

# *God's Marvelous Grace*

by Tom Wacaster

"For by grace have ye been saved though faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory' (Eph. 2:8-9). These words have been the center of controversy for as long as I can remember. Denominational theologians, and in recent years some of our own brethren have suggested that man is saved solely on the basis of grace; that no man can "contribute one whit to his salvation." This of course is false on the very surface of it. One need simply take a look at the numerous passages which lay at the feet of each and every individual the responsibility to act on that which he has come to know and believe (Phil. 2:12, 2 Thess. 1:7-9, Acts 17:30-31, 2 Cor. 5:10). If man plays absolutely no role whatsoever in his salvation, then all men must eventually be saved for "the grace of God hath appeared unto all men" (Titus 2:11).

Yes, the doctrine of salvation by grace has been abused, maligned, and perverted. But we must avoid the temptation to swing too far to the right while attempting to make a correction toward center. Balance demands the recognition of both parties involved in salvation, namely the divine and human sides of salvation. When we speak of God's grace, we are speaking of the divine side of salvation. Someone has said, ""Grace is that quality of God which gives us what we do not deserve while mercy is that quality which does not give us what we do deserve." God saves us by grace, not by obligation. The only obligation that God has to save man is that obligation that is self imposed. He is not obligated by outside forces. What you or I do in compliance to God's commands does not in any way obligate God, or place Him in debt to us. But since He has promised that He will save those who believe and obey, He has placed upon Himself the obligation to follow through on His promises. What great comfort there is in knowing that we serve a God Who never lies, and Who always keeps His promises. There is great consolation in knowing that we do not have to depend upon our own self righteousness to make it to heaven. Were that the case, then quite frankly, none of us would ever see so much as the shadow of that heavenly portal to which we have set our hopes and our hearts. The key here is this little word "depend." It is a matter of in what or in Whom we place our trust and confidence. It is summed up in the word "faith."

Paul clearly states that we are saved by grace, through faith. Faith is the medium by which we gain access to the wonderful grace of God. Here is the human side of salvation. When the two are combined, the result is man's salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Clovis Chappell once wrote, "God measures us not by our achievements, but by our longings to achieve. He judges us not by what we have in our hands, but what we have in our hearts. He crowns us not for the great task that we actually accomplished, but for the great task that we long to accomplish." The beloved poet Browning said, "It is not what man does, but what man would do that exalts him." When we sing the words, "My Savior pardoned me and now I onward go; I know He'll take me thro' tho' I am weak and poor," we are speaking of God's Marvelous Grace.