

## The Book of Ephesians

The book of Ephesians seems to encompass everything that the Christian is, what he will experience, and how he is to overcome against the ancient foe, the devil. The theme of the book of Ephesians is found at chapter 1:7, “*in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.*” Paul identified the conditional grace of God that saves man’s soul, and he proceeded to develop this principle around the Christian’s relationship to grace. Grace is therefore a thematic part of the book of Ephesians. By the grace of God man is saved; however, we are responsible for approaching God’s gracious offer of salvation with intelligence.

The Book of Ephesians helps us understand principles of God’s grace. First, we find that God’s gracious offer to forgive man of his sins (Eph. 1:7) is made manifest to mankind through the gospel message (Eph. 1:13-14). This gospel was distributed to mankind through the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:3-5). The Ephesians had heard and believed the gospel message (Eph. 4:20-21), repented of past sinful ways, and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38 tells us what one must do to receive the forgiveness of one’s sins and have access into God’s grace). God “*gave*” the Ephesians the forgiveness of their sins when they complied with His instructions (cf. Eph. 2:8; 3:7; Titus 2:11-12).

One may ask, “how is God’s grace ‘given’ if we must do something (i.e., be baptized) to receive His gift?” One may also ask the inquirer, “how is it that God told Abraham, “*Unto thy seed will I give this land:*” (i.e., the land of Canaan) (Gen. 12:7) yet from this chapter to Joshua 21 we find bloody warfare on the part of Israel and Canaan over the land? When the wars were over, the Bible tells us, “so Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein” (Josh. 21:43). Note that during these wars for Canaan, God told Joshua that He had “*given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor...*” yet then requested that Joshua and Israel go to war to take the city (Josh 6:2ff). Later in the history of Israel, God told Namaan that he would heal his leprosy **if** he would wash in the Jordan seven times (II Kings 5). Why did Jesus tell the blind man of John 9:7 that he would be healed **if** he would “*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam...*”? Could it be that man is justified (forgiven of sins; i.e., is a recipient of God’s grace) through an obedient faith in Jesus Christ? Each case in the Old and New Testament that deals with God and His promises reveals a common factor of an individual being asked to obey God’s commands that he or she may receive His favor. Grace works no different today. Those who truly love truth and God will have no problem complying with God’s instructions and are thereby justified of sins by an obedient faith as was Abraham (cf. Gen. 18:19; 22:18; 26:4-5; Heb. 11:8).

The book of Ephesians reveals the church of Jesus Christ to be associated with God’s grace as well. The foundation of the church is truth (Eph. 2:20ff). Truth is the common denominator in God’s plan to save man from the consequences of their sins (Eph. 2:20ff). Paul revealed that there is only one truth and therefore only one acceptable church of God’s people (Eph. 4:1ff). The one true church has no spots or wrinkles because Jesus has washed them away with His sacrifice. Man gains access into God’s grace through baptism and continued prayer and supplication (Rom. 5:1ff; Eph. 5:26ff). When one is baptized for the forgiveness of his sins, he is added unto the Lord’s church (cf. Acts 2:41).

Lastly, we learn from the book of Ephesians that each man is responsible for his actions. God’s conditional grace, His standard of truth, and His one church prove that God has set a standard with which man must comply. Paul spoke often in the book of Ephesians of a specified walk based upon God’s standard of truth (cf. Eph. 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). God’s laws, as opposed to man’s imagination, are to govern man’s actions. I am, therefore, to “*walk worthy of the calling wherewith I was called*” (Eph. 4:1ff). Seeing that Grace is conditional and I am to walk by God standards, I am to arm myself to the teeth so that when false teaching and the tempting vices of Satan come my way, I may be able to raise my shield of faith and slash the devil and his demonic angels in pieces with the sword of truth (Eph. 6:10-20). Let us all continue to battle the devil and his demons that we may receive the crown of victory one day; i.e., a home in heaven.

The overall lesson we learn from Ephesians is that God’s gracious gift of salvation will not be wholly obtained until one has run life’s race faithfully and successfully defeated Satan and his demonic angels. When Jesus comes again, He will take faithful Christian’s home to glory (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18).