

## 19- Unmerited Favor

Merriam-Webster's first definition of "**grace**" is, "**unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification**". Another way to put it is "unmerited favor". Everyone of us deserves to spend eternity paying for each sin that we commit while we are living on this present earth **after** we reach the age that the Lord holds us accountable for our sin debt. What is the age when the Lord holds us accountable for our sin debt? We do not know the exact age of each person because it varies depending upon our maturity and our spiritual instruction by the Holy Spirit and by those the Holy Spirit uses to deliver the news of the Lord's glorious, free plan of salvation. Of course, the most important of the two instructors is the Holy Spirit of the Living God. That means that the Holy Spirit deals with the intellect of each person who has ever been or who is now on this earth (please reread the paper, 05-GOD'S IMAGE). **Even If A Person Never Comes In Contact With Another Person Who The Holy Spirit Uses To Deliver His Message Of Salvation, The Holy Spirit, Himself, Will Reveal To That Person The Fact That There Is A Living God To Whom They Are Accountable For Their Sin Debt.** The Holy Spirit, Himself, will convince them of their need to throw themselves at the feet of the Living God and beg forgiveness of their sin debt even though they do not deserve to be forgiven. Unfortunately, in most lives, it is at this point that the material body (with its old sin nature or propensity to sin) leads that person to ignore the conviction and leadership of the Holy Spirit and to seek salvation through their good works, through trying to follow the laws of God or through a religion of one form or another.

But what about the sins a child commits before they reach the place where the Lord holds them accountable for their sin debt? Are they **saved**? No, they are **safe** under the blood of Christ until they reach the place when they are held accountable. " <sup>39</sup> *And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.*" Deuteronomy 1:39 (English Standard Version)

Will good works pay the sin debt that we owe? The Lord revealed in Isaiah 64:6, that all of the good things we do, in the eyes of God, look like filthy rags. " <sup>5</sup> *Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways! Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful;* <sup>6</sup> *all of us have become like unclean men, **all our good deeds are like polluted rags**;* We

*have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind." Isaiah 64:5-6 (New American Bible-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)*

Let's say we owed the bank a hundred dollars for a loan we had made. Do suppose we could bring a box of dirty rags to the bank and expect them to accept the box of dirty rags as a payment for the debt we owed? **NO!** We know they are not going to accept a box of dirty rags as a payment for our debt. Yet some people are counting on the Lord to accept what looks to Him like filthy rags as a payment for their sin debt!

If it were possible for us to keep every one of the laws of the Lord except for committing one sin during our entire lifetime, the Lord holds us guilty as if we had broken all of them. What we are sharing is that only one transgression of the Lord's laws still must be paid for and if we do not ask Jesus Christ to pay for that one sin, we will have to pay for that one sin for eternity in Gehenna, the Lake of Fire. " <sup>10</sup> *And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.*" James 2:10 (Douay-Rheims Version, New Catholic Edition)

" <sup>9</sup> *So are we Jews better than other people? No, we have already said that those who are Jews, as well as those who are not Jews, are the same. They are all guilty of sin.* <sup>10</sup> *As the Scriptures say, "There is no one doing what is right, not even one. <sup>11</sup> There is no one who understands. There is no one who is trying to be with God. <sup>12</sup> They have all turned away from him, and now they are of no use to anyone. There is no one who does good, not even one."* <sup>13</sup> *"Their words come from mouths that are like open graves. They use their lying tongues to deceive others." "Their words are like the poison of snakes."* <sup>14</sup> *"Their mouths are full of cursing and angry words."* <sup>15</sup> *"They are always ready to kill someone. <sup>16</sup> Everywhere they go they cause trouble and ruin. <sup>17</sup> They don't know how to live in peace."* <sup>18</sup> *"They have no fear or respect for God."* <sup>19</sup> *What the law says is for those who are under the law. It stops anyone from making excuses. And it brings the whole world under God's judgment, <sup>20</sup> because **no one can be made right with God by following the law.** The law only shows us our sin. <sup>21</sup> **But God has a way to make people right, and it has nothing to do with the law.** He has now shown us that new way, which the law and the prophets told us about. <sup>22</sup> **God makes people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. He does this for all who believe in Christ. Everyone is the same.** <sup>23</sup> *All have sinned and are not good enough to share God's divine greatness.* <sup>24</sup> **They are made right with God by his grace.** This is a free gift. They are made right with God by being made free from sin through Jesus Christ. <sup>25</sup> *God gave Jesus as a way to forgive people's sins through their faith in Him. God**

