

1 and 2 Thessalonians Lesson 11 3Q 2012

Promise to the Persecuted

What comes to mind when you hear this title?

The first thing I thought of was, deliverance – what about you?

Were you surprised what the lesson is actually about?

SUNDAY

Read 2Thes 1:1,2:

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then read first paragraph, “Paul, as he does....” Thoughts?

Is there a limit to God’s grace? Does God ever stop being gracious?

What is the traditional definition of grace?

From the book, *The Cross of Christ*, by George Knight, which some of our critics have held up as the textbook for the atonement, states:

“...the basis of God’s justice is what Paul called *grace*. The simplest definition of grace is unmerited favor. In other words, *grace means that people receive what they do not deserve.*” (p. 16 emphasis theirs)

Thoughts?

Unmerited favor – if God’s favor is based on grace, and grace is unmerited favor, why do traditional theologies teach that we

are to claim the merits of Christ when we approach God? Or that we are to present Christ's merits in our behalf?

Is grace, in the traditional view, actually Christ merited favor? Doesn't the traditional view of presenting Christ's merits to the Father in our behalf, to achieve avoidance of wrath, or mercy, or salvation, undermine the entire concept of grace?

Does Christ have to earn favor with God for us? Here are a couple of further quotations from the book, *The Cross of Christ*:

"Paul always speaks of people being reconciled to God (2Cor 5:19; Rom 5:10; Col. 1:20). He never refers to God being reconciled to us. **In spite of that fact, [my comment - he just affirms the Bible nowhere refers to God being reconciled to man, yet now he denies this fact and argues that "in spite of what the Bible says" God did have to be reconciled to man]** however, we should recognize that sin affected both sides. Humanity's rebellion and sense of guilt alienated it from God, while **God was separated from humankind by His necessary hatred of and judgment on sin (His wrath). Christ's sacrificial death (propitiation) removed the barrier to reconciliation from God's side.**" (Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 74.)

"Leon Morris writes that *if God's 'wrath is regarded as a very real factor so that the sinner is exposed to its severity, then **the removal of the wrath will be an important part of our understanding of salvation...***' **In other words, Gods' wrath must be propitiated or turned away from the sinner. That was one aim of Christ's self-sacrifice on the cross.**" (Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 64)

Thus Revelation 19 and 20 represent Armageddon as having two significant engagements – one at the beginning of the millennium and the other at the end. The Second Armageddon engagement finds God executing His ultimate wrath not only on Satan, but on those sinners who have

refused to accept (1) His principles into their lives and (2) **Christ's vicarious sacrificial propitiation (the basis of grace) that turned aside the divine wrath (judgment on sin)**. (Knight, George, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 107).

What does traditional Christianity teach? That grace is not free, but earned at a high price by the blood payment of Christ. God, if not for the blood payment of Christ, would be wrathful – this is not a god of grace being taught, but a pagan god construct who must receive some payment to merit his grace.

But the Bible is clear – God is gracious, His mercies are freely given and Christ was given as an expression of His grace to achieve His plan to redeem, not as a means to get grace.

Here is an article, written by Ellen White, one of the founders of our church, in December 1914, less than a year before her death. Keep in mind the quotes from *The Cross of Christ* which represents the predominate view in our church today and notice how far our church has drifted from its origins in understanding God and the plan of salvation. My insertions are in red:

The law of love is the foundation of God's government, and the service of love the only service acceptable to heaven. [Why?] God has granted freedom of will to all, endowed men with capacity to appreciate His character, and therefore with ability to love Him, and to choose His service. So long as created beings worshiped God, they were in harmony throughout the universe. While love to God was supreme, love to others abounded. As there was no transgression of **the law, which is the transcript of God's character**, no note of discord jarred the celestial harmonies. [Where does the law originate? Is it imposed or, as it is an expression of God's character is as eternal as God?] {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 1}

"Kept in Silence from
Times Eternal"

But known unto God are all His works, and from eternal ages **the covenant of grace (unmerited favor) existed in the mind of God**. It is called the everlasting covenant; for **the plan of salvation was not conceived after the fall of man**, but it was that which was "kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." Romans 16:25, 26, A. R. V. {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 2}

Redemption Not an Afterthought

The purpose and plan of grace existed from all eternity. [Why? Is it because grace is an expression of God's character who existed from all eternity? Does it remind you of the eternal gospel of the first angel?]

Before the foundation of the world it was according to the determinate counsel of God that man should be created and endowed with power to do the divine will. The fall of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent. Redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam, but an eternal purpose, suffered to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world, but for the good of all the worlds that God had created. {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 3}

Before Him who rules in the heavens, the mysteries of the past and the future are alike outspread; and God sees, beyond the woe and darkness and ruin that sin has wrought, the outworking of His purpose of love and blessing. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, yet righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne. {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 4}

Made Known in His Love

Through creation and redemption, through nature and through Christ, the **glories of the divine character are revealed.** [Why is this important?] By the marvelous display of His love in giving "His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," **the character of God is revealed to the intelligences of the universe. Through Christ our heavenly Father is made known as the God of love.** {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 5}

