

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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Garage Sale Grace and Flea Market Salvation

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The obvious question is, "What in the world do garage sales and flea markets have to do with grace?" The obvious answer ought to be, "Absolutely nothing!" But such is not the case. Many people today are in search of a bargain even in the religious realm.

The overwhelming success of garage sales and flea markets in today's society demonstrates that many are interested in a bargain. Likewise, in the spiritual realm, many seem to approach the subject of grace with the same bargain hunting frame of mind. They want to obtain the benefits of grace, but they want to do so as cheaply as possible. In truth, their question is: "How little must I give before I can possess it?"

Grace Is Free but Not Cheap

In Ephesians 2:8, 9 and Romans 5:15-18, we find that salvation is by God's grace and cannot be merited by any work which man can perform. But for someone to think the benefits of grace can be had at bargain basement prices is a serious mistake and only serves to demonstrate how that individual has completely misunderstood the subject of grace. The unmerited and gracious gift of God's Son for the redemption of fallen man was not something that was deserved by any thing man has done or ever could do. It comes as a free gift from God and is completely unmerited by man, but this is not to say it is not without great cost on the part of both God and man. Does this all seem confusing to you? Are you wondering how something can be free yet costly? Then maybe you are confusing the physical and spiritual realms. Let's spend some time considering the cost of God's grace.

What It Cost God

Our God and Heavenly Father 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" (John 3:16, 17). The Father gave His Son and the Son gave His life; but there is more. The relationship the Father and Son had enjoyed throughout eternity (John 1:1) was disrupted (Philippians 2:5-8) so that man could be justified (Romans 3:26). When one begins to contemplate the great sacrifice of both the Father and the Son, one is simply overwhelmed by the great cost of this thing called grace.

What It Costs Man

One gets an insight into what the "free gift" of salvation costs man when, in Matthew 13:44,45, our Lord said: "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath

found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and seeketh all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” To receive the benefits of grace, one must be willing to give all that one has, i.e., “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24). In other words, in order to receive the benefits of God's grace, the Lord requires a complete sacrifice of our lives to Him (Romans 12:1, 2).

The blood-bought are aware of the marvelous price God paid so that He could bestow His grace upon them (I Corinthians 6:19,20), and know they are under obligation to the Giver of this grace to walk in the footsteps of Jesus (I Peter 2:21-23). When one truly understands the great value of grace, he will give all that he has to possess it, knowing that there is no way he could ever really pay for it. It is within this context that the Lord said: “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light” (Matthew 11:29, **30**). He is not saying there is no work (i.e., righteousness) to be performed, but that when compared with the benefits to be received such righteousness is easy and light. In other words, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Cheap Prices

When grace is reduced to a doctrine, principle, or system it is cheapened, and those who engage in such endeavors demonstrate a real lack of understanding about this subject. The religious world is full of flea market salvation and garage sale grace. Belief in God (viz., mental assent), we are told by some, is all that is necessary for one to receive the remission of his sins. The benefits of grace can be possessed, they say, without repentance, baptism, and a continual “walking in the light.” Furthermore, these “faith only” advocates tell us that once one has received the blessings of God's grace and been saved from his past sins he can never fall from such grace so as to be lost. In addition to being a clear contradiction of Scripture (cf. Galatians 5:4), such teaching cheapens grace and ultimately makes it nothing more than a cloak for evil-doing.

There are those who call themselves Christians today who have no concept of discipleship. They wish to join themselves to local churches of Christ but they do not intend to submit to church discipline. To those like this, the apostle Paul wrote: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:7-9).

That which has cost God so much cannot be cheap for us. It must be seen as the priceless gift it is. Although we give all we have to possess it, it is ours because God gave it to us. Let us always be determined to keep grace in its proper perspective, remembering what it cost our Heavenly Father and His only begotten Son. Let us be determined never to reduce grace to simply a theological system to be memorized. Let us teach that grace must be accepted on God's terms and not man's. In so doing, we will never become involved in that which is worthless, namely, bargain basement salvation!