

*Grace, a Free Ride to Heaven?***Appendix viii****"GRACE AND JUDGMENT"**

**Merit.** According to *Merriam-Webster* the English word "merit" can refer to the "qualities or actions that constitute the basis of one's deserts." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/merit> An example from Webster's dictionary for those learning English is given: "they will be judged by looking at their skills and their **good and bad** qualities." <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/merit>

One cannot therefore honestly cast aside the word "merit" as not being applicable for God's favor in His judgment. To the contrary. Judgement begins at the church of God. *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"* (1 Peter 4:17). What will God be judging in the church if not the actions of members to decide each one's deserts? If they were saved, they already had God's grace. Aren't those in the church supposed to be "saved" (Acts 2:47)?

Why judge the church, if God's saving grace is given without a standard of merit?

Paul said, *"I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God"* (1 Timothy 3:15). Why, Paul? Because, as Peter exclaims, *"the house of God ("which is the church", 1 Timothy 3:16) is to be judged"* along with the world. Just because a man said he believed yesterday but today curses God to His face, would he retain the favor of God (Galatians 5:4)? Should he not "ought to conduct" himself a certain way? Does not "ought to" mean you have to do it?

To the church at Ephesus, Jesus said He was judging them, *"I know your works... Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent"* (Revelation 2:2, 5). Discerning merits is involved in God's grace. *"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, To give to each man what his actions merit"* (Revelation 22:12, MNT).

**PAUL AND WORKS**

Why would anyone select the word "grace" to hang the modifier "unmerited" upon? Why not choose some other word? Theologians have decided that certain books of the Bible or writers are not verbally inspired because they don't write it like the theologians like to preach it. Are they not interpreting their personal views on the teachings of Christ or the Holy Spirit? To these theologians the writers of the New Testament are to be looked at as being just commentators like Clarke, Jameison, Henry, etc. Each one has his measure of understanding and consequently like the rest of us humans do not agree on every facet of doctrine. Perhaps, it can be compared to the ancient Greeks and their concept of gods at Olympus. If some men can create god in

their own image, then is it a hard thing to visualize theologians "creating" the writers of the Bible in their own image? The Greek and Roman gods were immortal while at the same time they were human in their desires and conflicts. People had their own favorite god according to their taste, occupation, etc. In the same way, we have some theologians identifying themselves with Pauline's doctrine (e.g., "I believe in Paul's idea of grace") while opposing and labeling other epistle writers with a label or brand.

Did Paul redefine the vernacular "grace" for a new meaning when it related to salvation. This definition is considered unique to Paul's interpretation of the gospel whereas other writers would not use the word with the same meaning. However, are these theologians not doing what Paul condemned? Paul criticized anyone that would so separate themselves into such parties. *"Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"* (1 Corinthians 1:12,13).

It is true that Paul's use of explanations on grace may be difficult. Peter comments, the wisdom of "our beloved brother Paul", speaking in [all his epistles] of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15,16). I suppose if one wants to twist any Scriptures, those of Paul's on grace, may be the best selection since there might be hope that the "grace" meaning they attribute to Paul will save them regardless. Calling a duck a dog will not change the fact. If you want to take a statement out of context, then one can come up with false thing.