Heaven in Sadness--the Angels Perplexed

When man sinned, all heaven was filled with sorrow; for through yielding to temptation, **man became the enemy of God, a partaker of the satanic nature.** The image of God in which he had been created was marred and distorted. **The character of man was out of harmony with the character of God;** for through sin man became carnal, and the carnal heart is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. [What does this mean? What does it imply? If God's law is imposed what is the result? If God's law, is as stated above the law of love, what is the result of being out of harmony with it? Then what would be needed to save mankind?] {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 6}

To the angels there seemed to be no way of escape for the transgressor. [Why do you think? Do you think the angels thought of God as severe and unforgiving? Or did they see the change in the character of man and couldn't conceive how mankind could be healed?] They ceased their songs of praise, and throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin sin had wrought. **Out of harmony with the nature of God, unyielding to the claims of His law, naught but destruction was before the human race.** [Why was destruction before the race? Because God would impose it or because deviation from God's design, law, results in

destruction?] Since the divine law is as changeless as the character of God, there could be no hope for man unless some way could be devised whereby his transgression might be pardoned, his nature renewed, and his spirit restored to reflect the image of God.

[What do you hear? Why is the law changeless? What is necessary for man to be saved? "his nature renewed and spirit restored to reflect the image of God – why?"] {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 7}

Divine love had conceived such a plan. **It was through Satan's misrepresentation of God's character that man was led to doubt the reality of His love, and came to look upon God as his enemy.** As Satan had done in heaven, so he did on earth,--declared God's government unjust, the restrictions of His law unnecessary, and bade men, as he had angels, to throw aside the yoke and let the dictates of their own nature be their only guide and law. He promised liberty; but as he himself is the servant of corruption, he brought the race into bondage to sin, misery, and death. **He represented God as claiming all, and giving nothing,** as requiring men's service for His own glory, but denying Himself nothing for man's good. {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 8}

He Alone Could Save

In the work of creation, Christ was with God. He was one with God, equal with Him, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person, the representative of the Father. [Why is it important to realize Christ is fully God? What do we lose if we deny the Trinity and make Christ a lesser being?] He alone, the Creator of man, could be his Saviour. **No angel of heaven could reveal the Father to the sinner, and win him back to allegiance to God.** [If an angel couldn't reveal the Father who could? God himself!] But Christ could manifest the Father's love; for God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. Christ could be the "day's man" between a holy God and lost humanity, one

who could "lay His hand upon us both." {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 9}

None but Christ could redeem man from the curse of the law. **He proposed to take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin**,--sin so offensive in the sight of God that it would necessitate separation from His Father. [What does this mean? He took our legal penalty, or our condition? Was this legal guilt or emotional guilt? Notice it is connected with shame, thus indicating it is not a legal state he took, but the actual state of our condition, guilt ridden and filled with shame. And for what purpose did he take our condition upon himself? To be legally punished by his Father or to heal and restore humanity back into harmony with God?] **Christ proposed to reach to the depths of man's degradation and woe, and restore the repenting, believing soul to harmony with God.** [What does it mean to restore "the believing soul to harmony with God"? Is it a declaration or an accomplishment, something real in the believer?] Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, offered Himself as a sacrifice and substitute for the fallen sons of Adam, though in this offering **all heaven was involved in infinite sacrifice.** [Does this sound like one member of the Godhead earning grace with his merits from another member? Or is the Godhead working in unison to achieve their common goal of the salvation of mankind?] {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 10}

He So Loved that He Gave

But the Father so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that through His smitten heart a channel might be found for the outflowing of infinite love for fallen man. Man had become so degraded by sin, his nature so perverted by evil, that it was impossible for him of himself to come into harmony with God, whose nature is purity and love. [What do you hear? What is God's attitude? What is man's condition? Where is the obstacle to reconciliation in God?

In God's law or in man's condition? Then what would be Christ's mission?] **But Christ redeemed him from the condemnation of the law, and imparted divine power, and through man's cooperation, the sinner could be restored to his lost estate.** [How did Christ redeem us from the condemnation of the law? What does the law condemn? Deviation from it – then redemption would entail restoration to harmony with the law.] {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 11}

The grace of Christ alone could change the heart of stone to a heart of flesh, make it alive to God, and transform the character, so that a degraded child of sin might become a child of God and heir of heaven. [Wow – what is being described, legal pardon, payment, or transformation and renewal?] **Man had no power to justify the soul, to sanctify the heart. Moral disease could be healed only through the power of the great Physician.** [What is justification? Being set right with God – which actually means what? Putting the heart of mankind back into harmony with God, healing!] The highest gift of heaven, even the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, **was able to redeem the lost.** [How? By fixing mankind, cleansing, renewing, developing a perfect human character in harmony with God!] {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 12}

The only hope for the fallen race was found in becoming reconciled to God. **Satan had so misrepresented God that man had no true conception of the divine character. Christ came to the world, and in carrying out the plan of salvation, revealed the fact that "God is love."** {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 13}

Thoughts?

Are you tired of this world of sin? Are you longing for your heavenly home? Why has Christ not returned? What is God waiting for? For the gospel (good news) of his kingdom of love to go to the world then the end will come. For people to realize the truth about him, and the reality that they can experience

real transformation of character here and now! Has this message of God's character of love and God's grace achieved through Christ been taken to the world, or has a pagan counterfeit been championed by Christianity – including our own church?

