

# Graceless Preaching?

(Ephesians 1:6)

- Introduction: 1. In book that was written not too long ago by a brother in Christ, this author described the preaching done in churches of Christ as being “harsh and graceless.”
- a. “The sermons just seemed so harsh and graceless...If you were going to preach in the 1940’s and 50’s in the Churches of Christ, you had better be able to quote at least seventy-five verses per sermon or you were out on your ear in no time. Never mind that they didn’t fit the context of your message, that was irrelevant, you just had to be able to string them together and spit them out fast enough to let folks know that you were the right source for all of their Bible-thumping needs. Likewise, the messages had to be ‘hot.’ If you finished your sermon without mentioning hell at least ten times and associating other denominations with the same, then you were liberal.”
2. I happen to know the author who wrote this and I find it interesting that he wasn’t even alive during the time he said our preaching was so harsh and graceless.
  3. I would imagine that preachers from that era grow tired of hearing young men who haven’t yet proven themselves worthy to carry their coat, harshly critiquing their preaching.
  4. To me, such criticisms and caricatures indicate to me that someone doesn’t understand the nature of God’s grace.
  5. So let’s discuss a few things about God’s grace.

## I. **Salvation is not earned**

- A. For years we have sung the song, “O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing,” which has the line, “Oh to grace how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be. Let thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee.”
- B. In recent years, I’ve heard many people charge gospel preachers of believing and preaching that salvation is earned.
- C. I deny such a charge as being an accurate representation of preaching over the past 50 years.
  1. How do they arrive at such a conclusion? Counting words.
  2. The “Core Gospel.”
- D. Did you know Jesus never once used the word grace in the gospel accounts? Did he understand it? Did he preach it?
  1. “Now just how often the word grace should be mentioned is difficult to say. However, it is noteworthy that Jesus never mentioned the word: not in the Sermon on the Mount, not in His cutting sermon in Matthew 23, not in His parables, not in His prayers, not in His miracles, not in His temptations with Satan, not in sending out the 70, not in giving the Great Commission, and

not in giving the promise of the resurrection and heaven. Wonder why He never mentioned it? Could it be that He knew the problem of salvation is not with grace, but with man, and that he was focusing on the urgent issue of saving and lifting man?"-- Leroy Brownlow

- E. (Ephesians 2:8).
- F. Laboring under the impression you must somehow earn your salvation is not only oppressive, but it must be insulting to God.
- G. Why are we indebted to grace? Because the glory of his grace has made us accepted in his beloved! (Ephesians 1:6).

## **II. Grace obligates**

- A. Many today use grace as an excuse for looseness or as a license to sin.
- B. (Romans 5:20-6:1).
  - 1. Ills. Of sermon wherein preacher said we need to quit telling young people "no" and tell them of God's forgiveness.
  - 2. While we thank God for his forgiveness, something even better than forgiveness is holiness and purity and not needing to ask for forgiveness because we did the right thing!
- C. Grace obligates us (Titus 2:11-12).

## **III. Our indebtedness to grace demands we persevere.**

- A. Adversity should not dissuade us, but rather should be expected and if viewed properly, even embraced!
- B. (2 Timothy 3:12; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; 1 Peter 4:12-14).
- C. Ills. of going to Heaven and standing with Paul, Stephen, James, etc.
- D. (Luke 17:7-10).

- Conclusion:
- 1. Friends, if one is headed toward Hell, and gaining momentum and I warn them, and describe to them their ultimate destination if they do not change, is that graceless preaching?
  - 2. If in my preaching I expose moral and doctrinal errors that jeopardize one's salvation, is that graceless preaching?
  - 3. It is a strange view of grace that would demand a gospel preacher not to warn one as he headed toward destruction, but to sooth them with pleasant words and amusing stories.
  - 4. May we always live with an ever present sense of our sinfulness and what it cost God to redeem us.