



## BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

Cnr Marcus & Thompsons Roads, LWR TEMPLESTOWE VIC 3107  
03 9850 9633 / www.bulleenbaptist.org.au

### BUILDING BLOCKS OF FAITH PART 1 : "Three Little Words"

April 10, 2005

### Study 1 : "GRACE"

Notes by Rev. Gary Lockyer

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

"Building Blocks of Faith" is a series of basic Christian beliefs. The studies will be kept as simple as possible. Those who are considering following Jesus will have the main issues of the Christian Faith explained. New Christians will gain an insight into what God has done in their life ... and why. Older Christians need to revisit the basics from time to time in order to check that what they are building is consistent with the blueprints!

### TODAY'S STUDY

The first part of the Series looks at three very simple words - small containers for principles that establish both God's dealings with us & our relationships with others - GRACE, MERCY, and PEACE.

The basis of the Protestant Reformation was the recovery by Martin Luther of three main principles "Sola Gratia", "Sola Fida", and "Sola Scriptura" :

- 1) We are saved by the **GRACE** of God **alone**--not by anything we do.
- 2) Salvation is through **FAITH alone** - in Jesus' death to pay for our sin and remove our guilt.
- 3) The **BIBLE is the only authority** - for all issues of belief and practice.

Today's Study is on the first of these Reformation Principles - The Grace of God

## A. THE CENTRAL ISSUE : HOW DO I GAIN FAVOUR WITH GOD?

Ephesians 2 : 8 -9 set out the two alternatives:

*"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith - and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast"*

The two alternatives are :

1. God's favour is his FREE GIFT to us
2. God's favour is EARNED and DESERVED by what we do.

Which alternative works?

The Scriptures teach that God's standard for himself is absolute moral purity - and that he demands the same of us - we who are created in his image :

*Be holy, even as I am Holy ( eg. Lev11:45b and 1Ptr1:15)*

The Scriptures also teach (what we know by our experience to be true) that :

*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom3:23)*

These verses together illustrate the problem : we can NEVER live up to God's requirements. Alternative Two, above, does not work as it is impossible to earn favour with God.

God creates Alternative One out of his LOVE for us. (Eph2:4) so that :

*GRACE* : God's UNEARNED and UNMERITED favour toward us in Christ

## B. THE SUPREMACY OF GRACE

The three key words of the Christian faith are set out in the top line. Imagine what shape our faith (and our world) would be if the bottom line replaced those three words

*GRACE*

*MERCY*

*PEACE*

|           |             |          |
|-----------|-------------|----------|
| JUDGEMENT | RETRIBUTION | DISTRESS |
|-----------|-------------|----------|

Ephesians 2 : 4 -5 tells us the source for the first set of attributes:

*"But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. "*

Now the second set of attributes are a biblical reality. Ephesians 2:3 tells us that .....

*All of us ... gratified the cravings of our sinful nature ...  
(and) were by nature objects of wrath.*

How can God's love and wrath be RECONCILED?

**Holiness** is a part of God's NATURE, ( eg. Lev11:45b and 1Ptr1:15)

but his wrath is a consequence of something outside himself .....

... the REACTION of God's holiness to human sin (eg. Rom1:18)

**Love**, is also a part of God's nature (1Jn4:16) His grace, mercy and peace flow as the natural EVIDENCE of his love.

Therefore there is no "eternal conflict" within God's nature. Love, and all that flows from it, is as eternal as God himself. On the other hand his wrath is not an essential characteristic; it is bound by time - it has a beginning and an end parallel with human rebellion.

The PRIMARY way God relates to his people is through love - grace, mercy and peace.

## C. AN EXAMPLE OF GRACE FROM THE MINISTRY OF JESUS.

The problem is the amount of material. Even though the word "grace" is only used twice in the Gospels, the concept is the overwhelming characteristic of Jesus' interaction with people, the central thrust of his teaching and the point of many of his stories and parables.

I have picked this one as the most clear; the thief on the cross next to Jesus :

*(To the other thief) "Don't you fear God? ... we are punished justly and are getting what our deeds deserve, but this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

*Jesus answered him, "Truly, you will be with me in paradise."*

This thief was making a "death bed confession. He would not be able to prove the sincerity of his repentance or new found belief. He would not be able to make amends for his wrong-doing. He would never read a bible or serve in some ministry. He would never make a single contribution to anything, any person, anywhere, anytime. But he stands in eternity alongside the most faithful Christian. (See Mat20:1-16)

This is sheer, unadorned grace in all its clarity ..... and OFFENCE. For Grace does not depend on what we can do for God or for ourselves. It is only about what God freely does for us. (Rom5:5-11)