

Bible Studies for Adventists



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May 9–15, 2009

Commentary on “Grace”

GRACE CARLSON
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Day 1: Sabbath Afternoon, May 9, 2009

Overview

The introduction to this lesson starts with an excerpt from Philip Yancey’s book, *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* which states that the Christian belief is unique in that it is the only one that believes in grace. Without defining what grace actually is, the author of the lesson simply states that it was “a divine intervention”, and that throughout the lesson we would be addressing the following questions:

- What are some of the images God uses to teach us the plan of salvation?
- What is atonement?
- How central is the concept of substitution to our understanding of the Cross

Behind the words

While one cannot argue that sin was conquered through “divine intervention”, this vague thought leaves one wondering exactly what is meant by that. *The E.G White Notes* that correspond with this lesson bring clarity to the false theology behind this phrase and how it plays into the definition of grace. “It was the love of the Father for fallen man that devised in union with the Son the plan of redemption. And in this great gift the character of God is exemplified to all who shall receive the world’s Redeemer by faith, as a God of holiness and a God of love. In the crucifixion of his dear Son upon the cross of Calvary, he gives to all the sons and daughters of Adam an expression of his justice and his love. This offering made manifest the immutability of the holiness of his law.” *Sign of the Times*, December 23, 1897.

The above quote is filled with problems that reveal an underlying misunderstanding of the Trinity, the heretical view of “The Great Controversy”, and a false premise of what the holiness of the law is.

Problems

1. Understanding of the Trinity

“It was the love of the Father for fallen man that devised in union with the Son the plan of redemption.”

This quote clearly implies that the Father and Son are separate from each other. This is not biblical. The Father did not need to “devise in union with the Son” because they are both ONE God. God is triune: three coexistent, co-eternal persons that make up God. This does NOT mean three Gods. John 10:38 says, “...so you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father”. John 14:7-11 further describes this “oneness” with the Father.

2. The Great Controversy

“And in this great gift the character of God is exemplified to all who shall receive the world’s Redeemer by faith, as a God of holiness and a God of love. In the crucifixion of his dear Son upon the cross of Calvary, he gives to all the sons and daughters of Adam an expression of his justice and his love.”

The act of redemption had nothing to do with the character of God being exemplified. The Bible is clear that God is sovereign over everything, including Satan. He does not need to prove that He is a "God of holiness and a God of love". He IS those things, apart from what creation thinks. The Bible never suggests that God's character has been in question. Job recognized God's sovereignty in Job 42:1-6. Also, Romans 9:20, 21 clearly describes the nature of God's sovereignty as well as our "right" to question God.

3. Holiness of the Law

"This offering made manifest the immutability of the holiness of his law."

While this passage does not address exactly what "his law" is, it is implied throughout the rest of the lessons, as well as in the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist church, that this is referring to the Ten Commandments. To put this in proper Biblical perspective, it needs to be clarified that God Himself is what is immutable, not the Ten Commandments. God Himself is what is holy, not the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are not timeless. In fact, according to the Bible, the Ten Commandments clearly had a beginning and an end. Galatians 3:15 states the beginning of the Law came four hundred and thirty years after Abraham, and ended when the seed came (verse 19). Romans 8:2-4 completely contradicts the above quote in describing what "this offering" really did:

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh."

Summary

1. "Divine intervention" is a deceptive phrase that sounds "correct", but undermines the Trinity and the sovereignty of God.
2. There is ONE God, made up of three co-existent, co-eternal persons.
3. God is holy, just, and loving apart from the cross, and apart from how creation saw the act of redemption.
4. God Himself is immutable and holy, not the Ten Commandments.

Day 2: Sunday, May 10, 2009

Overview

Sunday's lesson reviews the story of Abraham, where he is asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac. The lesson examines the prophetic significance of this story in pointing to the Messiah and the ultimate sacrifice through Jesus. The lesson concludes by stating that the central point of the entire Old Testament is Jesus.

Problems

At a glance, this lesson is seemingly very straightforward. But there are subtle errors that must be addressed.

