

THE REFLECTOR

DECEMBER 1979
Vol. 19/ No.12

WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER

Juven Lee

P. O. Box 866
Hartselle, Ala. 35640



The Pharisees said unto our Lord, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:3-5). This is God's law, and no man can transgress this law of marriage without grievous sin.

God willed that the two marriage companions become one flesh and that they continue to be happily united as long as they shall live. In a wedding two people are legally bound. In our generation there is the question as to how long the union will last. We repeat: it should last until death.

Let not man break this tie which God has recognized. It is an outgrowth of God's will for the good of mankind. The two people are held together by strong cords from the two lives if the counsel of God is understood and followed. There are many things said in the sacred writing about the principals that are joined together when two well taught and deserving young people marry.

She is to recognize the husband as the head of the family. This is not stated as a facetious remark, nor as an affirmation in a debate over women's liberation. This is the will of God Himself. He knows that the home should have a head, and He wills that man should take this responsibility. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ

is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:22-25). This is not the thinking of modern infidels, but it is wisdom's way. The same Bible includes the rule that the husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church. Men are to love their wives as their own bodies. Christ gave Himself for the church (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33). If the husband loves his wife as here suggested her submission will not be a galling experience. It will be more a matter of her coming under his strong arm for protection. Her submission and his love are joined together, and what God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

Titus 2:3-5 asked aged women to teach younger women to love their husbands. The same Holy Spirit guided Peter in pointing out the fact that husbands should honor their wives as also being heirs of salvation. The husband, in recognizing her worth and merit, and in realizing that she is the weaker vessel, gladly becomes her protector. His honor and respect for her, and her love for him, bind the two together as one unit. Neither has a desire to be free. Each complements the other. Each needs the other. They are happy together. Let nothing destroy his respect for her, nor her love for him. God hath joined them together.

There is much work to be done in maintaining and keeping a home, and each has much room for gratitude as this willing work is accomplished. It is right that man should provide for his own. He is worse than an infidel if he will not (1 Tim. 5:8). The beautiful word picture of the worthy woman given in Proverbs 31 shows her working willingly with her hands as she looks to the ways of her household. She is full of good works (1 Tim. 2:10; Acts 9:36). How can marriage succeed if neither is willing to work and to be thoughtful in showing gratitude for the work of the other? Gratitude expressed makes work easier. Cheerful and unselfish work makes gratitude natural. God has joined these things together. Let not man put them asunder. When a happy husband says, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all," his wife goes to work with renewed vigor. Her pleasant gratitude pays him well for all he does for her. When willing work meets joyful expressions of gratitude divorce is unthinkable.

SALVATION BY GRACE

James R. Cope

In Titus 2:11-13 we read, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" This passage affirms that the grace of God that brings salvation **teaches** us. The salvation here mentioned is obviously salvation from sin and its power. There is a grace of God, however, that does not bring salvation from sin, and from its operation we can gain a good idea of the meaning of grace in its spiritual implications.

The word **grace** simply means "favor." Actually we live and move and have our physical being by the grace of God. By His grace we breathe air. By His grace we eat food to satisfy hunger. By His grace we drink water to quench thirst. Every physical blessing may be properly ascribed to the grace of God.

It is equally true that this grace by which we live is unmerited. This means that there is nothing inherent about sinful man which obligates God to bestow His favor upon him. Man has not and cannot do anything to obligate God to him apart from God's self-chosen love and will toward man. This is as true spiritually as physically.

If man lives by God's grace he cannot be passive toward that grace. God provides food but man must eat it. God provides water, but man must drink it. God provides air but man must breathe it. God does not force His grace upon man in the physical realm; neither does He force His grace upon man in spiritual matters.

Grace Teaches

The passage under consideration (Titus 2:11) declares that God's grace teaches. This statement harmonizes with every other passage in the Bible having to do with man's salvation. It was and is through the process of **teaching** that God reveals His interest in and love for sinful men. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). After man, by his own inventions, learning, wisdom and philosophy had demonstrated the utter foolishness of trying to save himself Jehovah interposed the gospel to do for man that which he had not done and could never do for and by himself. Thus Jesus spoke: "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jno. 3:16), and Paul declares: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). The grace of God then, reveals itself in the gospel and the gospel can save none who refuses to believe it. This is exactly the point the apostle makes in Ephesians 2:8 when he says, "By grace are ye saved through faith." This is the same grace of Titus 2:11 — the grace "that bringeth salvation," the grace that **teaches**.

With these thoughts before us it is not difficult to understand why Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15), and "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Teaching or preaching the gospel was the means by which God's grace was to be made known to the peoples of earth. For man to reject the gospel, then, is to rebel at the grace of God which brings salvation.

