubt that anyone reading this article has been involved in the specific types of

sin Paul had been involved in prior to becoming a Christian. Does that mean God’s grace is any less powerful or rich? No!

Look at Ephesians 2:1-3. You were dead in your trespasses and your sins (just as I was). You were separated from God – and headed for eternal spiritual death in Hell fire as the result of your sin (Romans 6:23; Revelation 21:8). You had lived your life to fulfill your own fleshly desires – and lived contrary to the will of God. So, whether you murdered Christians (like Paul) or whether you told a lie (or any other sin), you were dead in your trespasses and sins! But, Ephesians 2:4-9 goes on to demonstrate how God has made you alive through Jesus Christ, showing His grace and mercy to you! Now, you can be saved from your sins and live eternally in Heaven with God!

What God’s grace must do in your life. God did not show His grace to you so that you could live your life in just any way you desire! Notice Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Of course, prior to becoming a Christian and accessing the grace of God, God required that you hear His word (Romans 10:17), believe (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be immersed in water (Acts 2:38). But, that was only the beginning of what God has expected from you.

Now, as a Christian, He expects your life to be entirely devoted to Him. Notice the following passages and how they relate what God has done for us you what you must do for God:

- Ephesians 4:1: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”

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- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 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.”
- Titus 2:11-14: “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, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

What it means for God’s grace to be shown in vain.

God has made every provision for you to be saved because He has loved you. However, perhaps you are still determined to live your life for yourself.

- Perhaps you are attempting to serve two masters instead of only serving God (Matthew 6:24).
- Perhaps you are not yet prepared to offer your life entirely to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).
- Perhaps you are not yet prepared to deny the desires of your flesh in order to obey God’s commandments (Luke 9:23).
- Perhaps you are not yet willing to sacrifice those things that are precious to you to the Lord’s service (Matthew 19:16-22).
- Perhaps you have become distracted by the cares, riches, or pleasures of life (Luke 8:14)
- Perhaps you have become intimidated by threats and persecutions due to your commitment to the Lord and turned from Him (Mark 4:16-17).
- Perhaps you are allowing other things to become higher priorities than whole-heartedly serving the Lord and obeying His commandments (Matthew 6:33; Luke 14:15-24).
- Perhaps you are allowing other people to steal your allegiance away from the Lord (Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:34-

39).

- Perhaps you are “going through the motions” in your service to God; but, you have lost the fervor you originally had in your service (Revelation 2:4-5).
- Perhaps your service to God could be accurately described as a lukewarm beverage – that has lost its true purpose or meaning (Revelation 3:15-16).

Remember, God’s rich grace is meant to transform your life into what He would have you to be (like it transformed the apostle Paul from a persecutor to a preacher)! But, if you are living in your sin after having been saved by the grace of God, then that rich grace of God has been worthless! No, not because God’s grace was ineffective on your sins; but, because you have turned yourself away from it and have not allowed it to truly work in your life (Galatians 5:4)! To individuals who had once become Christians (accessing the riches of God’s grace), but who were turning away from the faith of the gospel, the Hebrew writer said: “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘The LORD will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Conclusion. Has God shown His grace to you in vain? Or, have you given yourself entirely to Him? Are you willing to do whatever He instructs you to do? Will you make the same commitment that Paul made in Galatians 2:20 when he said: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”?

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