First, the *E.G White Notes* "expand" on the story of Abraham by adding thought and emotions that are not described in the actual story found in Genesis 22:1-18. Here is an excerpt from the E.G White Notes that correspond with this lesson:

"All the grief and agony that Abraham endured during the three days of his dark and fearful trial, were imposed upon him to give us a lesson in perfect faith and obedience, and that we might better comprehend how real was the great self-denial and infinite sacrifice of the Father in giving his only Son to die a shameful death for the guilty race. No other trial, no other suffering or test, which could have been brought to bear upon Abraham, would have caused such mental anguish, such torture of soul, as that of obeying God in offering up his son."--Signs of the Times, April 3, 1879.

While it can be assumed that Abraham was filled with grief and agony, these emotions are not recorded in the Biblical account. In fact, by adding these assumed emotions to the Bible, it minimizes Abraham's trust in God's faithfulness and promises.

It is important to note that God calls Abraham by his covenant name. "Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am'" (Gen. 22:1). This fact tells us that God was in a covenant relationship with Abraham. God had agreed to bless and protect Abraham, and make him the father of many nations.

The actual story of the Abrahamic covenant is found in Genesis 15:6-21. It is important to note that this covenant was unilateral. Abraham did not have to hold to any standards of behavior to maintain this covenant--God's promises to

Abraham were unconditional. God, representing both the smoking oven and the flaming torch (vs. 17), alone passed between the animals while a deep sleep was upon Abraham. The fulfillment of this covenant fell to God alone.

It is also important to note that God refers to Isaac as his only son:

"He said, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you'." Because of God's earlier promise and covenant to Abraham, Abraham understood that Isaac, not Ishmael, was the son through which the promise was to be given. "But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him'" (Gen. 17:19).

Hebrews 11:17-19 states that Abraham did this by faith, knowing all along that God, who cannot lie and is faithful to His promises, had promised a long line of descendants through Isaac. This was not merely an act of blind faith, or as the E.G White Notes put it, a "dark and fearful trial". Abraham was able to fully trust God because he was in a unilateral, unconditional covenant relationship with God. He knew God would be faithful (2 Tim. 2:13).

Another problem noted in the *E.G White Notes*, is the undermining of God's sovereignty by introducing the heretical thought that the angels were eagerly watching to see whether Satan's accusations would be false. Note the following excerpt:

"It had been difficult for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption--to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command... Heavenly beings were witnesses of the scene as the faith of Abraham and the submission of Isaac were tested... All heaven beheld with wonder and admiration of Abraham's unflinching obedience. All heaven applauded his fidelity. Satan's accusations were shown to be false."--*The Truth About Angels*, pp. 79, 80.

The above account is completely unbiblical. There is no indication in the Bible that angels are watching a cosmic battle between God and Satan, applauding when the good side wins. It's a ridiculous notion.

Summary

1. Abraham's faith was not blind. Because of his certainty in God's covenant and promises, he trusted God.
2. The Abrahamic covenant was unilateral and unconditional. It was not dependent on his behavior or level of obedience.
3. God is sovereign. He does not need to prove Himself to His creation.

Day 3: Monday, May 11, 2009

Overview

Monday's lesson discusses some of the word pictures and symbolism that Scripture uses to describe the atonement, and as the author puts it, "the mystery of grace". The texts the author chooses to illustrate this idea, describe Jesus as "the Lamb of God" and as a "ransom". The author cautions against putting too much weight onto one particular symbol or word-picture, but states that the image of a ransom is a powerful one. He quotes Edward W.H Vick, *Let Me Assure You* (a Pacific Press Publishing Association book) saying, "Christ redeemed us from sin, that is, He bought us back from sin... What the metaphor intends is that a) the means of our salvation is costly and that b) we have passed from one state to another--from the state of slavery to the state of nearness to God." The lesson ends with the following question and thought, "Dwell on the implications of this idea that the Creator of the universe, the One who made all that is, voluntarily went to the cross as the only means of saving us from eternal ruin. Why should the reality of this truth heavily influence how we live? Think how foolish it is to let anything earthly turn us away from the Cross."

In the teacher's edition, under the section "Consider This," the following questions are also asked, "How does grace, like a digital camera, restore us to His likeness? What does it mean to be in His likeness?"