Teaching the gospel is necessary, but teaching alone can profit none whatever. Where teaching falls on deaf ears and stubborn hearts it is as seed sown on hardened, wayside soil (Matt. 13:4). There must be a hearing of the Word, a hearing whose disposition is to heed, if the teaching is to profit; hence, Jesus not only said to His disciples, "Take heed what you hear," but also, "Take heed how you hear." A receptive heart is a necessity if grace's teaching is to enlighten it.

Grace Demands Faith

Just as one cannot come to God without believing that "God is" and that He rewards them who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6), so one cannot come to Jesus Christ without believing He is the Son of God (Jno. 5:39, 40; 6:28-47; 8:21-24). The heart indisposed to hearing and learning can never be drawn to God in this condition (Jno. 6:44, 45). As long as there is no will to learn the teaching there cannot possibly be any faith to save, and for the word to profit it must be learned (Jno. 6:45) with a view to believing and doing what it says (Jno. 7:17), because apart from faith in it, the word cannot profit those who hear it (Heb. 4:2).

The grace of God, then, provides the means for man's redemption from sin, but man in sin must appropriate this means (the gospel) by hearing, learning, and believing it. This argues that man is not passive but active in his salvation. For him to be otherwise is to make of him a mere machine, wholly without power to discern or choose between good and evil. If he is altogether passive he could not save himself if he would, and he would not if he could. In such condition if man is lost he cannot help it and if he is saved he cannot prevent it. If we deny man's activity in salvation we thereby deny his free moral agency, and if man, as God made him, is not a free moral agent with power to choose between good and evil and thereby determine his own eternal destiny, the entire Bible is useless. All its pleadings, overtures and invitations plus all its warnings, threats and commandments are but sounding brass and clanging cymbals — they are empty, absurd and wasted. There is not one passage in the Bible which indicates man is not free to choose between good and evil, between God and Satan, between salvation and damnation. It is this one consideration which gives grace its efficacy as that grace is revealed in the gospel. The gospel is powerless to save him who refuses to believe it. It is God's chosen medium to save him who does believe it.

Grace and Works

"But," asks one, "does not Paul declare in Ephesians 2:8, '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?' Indeed the Apostle so states, but instead of this passage teaching that salvation is of grace without man's activity, it affirms the exact opposite. Notice the expression 'through faith.' Salvation is by **grace through faith**, not by grace **without** faith. The grace is God's part, the faith man's.

Then what about the expression: "that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast?" Obviously, though man is active in salvation his salvation comes neither through his own wisdom (I Cor. 1:21), his own merit (Rom. 3:9-19), nor his own works as is the clear implication of the passage before us. God does the saving, not man. Jehovah has designed the plan of salvation, has revealed it to man in the gospel, and has invited man to embrace it. When man in sin accepts the divine plan and conforms his life thereto, by virtue of this action he acknowledges his own inability to design or execute a plan for saving himself. Though he submits to the will of God, salvation is not **of himself** but **of God**; hence it is "not of works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Tit. 3:5).

If finite man could save himself through his own wisdom or his own standard of righteousness he would have whereof to boast even before God. This is exactly what Paul declares in I Corinthians, Chapter 1, man has not done and can never do. As indicated above, God designed and perfected the plan for man's redemption; hence, salvation is not and cannot be by the works of man apart from God's revelation and, therefore, man cannot boast about his salvation.

"It (salvation) is the gift of God" in exactly the same sense that Jesus Christ is the gift of God. "God so loved the world that he **gave** his only begotten Son" (Jno. 3:16), but because God gave His Son it does not follow that all the world receives Him. Actually, Jesus Christ is God's "offer" of a Savior and cannot be a "gift" unless and until He is accepted. So it is with salvation. Salvation is "offered" to sinners through the gospel but does not become and cannot properly be a gift until accepted or appropriated. Man's action or inaction with reference to God's offer is that which determines salvation's remaining an "offer" or becoming a "gift." Here again we see salvation predicated on man's disposition or will toward it.

Grace and Baptism

Sometimes we are told that if one must be baptized in order to be saved, salvation is made to depend upon a work of man, not on the grace of God. The fallacy in this reasoning is easily detected when we remember that baptism is **not** a work of man. While it is true that man is active in submitting to baptism, it is not true that baptism had its origin or continues its purpose in the wisdom or works of men. The Lord Jesus once asked the stubborn Jews a timely question about the baptism administered by John the Baptist. Said he, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (Matt. 21:25). Obviously, John's baptism came from God (Jno. 1:33), not

from men. This being true, Jews submitting to it were doing the work of God. In like manner, when sinners are baptized at the command of Jesus Christ, they are doing the work of God, not the work of men for baptism exists now by order of God, not by order of men (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21). On another occasion the Jews asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent" (Jno. 6:28,29). One may ask, "How can this be true? In what sense can one do the work of God when he believes on Jesus Christ?" The answer is clear if we will remember that God thus commands it. Anytime we do what God commands because He ordered it we are working the work of God. This is equally true of believing on His Son, repenting of sins, confessing faith in Christ with the mouth, being baptized, partaking of the Lord's supper, or doing anything else which God commands.

