“Don’t Receive God’s Grace in Vain”

(2 Corinthians 6:1-3)

5/15/2011

Introduction: v.1

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I. By <u>failing</u> to realize <u>the urgency of the hour</u> to come to Christ (v.2)

God is ready to save NOW!

A. God <u>HEARS</u> the sinner at a favorable season of time

B. God <u>HELPS</u> the sinner on the day of his salvation

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II. By <u>excusing</u> your <u>unbelief on others</u> who ministered God’s Word to you (v.3)

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v.1) **“as workers together with him”** – as a co-laborer together with God (1Co 3:9), Paul shared the grace of God with others. He had received the ministry of reconciliation (5:18,19) and he carried it out faithfully.

“beseech you” – as a friend, Paul comes along side the Corinthians and encourages them.

“receive not the grace of God in vain” – the word “vain” (kenos) means “empty” “without results” or “without meaningful effect” (Rogers, citing Furnish, page 404). The word “receive” (from dechomai) “may point ot he time of conversion. Paul exhorts them not to have accepted the grace of God in vain; i.e., not to show by their behavior now that they accepted it then to no profit (Plummer, cited by Rogers p. 404).

There are two senses in which Paul could be speaking about the Corinthians receiving the “Grace of God in vain”

1) The **Believer** (having received the grace of God for salvation) is encouraged to live out the Christian life and not to have an empty, vain Christian life with nothing to show for it. He is to team up with Paul and fulfill what he calls in 5:18, 19 the ministry of reconciliation.

“The fear is not that they would lose their salvation, but that they would not effectively carry out the ministry of reconciliation which had been committed to them” (Rogers, Linguistic Key, p.404)

The concept of a believer living a somewhat wasted life is also something Paul addressed.
1Co 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.
1Co 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

To the Philippians he writes in 2:*12,13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* Implied in this statement is the fact that it is possible for a believer to have salvation, but to not work it out or live it out to it's fullest.

The second view which also has immediate contextual support is that Paul is not referring to the believers in the church in Corinth, but to the plethora of unbelievers in it's midst. People who had professed salvation, but without genuine repentance and faith.

2) The **Unbeliever** is encouraged to come to genuine faith in the grace of God. This view seems to best fit the admonition that follows in verse 2: "Now is the accepted time, behold Now is the day of salvation" Also in the context, Paul writes to the Corinthians: "be ye reconciled to God" (5:20)
So it stands to reason that he is addressing some within the Corinthian church who professed faith in God's saving grace but did not actually have it. (See: 2 Cor. 13:5 – Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith)

The other time God speaks of "belief" that is in "vain" is in 2 Corinthians 15:2 where Paul says in reference to the Gospel: *"By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have* ***believed in vain****."*

Paul commends the Thessalonians for their genuine faith when he writes:
1Th 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:
1Th 3:5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

How is it possible to "receive the grace of God in vain?"

a. People receive His Grace in vain, when they fail to trust Him alone, but continue to trust in other sources of salvation.
Jer 3:23 Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.
Mt 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.
(Cp. Mr 7:7)

b. People receive His Grace in vain, when they fail to trust Him sincerely or with a genuine heart.
Ro 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Many make quick, shallow, insincere professions of faith for the following reasons:

- To get the soulwinner off their back.
- To please someone else (other than God)
- To gain something (ex. Simon the sorcerer of Samaria – Acts 8:9-f)

All who genuinely seek the Lord find Him and Instantly attain His great salvation. We need not fear or worry, if our trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is always true to His Word.
Isa 45:19 - I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

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I. By <u>failing</u> to realize <u>the urgency of the hour</u> to come to Christ (v.2)

God is ready to save NOW!

A. God <u>HEARS</u> the sinner at a favorable season of time

In verse 2 Paul gives the Corinthians a very good reason why they should come to genuine faith.

V.2) **"For He saith"** – Paul quotes in the first half of this verse, Isaiah 49:8 -<u>"Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee:</u> and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages"

"in a time accepted" – in a favorable (dektos) season (kairos). At a welcome moment. In many people's lives, there are those open times when distractions are few, the felt need for salvation is great, and the invitation is available.

There are favorable seasons in which it is easy to come to God for His grace. That time is now.
God hears the call of the sinner at this time as He offers salvation.
When you die, it is too late!

B. God <u>HELPS</u> the sinner on the day of his salvation

"the day" – there is a particular day in which someone believes and comes from darkness to light, from lostness to being found, from blindness to sight, from distance from God to intimacy with Him, from being a child of the Devil to becoming a child of God.

God by His spirit actually helps the lost sinner to come to receive His grace.

How does He help?
By softening one's hardened heart
By opening one's blinded eyes
By convincing us of Christ and His alsufficiency

"Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation"

Paul now gives an application to his quote of Isaiah 49:4. Paul's emphasis is on the word "Now".

Salvation is the most urgent matter on earth! The word "behold" (Look) is also an attention getting word to express urgency.

If people only knew ***The Doom of the Lost***

1. **Luke 16:19-31 -**
   --eternal conscious torment
   --eternal unfulfilled desire (v. 24)
   --eternal memory (v. 25)
   --eternal hopelessness (v. 26)
   --eternal loneliness (v. 19-21)

2. **Matthew 8:12 - outer darkness**
   But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. **Matthew 13:42 - furnace of fire**
   And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

4. **Matthew 25:41 - everlasting fire**
   Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

5. **Matthew 25:46 - everlasting punishment**
   And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

6. **Mark 3:29 - eternal damnation**
   But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

7. **Rev. 11:7 - bottomless pit**

8. **Rev. 20:10 - lake of fire and brimstone**
   And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are,* and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

9. Rev. 21:8 - second death

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Every person has a soul-spirit which is of...

More value than all the wealth of the world (Mt.16:26, Mk.8:36,37)

Every person will...

Live on for eternity

A. The souls of the saved are with the Lord (Gen.35:18; II Cor.5:8; Acts 7:59)

B. The souls of the lost are experiencing eternal anguish & suffering (Mt. 10:28; Rev. 14:11; 20:14,15)

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II. By excusing your unbelief on others who ministered God's Word to you (v.3)

In verse 3 Paul gives the Corinthians another reason why the Corinthians would have NO valid excuse for "receiving the grace of God in vain" and that reason is Paul's righteous testimony as a minister of God. He did nothing to bring offence to the ministry. No one could blame their unbelief on Paul.

Many today are reluctant to come to God for His gracious salvation because of the poor testimonies of those they know who claim to be believers.

The uprightness of Paul's testimony is given in verses 3-13