

All of Grace
Rom 11:5-6
By Randy Wages
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- 1) Introduction: I've titled today's message, "All of Grace," in keeping with the truth that all of salvation is by God's version of pure, unadulterated, sovereign grace. And I hope to show from verses 5 and 6 of Romans 11 that God's version of grace (that is grace as it is set forth in God's Word) is altogether different from that which is presumed to be "grace" and is called "grace" by many, if not most, who profess to be of the "Christian" faith. And most who profess to be "Christian" will claim that they truly believe that salvation is by God's grace and not by man's works. Sadly for most, the reality is their concept of "salvation by grace" is not supported by scripture and is at best a cleverly disguised system of works religion.

Many profess to believe the Bible and so, may be familiar with the clear declaration of Ephesians 2:8-9 where God tells us, "**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.**" And yet often their doctrine / their "gospel" (that is, how they believe sinners are saved) exposes that their version of "grace" really is not grace at all. They may call it grace (as so many do, including yours truly in years past), they may sincerely presume it to be grace, and it may be disguised and presented to them as if it were grace, but know this, when one believes that any part of salvation is conditioned on the sinner in any way and at any stage of salvation, then that popular version of what may be called grace has been contaminated by an injection of a work into the mix.

As we will see from today's text these two (grace and works) are mutually exclusive, polar opposites which God declares cannot (and do not) coexist by His definition of salvation by grace. And to imagine otherwise (as if these are mixed so as to presume God has done His part and made it all possible, but now the rest is left up to the sinner) may be called grace, but the reality is that it is grace in name only (a misnomer if you would) – whether it's recognized as such or not. My desire today is drive home this one simple, but so vital distinction – the distinction between pure, untainted grace (the grace of God's salvation) and the prevailing (but mistaken) concepts of grace most prevalent in religion today.

And this is a serious matter for to persist in believing a tainted version (or more accurately a perversion) of grace is not merely some minor theological difference of opinion. No, it's to remain in unbelief, lost – not knowing God's way of salvation. What supports that conclusion? Consider that in Mark 16:15, as Christ gave His disciples what is called the Great Commission, He said, "**...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He that believeth <believeth what – the Gospel> and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**" Now the Gospel is the good news concerning how God saves sinners and as I mentioned earlier, Ephesians 2 (and elsewhere) makes it clear that God's Gospel sets forth that salvation is by grace, and not by works. So if your concept of grace is flawed so as to actually depend on a cooperative work done by the sinner, then that would amount to unbelief of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. And as Christ declared, "**...he that believeth not shall be damned.**" That is how serious an issue this.

If we consider a tainted solution of a food, medicine, (whatever), we know we're dealing with something dangerous. And our susceptibility to this danger lies in the fact that it's not as it seems. I.e. – It's been tainted or contaminated but we're unaware of it. It's akin to sitting down to enjoy a delicious steak that appears to be fine, appealing and satisfying to your taste buds – only to later discover this piece of beef was tainted (or contaminated) with the e-coli bacteria. We're not aware of it but it has been contaminated and not at all good for you. In fact it's deadly. Likewise, most of what is called grace today has also been contaminated and it's deadly to the soul. So that should make it incumbent upon us to seriously evaluate whether or not our version of grace is consistent with what the Bible teaches concerning God's grace in salvation or whether it might actually be a perversion of grace (and therefore, not really salvation by grace at all).

- 2) All of Grace: Our Romans 11 text speaks of God's election (His choosing a people from before the foundation of the world in Christ, a people whose salvation is accomplished for them, based solely on the merits of the Person and work of God the Son, Jesus Christ as their Substitute and Surety. Although the context of Romans 11 is dealing with the fact that God's election is an election of (and by) grace, I think it's worthwhile to be reminded from the scriptures that ALL of salvation (from start to finish) is likewise owing to God's grace. So the distinctions we will consider in Romans 11 concerning the grace of God in His election (or choosing) of a people, are also to be applied to God's grace in every aspect of salvation. It's truly all of grace!

You don't have to turn these, but let me briefly review a few scriptures just to drive this point home – that all of salvation is by this uncontaminated, pure, untainted grace of God. As you listen to these familiar verses, particularly listen for the language (or terminology) of grace in contrast to the language or terms of that which taints grace – the language of salvation by works. In each of these scriptures I've chosen, know that the Greek word translated as "grace" is the same word, showing that we're talking about the same concept of grace in every aspect of salvation.