Grace and the Erring Child

The same passage (Tit. 3:5) which speaks of the grace which brings salvation from past sins demands that those who are thus pardoned must deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2:11-12). The **nature** of God's grace does not change because a man is delivered in baptism from the guilt and power of past sins. The same God who extends His grace conditionally to the alien saved by faith extends conditionally His grace to His child in his failure to be guarded by faith unto whatever salvation he receives in heaven which he does not have on earth.

In principle that which is true of the alien saved by God's grace is also true of the saint saved by God's grace. When Paul said, "Now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11), he sets forth salvation in **three tenses** — present ("now"), future ("nearer"), and past ("than when we first believed"). Peter speaks of the future salvation in heaven when he describes the "living hope" of the believer. He calls it "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Peter 1:3-5). This same salvation has not yet become a reality for he says saints should "as newborn babes long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (I Peter 2:2). These are "guarded through faith" because they "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7).

Christians not only "walk by faith" but God's children must "walk in the light" (I Jno. 1:6). In fact, to "walk by faith" is to "walk in the light" since a Christian's faith comes through hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). In the sinful act God's child does not walk by faith for in sinning he does not walk by God's word; hence, he is walking in darkness.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3)? How many sins must be committed for one to be out of step with God? In Acts 8:20-23 Simon's "thought to obtain the gift of God with money" was enough "wickedness" to place

him "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity" and, according to Apostle Peter, his single sin demanded that he "repent of this thy wickedness and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee." If this child of God had to repent and pray for forgiveness of one sin, in the absence of apostolic teaching to the contrary, can any other disciple be forgiven of any sin apart from his repentance and prayer? If so, by whose authority and by what process — by faith or by feeling?

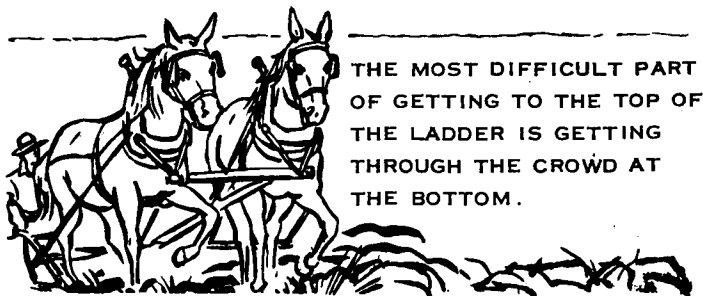
Certainly Apostle John tells us that "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sins" but the same apostle in the same context says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jno. 1:7-9). When did the blood of Jesus cleanse Simon of his sin — **before** or **when** he repented and prayed for forgiveness? Let us not forget that the same Apostle John was present when Peter told Simon to repent and pray! If the blood of Jesus Christ does not cleanse an alien of sin until he repents and is baptized, why should any person think the same blood of God's Son will cleanse a child of God of sin until he repents and prays?

Truly "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (Rom. 5:20), but grace is nowhere pictured in the Bible as saving anybody anywhere anytime from one sin, few sins, or many sins apart from the guilty sinner's meeting the Lord's stipulated conditions of forgiveness! If anyone knows any instance when God forgave or promised to forgive His child's

sin apart from repentance and prayer by that child, that person will render all of God's children a great service by enlightening them on the whereabouts of that scripture. If and when one affirms that God's grace overlooks unconfessed sins under any condition, why isn't that one "playing God"? If God has said He will forgive His child who has repented of a sin and prayed for forgiveness, who has the right to say God will forgive His impenitent, non-petitioning child who has sinned?

If a disciple who has sinned does not need grace, who does? If he is not in need of mercy when guilty, who is? If a child of God is not in need of forgiveness following sin, how can one ever be in need of anything? If Hebrews 11:16 is not addressed to such a person, then there is no Bible text involving God, Christ, the grace of God, a child of God, the child's sin, and the child's forgiveness! Lest we forget, here it is: "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."

Brethren, let us keep up our "prayer-line."



A monthly publication of the **Fultondale Church of Christ** meeting at 2005 Elkwood Drive, Fultondale, Alabama. Our mailing address is 3004 Brakefield Drive, Fultondale, Alabama 35068. Edited by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Second Class
Postage Paid
at Fultondale,
AL 35068

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

<i>Bible Classes</i>	9:45 AM
<i>Worship</i>	10:45 AM
<i>Worship</i>	6:30 PM

WEDNESDAY:

<i>Ladies Bible Class (Oct-May)</i>	10:00 AM
<i>Bible Classes</i>	7:30 PM