

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

What Grace Teaches Us!

By Stan Cox

The apostle Paul wrote to Titus, explaining that God’s grace has something to teach us. Let us read the text, and then make some points:

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

First, we need to understand how grace teaches. It is simple, the gift of grace is great. It is great in its benefits. God’s gift of His Son as our Redeemer affords us a hope of eternal life! It is great in its sacrifice. God’s giving of His Son was a great sacrifice in that Jesus was the only begotten of the Father, and God loved His Son. It is great in what it reveals to us about God. He loves us! He gave us everything we need to deal with our sin. He wants every living soul to go to heaven, and so has gifted us with grace, so that we can obtain what we ourselves could not possibly receive on our own merit. So, the gift of grace impresses the thoughtful because of its significance, sacrifice and its absolute necessity for our redemption.

As we contemplate this truth, it makes certain things evident. We need to respond to God’s will for us, as a proper response of thanksgiving. This means to live ***“soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.”*** God created us to serve Him. He defines holiness, and expects us to try and attain it. ***“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’”*** (1 Peter 1:15-16). We need to look for the second coming of Jesus. Here, looking does not indicate peering up into the sky, but being prepared for what is inevitable. ***“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”*** (2 Peter 3:10).

Finally, let us consider that this grace is universally given. This was a truth that was hard for some to grasp in the infancy of the kingdom, but it clearly ***“has appeared to all men.”*** As Paul wrote, ***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”*** (Galatians 3:28). It does not matter your culture, race, position in society or gender. If you belong to Christ, you have the hope of heaven.

Consider what the Father and the Son have done for you. Consider the impossibility of presenting yourself unto God as one of His ***“chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people”*** (1 Peter 2:9), without the gift of grace. And then learn and apply the lesson! ■

What is the Purpose of Baptism?

By Heath Rogers

Many people believe and teach that we are saved without water baptism. They will tell us that baptism is important, and that we should be baptized someday, but it is not necessary for our salvation. Is this true?

If baptism is not necessary for our salvation, what is it for? There is a reason behind everything that God tells us to do. We all understand that baptism is a part of the gospel of Christ. What does the Bible say baptism is for?

1. Saves Us. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Notice, the Lord did not say, “He who believeth is saved and should be baptized.” The Lord placed baptism before salvation. Man places it after. The apostle Peter said, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:21).

2. Remission of Sins. “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). Remission, or forgiveness, of sins comes after baptism, not before.

3. Washes Away Our Sins. “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). According to this verse, when Ananias found Saul in Damascus, Saul was still in his sins. Yet, we hear people today affirm that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus. How can people be saved from their sins while still being in their sins? That just does not make sense. This verse plainly says that baptism washes away our sins.

4. Contact the Death of Christ. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). It was at His death that the blood of Christ was shed. We contact that cleansing blood, shed at His death, through baptism.

5. Places Us in Christ. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). Paul said that every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places was found in Christ, blessings which include the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:3, 7). How do we get into Christ? The Bible says we are baptized into Christ.

6. Places Us in the Church. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). The church is identified as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). The only way we enter the church is through baptism. Since the church is the body of Christ, the same thing would place us in both.

Think seriously about our question. The Bible plainly identifies the purpose for baptism. Have you been baptized for the remission of your sins? ■



“He Preached Right At Me”

By James Hahn

I have heard this statement made many times by individuals who have just heard a sermon presented which exposed some wrong in their lives. Did you ever wonder why anyone would feel that the preacher had “preached right at” him?

Suppose the preacher has just preached against lying. Who in the audience will feel that he has preached right at him? It could only be one who is guilty of lying. The same would hold true on any other subject.

What we need to do is examine the things taught in the light of God’s word. If we find them to be true we should accept them. If they expose some wrong in our life we need to change and thank God that there is someone concerned enough about our soul to teach us what we need to hear. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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