- a. Election: First we do see it in election – In our text, Romans 11:5-6a, we read:
"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.⁶ And if by grace,..."
- b. Justification: We see that our justification, the legal or forensic determination by which God declares a sinner righteous and accepted, it too is provided by grace. We read:
 - i. In Rom 3:24: ***"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"***
 - ii. In Titus 3:7: ***"That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."***
- c. Our Redemption and forgiveness of sins, based upon our standing in Christ, are according to grace as we read in Eph. 1:5-7: ***"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁷In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"***
- d. Our calling, Our conversion we see is by Grace:
2 Tim 1:9: ***"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"***
- e. Our walk, is by grace: Paul said of himself in 1 Cor 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."*** See, we don't even deserve credit or earn anything by our walk of faith for it too is a product owing exclusively to God's grace. And we only persevere in the faith, especially during difficult times of trial by God's preserving grace. We would be prone to forsake Him when things are tough, but He won't let us go. He says He'll never forsake His elect – preserving them by His grace.

- f. Final Glorification / Heaven Itself, is attributed directly to the God of all Grace: I Pet 5:10 reads, ***“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”***
- g. Summary: All of salvation is by grace, as we read earlier in Ephesians 2:8-9: ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.”***
- 3) Romans 11:5: Back now to Romans 11:5, let me bring you up to speed real quickly on the context. If you consider that earlier in the Epistle Paul spoke of the rejection of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles. Perhaps foreseeing that this would stir up resentment of the unbelieving Jews and might cause them to misconstrue what he was teaching them, to mean that all of the Jews had been rejected of God, he begins in chapter 11 to show that there were among the Jews, as well as among the Gentiles, the Lord’s chosen ones, denying that the whole nation of Israel was being indiscriminately rejected. Paul is saying that there is a remnant to be saved – himself (as a Jewish believer) being an example. And he is bringing into view in the prior verses God’s sovereignty in preserving this remnant as we read here in vs. 5: ***“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”*** In other words, there is an election that isn’t done away with by the seeming rejection of Israel in the abolishment of its special status under the Old Covenant. Back in verse 2, Paul wrote, that ***“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew”*** – i.e. Spiritual Israel, this election of grace, for whom God had a preconceived love, favor, and regard for. So we see, that God chose a people unto salvation and He calls this choosing, this election, an election of grace.
- 4) Romans 11:6: He goes on in vs. 6 to say, ***“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”*** Here is where we want to focus. We see here the dichotomy set forth between grace and works and how there can be absolutely no mixing. These are 2 mutually exclusive concepts which cannot coexist and if God so graciously shows you the significance of this lesson so that you see how it applies to your own thoughts about how God saves sinners, then (if it hasn’t already done so) it will turn your world upside down. You see, your eternal destiny (heaven or hell), has a direct correlation with your understanding of the vital distinctions between God’s grace and any tainted version, identified by the contaminating component of works.
- 5) Romans 4:1-8: We’re going to explore this verse 6 in Romans 11 further, but first let’s examine this same principle – that grace and works cannot be mixed – by briefly

looking at another passage. Hold your place there at Rom 11 and turn back briefly to Romans 4. Beginning in Romans 4:1 we read, ***“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? ²For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. ³For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it <not the believing, but what Abraham believed> was counted unto him for righteousness. ⁴Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. ⁵But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith <again, not his believing but the object of his faith> is counted for righteousness. ⁶Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”*** I wanted you to look at this because I want you to see that to have this thing wrong by mixing grace and works AT ANY STAGE of salvation, is equally deadly. We see the same polar opposites between grace and works set forth here, in discussing Abraham’s justification, as we see in Paul’s discussion of the election of grace in Romans 11.

- 6) The language of grace and works: Consider some of the terminology or characterizations that God uses to define the distinction between grace and works.
- a. The language of grace:
 - i. Free gift, - unmerited by the recipient;
 - ii) Unearned
 - iii) the language of inheritance, of heirs,
 - iv) No room to boast – no basis for it
 - v) Language of imputation, reckoning, counted – the charging to one’s account totally independent of any action on your part, even as to the acquiring of it. Not infused nor imparted – not something put inside of you—but God’s consideration of the sinner’s state in union with Christ, independent of anything done by, in, through, or even seen or foreseen in the sinner. (Cite 2 Cor. 5:21)
 - b) The language of Works –
 - i) Debt (it’s owed you). It’s of merit.
 - ii) Earned. Like wages paid. Consistent with Rom 6:23 – the wages (what we can earn) of sin is death (eternal). But the gift of God is eternal life.
 - iii) Obligation due (e.g. – I’ve done my part now so God must do His in exchange) – a perversion of the promise of God to save by grace – the conditions or requirements met by Christ alone.

iv) Room to boast I.e. – Even if your social manners suggest it to be uncomely, there would be a basis for your boasting. The glory would belong to you.

