

AMERICA'S HOPE

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"MARVELOUS, INFINITE, MATCHLESS GRACE"

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Grace is a virtue as eternal as God is. We are introduced to grace as early as Genesis 6:8. There we learn that Noah "found grace in the sight of the Lord." Throughout the Old Scriptures we read of those who similarly experienced God's grace. When we come to the New Scriptures, particularly the Epistles, grace is a very frequently used term.

There is a grace that can be added by a mental process of determination and development which is commendable, but that is not the grace of God. The grace of God is a virtue which God gives as a gift. It is heaven sent and not something we assume or develop. God's grace is the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon upon and within the life of its recipient.

Noah appropriated much of God's grace. His task was not an easy task. Estimate, if you will, the amount of grace required to preach for one hundred and twenty years to a generation steeped in unbelief and rebellion toward God, for that is what Noah did. Imagine the ridicule this prophet of God endured from his generation. We have reason to believe that skepticism and atheism greeted him hand in hand for only eight persons, the members of his immediate household, believed Noah's God-inspired warning and thus escaped the Deluge.

Grace can be likened to a two-way thoroughfare. God meets the honest attitude in human grace by giving His grace to guide and sustain the heart turned toward Him. "Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord." He stood alone; God's grace sustained him. Noah was neither embittered nor discouraged, for God's grace sweetened his experience. He built the ark in compliance to the will and command of God; God's grace added trust and obedience. The result of finding grace in the sight of God brought salvation to Noah and his house while the graceless and the Godless perished.

One might ask, "Did God show grace toward Noah only"? Decidedly not. God manifested much grace to the rebellious and skeptical when He directed Noah for one hundred and twenty years to warn them of impending judgment. No flesh

escapes the grace of God, but they may reject it which is what Noah's generation did. They willfully, deliberately refused the mercy God proffered.

Grace is one of the most outstanding of Christian virtues. It adorned the early church in rich measure. We read concerning this body of believers that "great grace was upon them all." This measure of great grace came as a result of the heaven-sent outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So great was the grace of God in their midst that "neither was there among them any lack."

Grace is beautiful in operation. Its Divine influence upon the heart is reflected in the life of him who possesses it. Grace breeds joy and pleasure of heavenly nature. God adds generosity, kindness and graciousness to a personality. Where grace abounds serenity and peace are found.

Paul admonished the Christian at Colosse in this manner with respect to God's grace. "Let Christian wisdom rule your behavior to the outside world; make the very most of your time; let your talk always have a saving salt of grace about it, and learn how to answer any question put to you." (Colossians 4:4 and 6, Moffatt Translation)

Writing to Timothy, the young man he addressed as "my own son in the faith," Paul says, "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." That believers can appropriate grace becomes clear from such a passage as this.

Peter has a word of instruction to offer in I Peter 4:7 through 10 wherein he tells the believers they are stewards of the manifold grace of God. Think of the responsibility such stewardship holds. Listen to Peter:

"Now, the end of all is near. Steady then, keep cool and pray! Above all be keen to love one another, for love hides a host of sins. Be hospitable to each other, and never grudge it. You must serve one another, each with the talent he has received as efficient stewards of God's varied grace." (Moffatt Translation)

Paul's boast positionally and provisionally rests upon the grace of God. Everything Paul was or hoped to be he ascribed to the grace of