*can forgive them because the blood sacrifice of Jesus pays for their sins. God gave Jesus to show that he always does what is right and fair. He was right in the past when he was patient and did not punish people for their sins. And in our own time he still does what is right. God worked all this out in a way that allows him to judge people fairly and still make right any person who has faith in Jesus.<sup>27</sup> So do we have any reason to boast about ourselves? No reason at all. And why not? Because we are depending on the way of faith, not on what we have done in following the law.<sup>28</sup> I mean we are made right with God through faith, not through what we have done to follow the law. This is what we believe.<sup>29</sup> God is not only the God of the Jews. He is also the God of those who are not Jews.<sup>30</sup> There is only one God. He will make Jews right with him by their faith, and he will also make non-Jews right with him through their faith.<sup>31</sup> So do we destroy the law by following the way of faith? Not at all! In fact, faith causes us to be what the law actually wants." Romans 3:9-31 (Easy-To-Read Version)*

Every person who is condemned to eternal punishment will fit in one of three groups. We have just examined the **first group** of lost people, the people who expect to gain their salvation by trying to follow the laws of God and doing good works. The **second group** are those who are trying to gain eternal life by being religious. They think that if they join the membership of a church or become an active participant in some other religious activity or some religion, the Lord will be so pleased with them that He will let them slip into heaven.

But let's look at some of the most religious people of Jesus Christ's day, the Pharisees. We are told they had 80 different prayers they prayed every day. They would take a copy of the Ten Commandments, written on little, bitty scrolls, and hang them on themselves to show others how religious they were. They would stop on the street corner and pray. They would observe the Sabbath and the other extra laws their rabbi told them were imperative to keep in order to please the Living God. And like many religious people, they tried to live according to the traditions that people they highly respected passed down to them. They thought that would gain them a pass but let's see what Jesus Christ, Himself, said about them. *"Then there came to Jesus a party of Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem, who inquired,<sup>2</sup> "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the Elders by not washing their hands before meals?"<sup>3</sup> "Why do you, too," He retorted, "transgress God's commands for the sake of your tradition?"<sup>4</sup> For God said, 'HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER'; and 'LET HIM WHO REVILES FATHER OR MOTHER BE CERTAINLY PUT TO DEATH';<sup>5</sup> but you—this is what you say: 'If a man says to his father or*

mother, That is consecrated, whatever it is, which otherwise you should have received from me—  
<sup>6</sup> he shall be absolved from honoring his father'; and so you have abrogated God's Word for the sake of your tradition.<sup>7</sup> Hypocrites! well did Isaiah prophesy of you,<sup>8</sup> " 'THIS IS A PEOPLE WHO HONOUR ME WITH THEIR LIPS, WHILE THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME;<sup>9</sup> BUT IT IS IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, WHILE THEY LAY DOWN PRECEPTS WHICH ARE MERE HUMAN RULES.' " Matthew 15:1-9 (Weymouth New Testament)

We know by experience about this religious group! That is why we are no longer surprised at the number of people whose name is on a "church roll" somewhere, who do not have Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. When we were nine years old, we attended a revival meeting with our grandparents. We thought, at that time, you were supposed to "join the church" and be baptized when you were about nine years old because most of the boys we knew had "joined the church" when they were about nine years old. The Lord was dealing with our heart but we did not understand His call. Sure enough, when the invitation was offered at the end of the service, we went down and told the preacher we wanted to join the church. Neither the evangelist or the pastor explained God's plan of salvation to us. The pastor just told the congregation we wanted to join their church and someone made a motion that we be accepted as a candidate for baptism and after baptism, be accepted as a member of their church. Soon after, we went down into the baptistery a dry, lost and condemned sinner and came up out of the baptistery a wet, lost and condemned sinner. We did not go to the Lord in prayer, ask Him to forgive us of our sins and ask Him to save us by His sacrifice on the cross until we were eleven years old. If our material body had died at anytime during those two years, we would have spent eternity in torments paying our sin debt. My wife did not ask Jesus Christ to pay her sin debt until after our daughter was born. Her name had been on a "church roll" for years. Dear reader, we hope the same thing did not happen to you also. If it did, please take time, right now, to go the Lord in prayer, confess to Him that you have sinned and ask Jesus Christ to pay for those sins by His sacrifice on Calvary's cross. It will please Him that you want to get your salvation straight, once and for all.