- 7) Romans 11:6 Con't.: I think you can see the dichotomy. I repeat, grace and works are set forth as absolute opposites. They are mutually exclusive concepts which do not coexist to any degree when it comes to God's way of salvation, at any stage. With that in mind, let's look now back at the passage in Romans 11:6 where it reads: ***"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."*** Consider this carefully. On the surface, we may say, oh – he's just repeating himself as he reverses the concept, but I believe that this wasn't just wordiness by Paul, but rather an emphasis that suggests that we might do well to apply the same scrutiny in examining our own concept of salvation by grace.

Paul is saying, If it's really grace, then there is absolutely no component of works. And if works can be applied to your concept of grace (to any degree), then it is really not grace – it ceases to be grace. That is, if you discover that even one component of your perceived salvation, at any stage is based upon something you do or refrain from doing, some decision you make (a work that proceeds from you), then you can't be true to what you've discovered and still call it the unmixed grace of God's salvation. You can refuse to acknowledge it, but in refusing to face that reality, you'd only be fooling yourself.

It's like someone says, oh no—I know my salvation is all of grace, I don't believe it's by my works (just as I sincerely, though erroneously, maintained for many years myself), . Now for that to be true, you must see that there can be absolutely no component of works in your doctrinal beliefs of how God saves sinners – that is, in your "Gospel." Well, many (like me in years past) would say, right – I get it – I don't believe salvation is by my works. But then Paul flips it and says conversely, well then, let's look at that which is works – that which we know to be works (remember the terms which suggest that some contribution proceeds from the sinner – something I do is presumed to make the real difference) – and wherever we identify that, we must say: then, that's not grace and we shouldn't call it that. Instead, it should lead to our repentance from those dead works. The challenge is this: – Don't take for granted that because I was taught or thought that I believed in salvation by grace that this makes it true. Let's see if we can dig out any component of "works" in our ideas of how God saves sinners to be sure we've got it right – to be sure that my idea of grace isn't tainted with that deadly contamination of works religion.

8) Application: Let's look at some of the more prevalent perversions of grace embraced in religion. And we'll begin with the not-so-subtle and plow down to that which may seem less obvious.

(a) Religions of the world in general: There are more religious factions and denominations than we can number throughout the world, but in reality, there really exists only 2: The religion of works and the religion of grace – the religion of Cain or the religion of Abel. All religions fit into one of these 2 identifying groups. Only in true Christianity do we find this unadulterated, untainted version of salvation by God's free and sovereign grace. All other religions, including most versions of so-called "Christianity," believe that their being blessed or their salvation is ultimately conditioned upon something done by, in or through the individual sinner. Many non-Christian religions make no pretense about it – not even claiming they believe salvation to be by grace. They typically believe their concept of a deity or higher power will reward them with some form of paradise or bliss based upon some condition, some work, done by or found in them.

Sadly, most of so-called "Christianity" isn't much more subtle if you honestly examine what they believe makes the ultimate difference in their salvation; however, most of them do know better than to call it "works." They know that the language of the Bible, the Bible many rightly consider to be the standard of truth, says clearly that God saves by grace. But in light of Rom 11:6, keep in mind that no matter how obscure (or how blatantly obvious) that component of "works" may be, as vs. 6 reads ***"if it be of works (if that component exists), then it is no more of grace."***

(b) Now, secondly, let's consider today's popular version of so-called "Christianity" which does claim to believe in salvation by grace. Here, the component of works that taints grace is perhaps most easily exposed by the widely held (but God dishonoring) doctrine of universal redemption – that Christ died for all who ever lived, leaving something else to be done, earned, merited by the sinner to make the real difference in being saved. And that in turn obligates God to reward the sinner for his or her response of faith, "free-will" decision, perseverance – or you fill in the blank (whatever that difference maker is presumed to be). If Christ didn't accomplish all that was necessary to save a sinner and ANY thing remains to be done in the way of a response – that response is a work.

Now there are some who reject the heresy of universal atonement, but who embrace what they call “justification by faith.” And I know that can mean different things to different folks. But I fear that some apply it to mean that by their believing the sinner appropriates God’s justification unto himself, treating it as a cause of their justification, rather than the effect (the blood-bought gift of faith). Though that may be subtle, if it is presumed to be the real difference maker, not Christ alone, then it too is works. That is faith in faith – not faith in Christ. And if so, as Romans 11:6 makes clear, **“if it be of works (if that component exists), then it is no more of grace.”** Genuine, God-given faith excludes itself as playing any causal role in the salvation of a sinner – it looks to salvation by grace – to Christ alone. I’ve heard some will concede that faith is a gift but insist the sinner must decide to “unwrap the gift” so to speak. But God’s Word tells us that none of us by nature will even want salvation God’s way. (Read Romans 3). We won’t “unwrap it” or come by faith to the true and living God of our own volition – not unless and until God makes us willing by His grace in the day of His power (Psa. 110:3).