Problems

First, let us address the quote by Vick and what it implies. In describing our redemption from sin, Vick says, "We have passed from one state to another--from the state of slavery to the state of **nearness to God**." This carries a very different message from the Bible. John 5:24 says:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

The transformation the Bible talks about is from a state of death to a state of life. Also, notice the present tense verb "has" in the text. The text does not say, "will have". In other words, for those who believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior, their eternity is secure; they have eternal life. Believers are not merely brought closer to God. The phrase "nearness to God" gives no impression of real hope or security. It also implies a lack of understanding of what it means to be born again.

When one is born again, God literally indwells the believer (1 Cor. 3:16, 1 Cor. 6:19, Rom. 8:9). This is more than just merely being near to God. Once we are born again, the Holy Spirit indwells us and the state of our spirits instantly change from being dead to being alive. Only when our spirits are made alive are we capable of living by the Spirit rather than living by the flesh. Without being born again, we are totally incapable of living godly lives. Understanding this spiritual transformation sheds clear light on the problems with the discussion questions at the end of the lesson. The question and statement of "Why should the reality of this truth heavily influence how we live? Think how foolish it is to let anything earthly turn us away from the Cross" is a moot point to those who have truly put their trust and faith in God. Furthermore, knowing the reality of Jesus voluntarily going to the cross on our behalf has nothing to do with whether we can live godly lives or not, or whether we can stay "focused" on Him. Knowledge and will power is not the key element in living godly lives. The only key to living godly lives comes by faith in Jesus' blood to cleanse our sins--past, present, and future--and being sealed by the Holy Spirit as a result of that faith (Ephesians 1:13). Once we are sealed by God's Spirit, and made alive, we are then capable of being able to yield and submit to His Spirit. It is the Spirit alone that causes the deep change in us. Not will power, perfect obedience, or even good intentions. The Spirit of life is greater than all the old habits of death. Although we may occasionally fail because we live in the flesh, because the power of the Holy Spirit is absolute, we have overcome the power of our flesh and death.

Romans 8:5-11 illustrates this clearly:

"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

With that thought expanded, we can now address the questions in the teacher's edition: "How does grace, like a digital camera, restore us to His likeness? What does it mean to be in His likeness?" Genesis 1:26 says that we are made in God's image and likeness. When it says we are made in God's image, we cannot think of this as something physical. God is Spirit (John 4:24) and so He has no physical body or form. In His likeness, He has made us into beings who have spirits that could relate to Him and know Him. But as we discussed earlier, the only way we are capable of relating to Him is if we are made spiritually alive. Because of Adam's sin, we are all born spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-3, 1 Cor. 15:22). So, in response to the questions asked in the teacher's edition: we are restored to His likeness by being made spiritually alive and this "restoration" is only possible through His blood, freely given through grace.

Summary

1. When we accept Jesus Christ, we pass from death to life.
2. When we accept Jesus Christ, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and our spirits are made alive.
3. Only through the Holy Spirit indwelling us, are we capable of living godly lives.
4. The power of the Holy Spirit is greater than our flesh. We have conquered our flesh because of His life in us.

Day 4: Tuesday, May 12, 2009

Overview

The author starts today's lesson with a mention of the objective and subjective views of atonement and claims that there is a lot of discussion about it among theologians. He describes the objective view as a "concrete historical event that provides the basis for our salvation". The subjective view is described as our response to what Christ did on the cross as the crucial point and "we are changed when we contemplate a love so great!" The author says that both views are correct and complement each other.

Problems

The author gives credibility to the subjective view of the atonement. This is not biblical. The most important part of Jesus atonement is not our response to His "demonstration of love". Christ's actual sacrifice is much more than simply the catalyst for our own change. This erroneous view is sometimes referred to as the "bloodless atonement".

Paul's letter to the Romans spells out clearly that we are justified through faith in Jesus blood.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood." (Rom 3:23-25)

"Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Rom 5:9)

"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men" (Rom 5:18)

Because we deserve punishment and God's wrath, are separated from Him and are slaves to sin, we need Christ's atonement.