TUESDAY

Read the second and third paragraph, “The word...” thoughts?

What to you hear suggested? What is the lesson implying with “the people of God are vindicated and those who persecuted them receive the same kind of experience they inflicted on others...Those who persecuted the people of God will one day face the justice of God.”?

Are they suggesting that God will use his power to inflict torture, torment, punishment, pain, suffering on his children to make them pay for their sins, and they call it justice?

Read WEDNESDAY first and second paragraph, “Many people are uncomfortable...” thoughts?

What do you hear? Do you hear God being represented or do you hear Satan's lies about God being represented?

What are the problems with this view and what Scriptural, science, or experience evidence can you cite to support your concerns?

- Jesus said “my kingdom is not of this world.” (Jn18:36)
 - Paul said “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. (1Cor 3:19)
 - Earthly governments are represented as ferocious beasts which tear and destroy, Christ is the lamb of God
 - “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways

higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater...

(Isa 55:8-10)

- What is being described?
 - Earthly governments rule exactly as the lesson states by force, might, infliction, arbitrary imposed law
 - God's law is the law of love, which is the design protocol for life – punishment is inherent in the sin – not inflicted by God.
 - The lesson has taken the foolishness of worldly governments and applies it to God's government alleging God's government operates like sinful man's and then call it justice – it is a lie!
- The law of liberty – a testable principle of God's government
 - 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. (Zech 4:6)
 - When freedom is violated, love is destroyed, rebellion is instilled in the heart and individuality is eroded over time, unless freedom is restored. This is a testable law, try it and see.
 - God cannot win the war for the loyalty of hearts and minds by threats. If the punishment comes out from God then freedom doesn't exist and love cannot exist. This is one of the cores to Satan's lies about God – that no real freedom exists and thus God is not love.
 - Even Gandhi, who was not Christian understood this when he said, "An eye for an eye will make the whole world go blind."
 - Jesus taught to turn the other cheek, to freely forgive, to not seek vengeance.
 - Some might ask then, what is Biblical vengeance doesn't Romans 12:19 "vengeance

is mine says the Lord” What does this mean? What definition do you use for vengeance, human diction or Bible?

- Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: “Ah, I will get relief from my foes and **avenge myself on my enemies**. I will turn my hand against you; **I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities**. Isaiah 1:24,25
- The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners**, ² to proclaim the **year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn**, ³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion— **to bestow on them a crown of beauty** instead of ashes, **the oil of gladness** instead of mourning, and **a garment of praise** instead of a spirit of despair. Isa 61:1-3
- What is the vengeance of God? Turning enemies into friends – His vengeance is not on sinners but on sinfulness. He attacks and destroys sin! This is His vengeance which purges and cleanses the sinner! The greatest vengeance God can have on Satan is healing and restoring all those who trust Him!

Isn’t it time we take the truth about God to the world? I challenge you to start confronting the lies about God with gracious presentation of the truth as Jesus revealed. Invite your friends over, have a Bible study, ask questions, expose the lies. Let’s start a spiritual fire, focusing on God’s character of love! Let’s work to set people free!

Read fourth paragraph, “Through His own experience...” thoughts?

While will the suffering not be more than is necessary? According to the lesson? Because Jesus has perfect ability to inflict only what each person deserves. What is the law concept this idea is based upon? An imposed law, just as the lesson examples of speeding and tax law, imposed by a governing authority, requiring the imposition of punishments.

Can you think of a better reason why people won't suffer more than is necessary? What if the law is the design protocol life is built upon?

- Why does a person who jumps off a building not suffer more than necessary?
- What about the person who lights themselves on fire?
- What about the person who cheats on their spouse?
- Are there inherent built in punishments for violating the law upon which life is built?
- What do you hear described in this quotation?
 - We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}
 - Those who hold to the idea God must inflict punishment claim this quotation is dealing with the inherent punishment built into nature and the laws of health, but deny this applies to sin.
 - Here is another quotation – what do you think?
 - **The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a**

transcript of the will and character of God.

Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. **The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies."** [What kind of law is being described here?] **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** [What do you hear in this statement? What might it mean?] **He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character.** [Why can't he? Why can't you make someone healthy who smokes 2 packs per day, or someone happy who lies, cheats, steals and murders?] He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; **but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy.** While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive hour will come at last, **when their destiny is to be decided.** [Who decides their destiny?] Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will? {GC 541.4}

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his **power are not prepared to enter the presence of God.** [Why? Because they haven't had their sins legally pardoned, or is there something actually defective in them?] **Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** [Is this different than remain unpardoned in their record book?] Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? **Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness**

will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. **What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests?** {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? **Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity;** they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. **A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction,** that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. **The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.** {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that **the wicked are incurable.** {GC 542.3}

Wow – what is the source of suffering? Their own unhealed sinful condition!

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, “The full sentence in this...” thoughts?

What do you think? How would you respond now? Why are the wicked destroyed? What causes their suffering?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss the questions