- (c) Now let’s drill down further by considering the immediate context of Romans 11 in which Paul specifically is talking about the election of grace. Quite a few years back, I recall being surprised to learn that some who come to see the biblical truth of particular redemption (that all for whom Christ died shall all be saved) – they still somehow find a way to cling to a form of works religion – of salvation ultimately conditioned on themselves, the sinner. And while the reality is that they believe salvation is by works, in spiritual blindness they may sincerely think they believe in salvation by grace. They do this by pushing this contaminating component of their concept of grace all the way back to eternity past, to God’s choosing of a people in Christ to be saved. Honest students of the Bible cannot deny that the Bible teaches that God chose a people from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1) and gave them to Christ as their Surety to establish in time at the cross of Calvary all that was required – a perfect justice-satisfying righteousness (perfect obedience unto death by a suitable, sinless Substitute – the God-man) – whereby God could save sinners consistent with His character as both a just God and a Saviour.

So if they rightly have discerned that salvation, including our very regeneration and conversion whereby God gives us life so that we can see aright how He justifies us – that this too is by grace, then where does the natural mind, determined to cling to control of his or her own destiny, have to go – especially if they’ve been convinced by the scriptures that Christ represented and substituted Himself for a particular people – those in our text who are referred to as the election of grace.

Well – You can't go back further than eternity past. So what we find is that many adopt a "telescope of time" type of theory regarding how God chose His people. In essence, the thinking is that God, who foreknows all things, looked down through time and saw which sinners would believe (or more subtly, who would at least be more receptive to receiving the gift of faith that God would give them). So they conclude that this otherwise immutable and omniscient God, actually REACTED to the sinner, learned something new and chose a people, not based on "the good pleasure of His <own> will" (Eph. 1) and (not because He "has mercy on whom He will" (Romans 9), but because of something (you name it- their receptivity, their being less obstinate, their being more zealous, their anything)—because of something that He foresaw in them that would distinguish them from others and thereby prompt God to include them among His "election of grace." The only problem is – such an election would not be an election of grace. This is just another, perhaps more subtle way of retaining control over your own eternal destiny, insisting on playing some role in saving themselves. As verse 6, reveals – this being an election of grace, then there can be no component of works, else it is no more grace.

Now even if you believe all of the rest of salvation is a result of what Christ accomplished for you, if you think Christ represented you at the cross, but it was all because of something God foresaw in you, then I beg you to see that your concept of being saved is ultimately based upon your deserving to have been chosen by God, a choice that YOU merited, that YOU earned, that YOU deserved because this is what distinguished you from others – and it puts all the work of Christ in a subordinate role to that ultimate determining factor. And thereby you have room to boast, and thereby sinners attempt to rob God of the glory – a glory He will not share. You see, if you can find something in you, done by you, even some quality about you, that distinguishes you from those whom God doesn't save so as to acquire salvation for yourself, then that quality, that trait, that receptive spirit (whatever) merits something from God by your way of thinking. That's works – it cannot be denied. Now if that's your viewpoint, then hear God through Paul saying, "***if it be of works*** (if that component exists), ***then it is no more of grace.***"

11. Closing:

Now I know that the mixing of works with grace can be subtle and not naturally obvious to us. In fact the scriptures tell us it would be impossible for the most discerning among us to apprehend and embrace this distinction, apart from a divine, intervening work of grace in giving us spiritual life and bringing us to faith and repentance – repentance from our former dead works. To see this takes a miracle of grace – we must be given eyes to see in keeping with the teaching of Christ in Matthew 13. So it isn't that it's so complicated that we can't grasp it, or that it requires greater mental acuity or intelligence – No, it requires life! Spiritual life. We must be born again – the light has to be turned on for us in order to dispel the darkness of our natural lack of spiritual discernment.

Well, God does turn on the light for all those for whom Christ died. And His Word tells us that He is pleased to do so by the God-ordained means of the preached Gospel of God's glorious grace. So, heed His command, believe His Gospel of grace, wherein His righteousness is revealed, the merit of Christ's finished work and that alone, the satisfaction to God's justice that He rendered and has freely imputed to all those for whom His saving cross work was rendered. By that blood-bought gift of faith we are brought to look to Christ alone for all of salvation, rejecting any notion that would mix in a component of works performed by, done through, or found in us, the sinner.

I pray that God will give somebody you who hears this message the eyes to see His marvelous, pure, free, and unmixed saving grace, because as we've seen In God's Word today, grace mixed with works is not grace at all. And salvation truly is all of grace!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.

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