The third group of people in this world who stand condemned to eternal punishment is a rather curious group. They are the bad people. The bad people can actually be divided into two other groups. The first group of bad people are those who the Holy Spirit is still dealing with. They know within their hearts that in spite of their good works and in spite of their religious acts,

they are still condemned to eternal punishment. It's not that they want to be eternally punished for their sin debt but no one, up to this point in their life, has ever taken the time to explain to them in a manner that they can understand, what the Lord expects them to do about it. So they continue to live on this earth condemned until one day the brittle thread of life breaks and they fall into an eternal life of punishment for their sin debt.

The second group of the bad people are those who the Holy Spirit has been dealing with over and over but they bow their necks and stubbornly refuse to repent of their sins and ask Jesus Christ to pay their sin debt. So the Lord says, "O. K., if you want to go to the Lake of Fire that badly, you'll just have to go". The Lord turns them over to a **reprobate mind** and never convicts them of sin again. Nor does He ever call them to salvation again. You might have seen some of these people before. They are some of the most lowdown, wicked people, and yet, it does not bother them a bit. Sometimes we wonder if some of them are in our government! These people may live another five years, another fifty years or another one hundred years but they will never have another chance to be saved. When you get right down to it, the Lord is not obligated to call us to salvation one time, much less hundreds of times as He does for some people before He turns them over to a **reprobate mind**.<sup>18</sup> *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and injustice of those men that detain the truth of God in injustice:*<sup>19</sup> *Because that which is known of God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it unto them.*<sup>20</sup> *For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; his eternal power also, and divinity: so that **they are inexcusable.***<sup>21</sup> *Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened.*<sup>22</sup> *For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.*<sup>23</sup> *And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four footed beasts, and of creeping things.*<sup>24</sup> *Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves.*<sup>25</sup> *Who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*<sup>26</sup> *For this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections. For their women have changed the natural use into that use which is against nature.*<sup>27</sup> *And, in like manner, the men also, leaving the natural use of the women, have burned in their lusts one towards another, men with men working that which is filthy, and receiving in themselves the recompense which was due to*

*their error.*<sup>28</sup> *And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a **reprobate** sense, to do those things which are not convenient;*<sup>29</sup> *Being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity, whisperers,*<sup>30</sup> *Detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,*<sup>31</sup> *Foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy.*<sup>32</sup> *Who, having known the justice of God, did not understand that they who do such things, are worthy of death; and not only do them, but they also consent to them that do them." Romans 1:18-32 (Douay-Rheims Version, New Catholic Edition)*

After we reach the age that the Lord holds us accountable for our sin debt, the very next sin that we commit erects a barrier between the Living God and ourselves. If we should die with that sin barrier separating us from God, we will pay that sin debt, ourselves, through eternity. But suppose the good person wants to cross that barrier so they are in fellowship with the Lord. Suppose the religious person wants to cross that barrier so they are in fellowship with the Lord. Or suppose the bad person who still feels the calling of Holy Spirit wants to cross that barrier so they are in fellowship with the Lord. How can they cross that sin barrier? They all must come by the way of the cross. As Jesus Christ looked through the centuries of time, He knew that if He did not give Himself as a payment for our sin debt, we would have to pay it ourselves. So Jesus Christ took what we deserved, death, so we could have eternal life with Him on that new, perfect, sinless earth that Revelation chapters 21 and 22 describes.

You are welcome to correspond with us.

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