

God is Gracious

All of us are infected by sin. We have all rebelled against God. And because of this we are all spiritually dead apart from Christ. When you read a passage such as Ephesians 2:1-3, which describes our condition due to sin, it is not a pretty picture. And then when you hold that picture up to the truth that God is a holy God, without Christ we are in a desperate situation. We need help. What we really need is grace. The good news is that is exactly who God is – a gracious God. He delights to show love towards guilty sinners, contrary to our merit in defiance of our demerit.

Read Isaiah 30:1-17

Background: Isaiah was a prophet who ministered in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah – kings of Judah. In 745 BC, Assyria began to grow in power and began to conquer surrounding nations. In 722, the northern kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria. As the threat against Judah grew greater so too did the temptation for Judah to turn to surrounding nations for protection rather than God. Egypt was one such nation.

1. God calls Judah “rebellious children” (v. 1, 9). How is Judah’s rebellion against God described in this passage?
2. What does God say will be the result of Judah trusting Egypt for help?

Brian said:

In spite of God’s warning, Judah was bound and determined to trust Egypt rather than God. They closed their ears to God’s messengers. They hardened their hearts against God’s words. They rejected the One True God who loved them and who had the power to deliver them. You might think that to such a nation, God would say, “I am done with you. You reject Me. You reject my messengers. You are full of rebellion. I’m done. I will delight to see your downfall.” It is possible that you might think that God feels this way towards you. There are ways that you have refused to listen to Him. There are ways that you have rebelled against Him. You’ve turned to this thing or that thing to try to make life work for you, but you have not turned to God. There are ways that you have not been obeying Him. You have not been trusting Him. And you feel like God must be done with you.

3. Have you ever felt or thought that surely God is about ready to be done with you due to your sin and disobedience? Explain.

Read Isaiah 30:18-19

4. What do these verse reveal about God’s heart?

5. If you knew absolutely nothing about God and then read these two verses after reading 30:1-17, what would be your reaction to this passage? Why?

Brian said:

J.I. Packer defines God's grace this way. He says:

The grace of God is love freely shown towards guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity, and had no reason to expect anything but severity (Knowing God, 120).

6. How do we see this definition of grace expressed to Judah?
7. What insights do verses 15 and 19 give into how someone puts him/herself into a position of experiencing God's grace?

Brian said:

Sometimes we can subtly begin to believe that though we entered a relationship with God only by grace, that we now maintain a good standing with God by our good works. We think that when we mess up, we need to work our way back into a good standing with God through some kind of track record of obedience. We can't do that. All we can do is repent. We need to be life-time repenters. We need to turn back to Him again and again and throw ourselves on His grace every time we wander from Him. He will always be there with open arms.

8. Do you ever find yourself subtly thinking that though you were saved by grace that somehow now you need to maintain your relationship with God by your good works?
9. What do you think of this idea that if we are going to live in God's grace we need to be life-time repenters?
10. What is the main thing that you've sensed God saying to you through this study?