Consequences of sin	Results of the atonement
Death: (Rom 6:23)	Sacrifice: Christ died as a sacrifice for us, paying the penalty that we deserve. "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb 9:26)
God's wrath: (Rom 1:18)	Propitiation: Jesus death appeased the wrath of God. "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:25)
Separation from God: (Isa 59:2, Eph 2:12)	Reconciliation: We are reconciled to God through Christ. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18)
Slaves to sin: (Rom 6:16-23)	Redemption: Christ bought us back from sin with his blood. "In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Eph 1:7)

Summary

1. The subjective view of the atonement elevates man's role and diminishes Christ's role in our salvation.
2. The consequence of sin is death, experiencing God's wrath, separation from God, and slavery to sin.
3. Because of Christ's sacrifice and propitiation, believers have received reconciliation and redemption.

Day 5: Wednesday, May 13, 2009

Overview

The focus of Wednesday's lesson is the idea that by beholding Jesus and what He has done for us on the cross, our hearts are changed. The author refers to the thief on the cross as well as the Roman centurion as people who were changed by beholding Jesus' great act of love for us. The author quotes a passage from *The Desire of Ages* illustrating the fact that change comes by beholding Jesus. The lesson ends by challenging the reader to prayerfully contemplate Calvary.

Problems

Again, at initial glance, the theme of Wednesday's lesson seems straightforward: by beholding Jesus, we become changed. But the reader must ask themselves, How do we behold Jesus? And what exactly are we looking for when we "behold" Him?

The *E.G. White Notes* makes it clear what is intended by "beholding" Jesus. Here is an excerpt from *The Bible Echo*, November 1, 1893:

"We are to contemplate the character of Christ. We are to meditate upon the cross of Calvary; for it is the unanswerable argument of Christianity...he who would be saved must keep his eye on Jesus. By beholding Christ he will learn to hate sin, that has brought to his Redeemer suffering and death. By beholding his faith becomes strong and he comes to know 'the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.'"

Another excerpt from the *E.G. White Notes* reemphasizes this thought:

"By beholding, we are conformed to the divine similitude, even the likeness of Christ. To all with whom we associate we reflect the bright and cheerful beams of His righteousness. We have become transformed in character; for heart, soul, mind, are irradiated by the reflection of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us."--*The Faith I Live By*, p. 150.

According to the *Ellen White Notes*, we are called to behold the character of Christ. Already, in Monday's lesson, we saw that without becoming born again, we are totally incapable of living godly lives. Will power and focus is not the key to overcoming sin; the Holy Spirit indwelling us, through being born again, is the only way we can overcome our flesh. Our character does not become transformed by "beholding", but rather by living and submitting to the Spirit who dwells inside of us (see Monday's commentary).

Beholding "the character of Christ" is not the way to salvation. Jesus is our substitute, not our example. Furthermore, the quote, "he who would be saved MUST KEEP his eye on Jesus" (emphasis mine) implies that we could lose our salvation. The Bible is clear that we can be certain of our salvation if we have trusted Jesus to be our Lord and Savior.

Jude 24 says, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy." It is God's power that keeps the believer from falling. Our eternal security is totally a result of God, and not us.

Jesus says in John 10:27-29,

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

Ephesians 1:13 says that we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit "as a pledge of our inheritance". When we have confessed Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are gripped by both the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is our seal for the day of redemption. The entire Godhead holds our salvation. A believer has nothing to fear about their eternity. Their salvation is secure.

Summary

1. We are changed by being born again, not by "beholding" the character of Jesus.
2. Jesus is our substitute, not our example.
3. Eternal security is promised to the believer.

Day 6: Thursday, May 14, 2009

Overview

Thursday's lesson starts out by discussing the need to keep our focus of "truth" clear. Here is an excerpt of this thought from the lesson, "For some, the focus of their faith is either on the Bible, or on the church, or on the traditions or doctrines of their church. While all these have their role, they can be very problematic if they turn us away from Jesus, who alone is the Source of our salvation. As Seventh-day Adventists, we often refer to the "truth" as the focus of our faith. There is nothing

wrong with that, as long as we do not reduce our concept of truth to a list of doctrines to which we intellectually ascribe. Our faith should find its center in the truth as we find it in Jesus. We believe in a Person who has revealed our God to us, who has come to redeem us, who presently is our heavenly mediator, and who will return to take us home."

The lesson continues by referring to Ephesians 2:4-10 stating that we are saved by grace; our salvation cannot be earned. It is a free gift of God.

