

Struggle & Grace

Objectives

Know about the divine grace of God and how to keep it

References

- ❖ “Divine Grace” by Father Tadros Malaty
- ❖ “Salvation in the Orthodox Understanding” by HH Pope Shenouda III

Scriptural Verse:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2: 8)

Lesson Outlines

Grace in the Old Testament

- ❖ It is declared by revealing that God chose Israel only in His free and unlimited love as God bestows Himself upon them as Father and Saviour forever (Deuteronomy 7:7)
- ❖ It is used in the Psalms as an appeal to God’s favor and kindness to hear prayers
- ❖ God had revealed His friendship to man, and attributed Himself to His people who were close to Him like Moses and Abraham

Grace in the New Testament (God’s self-giving)

- ❖ It is God’s unmerited love towards man, which is revealed in the Person, words and works of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is the self-giving of God to man.
- ❖ It is a communion between the Holy Spirit and man to work together (2 Corinthians 13: 14).
- ❖ The word “grace” appears in the New Testament 152 times. It is said about the Lord Jesus’ teachings that men have wondered at the words of grace. His words were words of grace about grace.
- ❖ Grace is attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, for the Father revealed His redeeming grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace (Romans 3:23-24)
- ❖ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is marked by its sin conquering power (Romans 5:20-21).
- ❖ Grace is God’s presence and action in our actual lives to reach the heavenly life

Grace of Renewal

- ❖ The grace of God is a grace of the continuous renewal of our nature by the Holy Spirit, who grants us the close unity with the Father in the Son.
- ❖ In the Lord Jesus Christ, we attain the “New Life”, free of sin, as a divine grace. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- ❖ By the divine grace, we became members of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ and have the power to practice the saintly life (Romans 6:13).

- † He suffered to prepare freedom for those who suffer in Him;
- † He became weak for us, that we might rise with power;
- † He descended into Hades, that He might bestow on us immortality

Free Grace and Free Choice

- ❖ Grace is the gift of God to undeserved men (Ephesians 2: 8)
- ❖ This free gift is not granted to men by force, or to careless souls, but it is offered freely to all men, to act in those who seriously desire it. Man has the choice to accept or reject it.
- ❖ God respects men's freedom, and exercises no force in salvation. No one will be saved against his will. Those who are foreordained were foreordained because God knew before the creation of the world that they would be righteous.
- ❖ The kingdom of God is not for the slack or the sleepers; the "violent takes it by force,"
- ❖ God's grace is not given to those who lack zeal in the cause of good, nor can human nature achieve virtue without help from above.
- ❖ God only requires of us the things that are in our power.

Universal Grace

- ❖ God who is love will reveal Himself to all, redeem all, so that everyone may accept Him and will have a share in His divine life, "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Growth or Loss of Grace

- ❖ Believers cannot do good deeds without God's grace, and in the same time God who grants man free will as the noblest gift, does not work in him unwillingly.
- ❖ The believer who accepts it must enjoy continuous growth in grace, otherwise he loses it. Therefore, St. Paul says, "Do not quench Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19)
- ❖ We are in need every day to practice the grace of God as if it were new every time. St. Paul and St. Peter used to say in their epistles "Grace to you and peace from God" not because they lacked grace but they were in need to increase and grow more in grace (e.g., 1 Peter 1:2)
- ❖ God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). St. Peter admonishes us to be humble to enjoy more grace (1 Peter 5:5) while St. Paul warns us not to despise the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29)
- ❖ The departure from virtue gives place for the unclean spirit. (Matthew 12: 43- 45)
- ❖ When a man despises the grace given to him, he delivers himself over to his lusts. "cursed is he who does the work of the Lord carelessly" (Jeremiah 48:10)
- ❖ A servant of the Lord should be diligent, careful and burning like a flame, to destroy all carnal sins and be able to draw near to God "A Consuming Fire" (Hebrews 12:29)
- ❖ God praised those who increase the grace twofold. He requires us to take effort to render Him His own fruits, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace" (Galatians 5:22)

Divine Grace and Our Life

Grace is God's self-giving to man to enjoy life, not only during worship, but all day and night long wherever he is and whatever he is doing by which:

- ❖ The believer gets rid of many problems like the feeling of loneliness as God fills him.
- ❖ He never suffers from the feeling of inferiority as the divine grace always reminds him of his Father, the Almighty and that he is an adopted son of God and a kingly person.
- ❖ He receives God's self-giving to him... He does not only enjoy it but also he himself becomes able to practice self-giving.
- ❖ He practices perfect love as self-giving not as a commandment but as his new nature
- ❖ The divine grace illuminates his inner sight, renews his thoughts and understanding
- ❖ He adopts God's view to everything, to find that the world is good and beautiful, and he joyfully lives here and has a pleasant look towards this temporal world.
- ❖ By grace he does not despise his body, senses, emotions, etc., but he acknowledges the divine gifts granted to him and can be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Through grace he acknowledges the continuous presence of God within his soul that grants him unceasing joy.
- ❖ The divine grace makes his heart very close to heaven, granting him the desire to attain the heavenly kingdom not only in the world to come but here on earth, by the dwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ in his soul.

Conclusion

It is God's grace that renews man's life; but God gives His grace to those who show an earnest desire for it. (St. Clement)

Activities / Discussion Points

1. Contemplate on the story of Moses and Joshua (Exodus 17: 8- 16)
And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed (Exodus 17: 11). They achieved victory by both: the struggle of Joshua, and the prayers of Moses.
2. Discuss the Verse "So it is not of him, who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Romans 9: 16) and "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7)