

Grace and Faith A Divine Synergy

"We gained our entrance by faith into this grace, in which we now stand." Romans 5:2

God has set up the spiritual dynamics of His kingdom so that grace and faith work together in a synergistic manner. Just as hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the elemental basis of water, grace and faith combine to form the basis of man's relationship with God. Without grace, faith cannot function; and without faith, grace cannot be obtained. To use the analogy of electricity, if grace is the power, then faith is the "on" switch within our spirit that enables us to receive grace. However, before we continue, let us define grace and faith from a Biblical perspective. The New Testament Greek word for grace is *charis*, which means God's divine favor toward man. More specifically, grace is God's undeserved kindness toward sinners, so that we might be saved from the curse of sin. How did God accomplish this great salvation? The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's grace (John 1:14). God sent Jesus His only Son to die on the cross as the avenue of His grace to redeem us from sin (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Therefore, the Bible says that Christ's sacrificial death is the free gift of God's grace to sinners (Romans 5:15-17; 6:23). Thus grace has been called **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. Now let us look at the Biblical meaning of faith. The New Testament Greek word for faith is *pistis*, which means to believe or trust. Faith must be based on the truth of God's Word, or it is not true Christian faith. The Bible says that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen (Hebrews 11:1)." Just as physical eyesight enables us to see the natural world, faith is the spiritual eyesight that enables us to see God and understand His heavenly world. For this reason, the Bible says, "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporal, but what is unseen is eternal... for we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 4:18; 5:7)." Thus God has made faith essential to see Him and know Him (Hebrews 11:3, 6). As the

Bible says, "God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith (Romans 1:17).'" Therefore, faith is the underlying basis of man's relationship with God, and the means by which man can apprehend God's grace. In this regard, the Bible says that our attitude should be one of faith toward God and His revealed truth in all that we do (Romans 14:23). How do grace and faith work together? The Bible says we are saved by both God's grace and by our faith (Ephesians 2:5; 1 Peter 1:9). "It is by grace that you have been saved through faith; and not from yourselves, it is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)." However, salvation is only the beginning and not the end of God's plan for our lives. Therefore, just as we entered into the grace of God's salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, we must now live by faith in the Son of God who indwells us, if we want to continue in God's grace and sanctification (Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20). In fact, if we do not continue standing by faith, we will be cut off from God's grace (Galatians 3:2-3; 5:4; 1 Timothy 4:1). The Bible says, "They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand by your faith... continue in His kindness (*grace*); otherwise you also will be cut off (Romans 11:20-22)." One verse in the Bible that sums up the complementary relationship between God's grace and man's faith is 2 Thessalonians 2:13: "God has chosen you to be saved through the sanctifying work (*grace*) of the Spirit and through faith in the truth." Once again, it is essential to spotlight what is the specific truth upon which our faith must be based to ensure our salvation and sanctification. This is the divinely powerful truth that sets us free from the tyranny of sin: by the grace (the undeserved gift) of Christ's death, God freed us not only from the penalty of sin (by forgiving our sins); He also freed us from the power of sin (by removing our sinful nature), so that His Son's Spirit could dwell in us (Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:11). When we apply this grace and truth of the cross to our lives each day by faith, we are forgiven for our sins and we are able to "put off" our old sinful way of thinking and acting and "put on" Christ's way of thinking and acting (Romans 8:13; Ephesians 4:22-24). This is the only way by God's grace we can

overcome sin and walk in sanctification: by faith in the truth (Acts 26:18). A couple of more points to consider: faith always springs from a heart of humility. Without a humble heart, it is impossible to have the true faith required to receive God's grace. "For God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5)." In this way, God has safeguarded His kingdom from those who are proud, rebellious, religious deceivers and hypocrites by ensuring that only those who are truly humble in heart will have true faith needed to enter His kingdom. Also, remember that our faith must have corresponding action to be effective. True faith is not a feeling; it is a decision to believe and act on the truth of God's Word; otherwise God's grace will have no effect in our lives (Hebrews 4:2; James 4:14-26). The Bible says that real faith in Christ is always manifested by our corresponding action (Luke 6:46-48). In closing, the cross of Christ is the door to God's grace, and our faith is the key that unlocks this divine door. Neither our initial salvation nor our ongoing sanctification depend on any of our natural strengths, virtues and efforts; instead they depend solely upon our faith (believing and acting) in the grace and truth of the cross of Christ. Remember that grace is always at God's initiative, but faith should always be our proper response. This is why the whole gospel of God gives equal emphasis to both grace and faith. When either grace or faith is over emphasized to the neglect of the other, it results in a gospel that is out of balance, distorted and incapable of producing healthy spiritual fruit. A beautiful picture of the divine balance between grace and faith can be found in Michelangelo's famous painting in Rome's Sistine Chapel. On the chapel's ceiling dome, the painting depicts God's hand reaching downward to touch man's hand that is reaching upward. We can even envision that when God's hand of grace and man's hand of faith join together to form an interlocking handshake, their divine relationship and friendship is complete and inseparable.

"Therefore, let us draw near with confidence (faith) to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16