It ends with the following questions, "How should the doctrines we have as Adventists help us better understand what Christ has done for us? Suppose, for instance, that you believed in eternal torment in hell. How would that, or other false teachings, impact your understanding of Christ? Why then are correct doctrines so important in helping us come to know Jesus better?"

Problems

The author makes the assumption that the Seventh-day Adventist "truth" is truth. Because of this underlying assumption, he implies that any problems with the Seventh-day Adventist view of "truth" is a result of misdirected focus rather than actual content. He states that if the doctrine is reduced to being merely intellectual, then our focus is wrong because our focus needs to be centered in Jesus. Again, under the assumption that the "truth" of the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine is correct, he continues to describe Jesus as "a Person who has revealed our God to us" and "who is presently our heavenly mediator".

It is correct that our focus needs to be on Jesus. But in order for our focus to be on Jesus, it is important that we evaluate whether the Seventh-day Adventist Jesus is the same Jesus the Bible describes. The best way to address this issue is to answer the final thought question listed at the end of the lesson, first from the perspective of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and then from a Biblical perspective. Note the differences.

How should the doctrines we have as Adventists help us better understand what Christ has done for us?

SDA Fundamental belief #24 (Jesus' actions and what He has done for us are highlighted in bold)

"There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent.

The Bible states:

Believers HAVE the benefits of His atoning sacrifice. It is not just simply "made available to believers".

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." (John 10:27-29)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." (John 5:24)

At His ascension, Jesus went to be with His Father, and is seated at the Father's right hand. He is not presently our intercessory mediator.

"But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12)

Jesus' atoning ministry did not have phases. The atonement was finished and completed at the cross.

"...He said, 'It is finished!'" (John 19:30)

"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:14)

Jesus does not need to reveal or vindicate His ways to heavenly intelligences.

"On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it?" (Romans 9:20)

The author asks at the end of the lesson, "How would that [belief in eternal Hell], or other false teachings, impact your understanding of Christ?" The purpose of this commentary is not to discuss the Biblical truths of hell, but rather to point out that proper theology can only be formed from studying Scripture inductively. It is important to point out the fallacy of approaching a doctrine first from the assumption that it is true, and then using the Bible to interpret that "truth". That approach leads to error, proof-texting, and a confusion about what the Bible truly teaches. The results of a deductive style of study depends upon the

reasonings of man whereas inductive study depends upon wisdom that comes from God's inspired Word. Simply put, deductive study centers around the flesh, whereas inductive study relies on the Spirit.

In brief, there are three parts to Inductive Bible Study:

1. Observation: What does it say?
 - Pray asking God to teach you, to keep you in truth, and to stay objective
 - Find out the context of the passage
 - Look for the obvious facts about the people, places, events, etc.
 - Ask questions: who, what, when, why, where
2. Interpretation: What does it mean?
3. Application: How does the meaning apply to me?

It is critical that all of the facts in the observation phase are correct since the interpretation and application depend on it. Studying the Bible inductively and honestly will open one's eyes and heart's understanding to the truth God desires for them.

Summary

1. There are significant differences between the teachings of the SDA church and the Bible about the work of Jesus and who He is.
2. Real truth can only come from the Bible, not a set of doctrines or fundamental beliefs.
3. When studying the Bible, it is important to approach it inductively rather than deductively.
4. Honest Bible study can only come from studying a passage without being biased by previous understanding, experience, or extra-biblical sources.

Day 7: Friday, May 15, 2009

Final Thoughts on Grace

The focus of this week's lesson was to define "grace". Because the Bible is so clear that we are saved by grace, no professing Christian would openly deny this truth. Yet, if the word grace is not clearly defined, then "grace" could be used in such a way that it is not actually true grace at all. It is not enough to just claim "grace". We must truly understand it's full Biblical definition.

Grace IS...

1. ...An attribute of God and therefore is eternal, immutable, and sovereign.
"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." (2 Timothy 1:9)
"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Romans 11:29)
2. ...The work of God by which He accomplishes salvation. It is all from God--even the repentance and faith by which we come to God is from Him.
"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)
"So that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'Let Him who boasts, boast in the Lord'." (1 Cor. 1:29-31)

Summary

- It is important to realize that we are saved by grace alone; ANY mixture of works with grace is a total denial of what grace really is.