

## Trends

A national survey of 11,000 American denominational congregations found that 12% of all congregations in the United States had a female as their senior or sole ordained leader. For Mainline Protestant congregations this jumps to 24%, and for more conservative 'Evangelical' congregations it drops to 9%.

- via *The Hartford Institute for Religious Research*

**I Corinthians 14:34:** "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."

## Sentence Sermons

"Anyone who resists the notion of women preachers is functioning as a tool of the devil." —Tony Campolo, spiritual advisor to President Bill Clinton

**I Timothy 2:11-12:** "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. I2 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

## News & Notes

**Pray for one another:** "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please consider donating funds to Zach & Taya Martin. Zach is a medical student and he and his wife Taya are planning to assist Ron Halbrook on one of his preaching trips to the Philippines. The Martins are worthy of our support. You can contact Zach at: zcmartin30@gmail.com.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. They are now meeting in their newly purchased building in Roscommon, Michigan.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets a great example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

# Words of Life

Westside church of Christ

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



## Noah, the Ark and Grace

Fred Newman

There is much erroneous teaching on the subject of God's grace. Many preachers, teachers and church goers are sincerely mistaken about how grace and works are reconciled. The record of Noah and the ark which is recorded in the book of Genesis gives us a glimpse into this subject.

Jehovah "saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that the intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). God was grieved in His heart and made the decision to destroy man from upon the face of the earth.

God gives us a description of His servant's character, "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). However, the Holy Spirit guided the author of this book to record this statement, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8).

Noah was provided a means of being saved from this destruction. Was this salvation based upon Noah's goodness or righteousness? The obvious answer to this question is: "NO." Noah was a good man, and one who walked with God, but he was a sinner just like you and me (this is borne out in Gen.9:21). He would not be spared because he had lived a life of perfection and thereby was entitled to being saved. God offered Noah this plan by which he could be saved because Noah found grace in His eyes.

At this point, if we apply the principles of popular teaching on the subject of grace, then God would tell Noah, "Rejoice because you have been saved." However, the Genesis account does not follow this line of logic. Instead, God told Noah of His plan to destroy man from the face of the earth and instructed him to build an ark by which he would be saved. It is also noteworthy that Jehovah did not provide Noah with the ark and tell him to enter when the rains began. The Lord gave Noah specific instructions about what he must do if he was to be spared from this calamity.

Let's stop at this point and ask a question. Would Noah have been saved if had not obeyed God in building this ark? The answer to this question is obvious. Noah would have drowned with the rest of the unbelieving and disobedient world.

Next, let us notice that God did not leave the construction of the ark to Noah's design. Instead, God gave Noah a "blueprint" by which the ark was to be built. Gopherwood was specified as the wood that should be used in building this vessel. The

ark was to be covered with pitch both inside and out. God instructed that the ark be 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits in width, and 30 cubits high. The ark was to have three decks, a window and a door. Would God have overlooked changes to His plan if Noah had taken it upon himself to change His design? Again, the answer to this question is clearly, “NO.”

If one is honest, the relationship between faith, obedience to God’s commands, and grace can be seen in this account. Obviously, Noah would not have been saved if had not believed God when He warned him about the impending destruction and His instructions to build the ark. Jehovah would not have saved Noah although he accepted the truth of the divine warning but failed to act upon His command to build the ark. Now we must synthesize the subject of grace and works. Did the fact that Noah built the ark in response to his faith in God’s command negate God’s grace and entitle Noah to salvation? Again, the answer is a resounding, “NO!” Regardless of what Noah did in response to God’s command, he could never stand before the Lord and appeal to his own goodness and righteousness as a basis for being saved. Although, Noah labored for over 100 years building this ark according to God’s specifications, it was still by God’s grace that he was saved.

The New Testament “blueprint” that is given by the Holy Spirit that provides the means by which one will receive the forgiveness of sins, includes action that is prompted by one’s faith. As Peter and the other eleven apostles were inspired to speak on the Day of Pentecost, the crowd responded, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The answer, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). God’s plan for receiving forgiveness of sins does not preclude action on the part of the believer nor does it negate the fact that salvation is by grace.

Paul wrote in Romans 5:1 that we are justified by faith (does that exclude grace?). He goes on in the next verse to explain that we have access to God grace by this faith. James tells us that faith without works is dead being alone (Jas. 2:17). He goes on to say that faith is made complete when it is coupled with works. So when an individual has complete faith that is accompanied by obedience to God’s commands then they have access to God’s grace. Grace simply means that God gives one something good of which they are undeserving. If I could accumulate an infinite number of good deeds to my credit, I could never merit or deserve salvation. However, just like Noah, without obedience to God’s commands I will never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Notice the words of our Lord, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven but he who DOES the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

The common objection that is raised when the necessity of baptism is taught in the plan of salvation is that grace then is excluded. If that is the case, then God excluded grace in Noah’s case when He commanded him to build the ark. We are saved by grace through faith which obeys the commands of God.

### The “Umbrella of Grace”

Larry Hafley

Calvinism argues that a sinful child of God is protected by the grace of God. Now, even some members of the church speak of an “umbrella of grace.”

Grace, they say, shields the erring child of God from the consequence of sin. Thus, even while he lives in disobedience and neglects to live as a Christian, he is not under condemnation. Why? Because he is under the “umbrella of God’s grace.” This umbrella sanctifies the saint who “mistakenly” continues to live in an adulterous marriage, or who departs the faith and worships in a denominational church, replete with the trappings and traditions of men (instrumental music, no weekly Lord’s supper, baptism not essential to salvation, etc.).

Such a view echoes the sentiments of sectarianism in general and Calvinism in particular. Said Lewis Sperry Chafer, “Through the present priestly advocacy of Christ in Heaven there is absolute safety and security for the Father’s child even while he is sinning” (As quoted by Robert L. Shank, *Life In The Son*, 133).

(1) If that is true, what shall we say of the alien sinner? “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). Are all men saved? It “hath appeared to all men,” so, why are not all saved? They are not all saved because there are conditions which they must obey (Eph. 1:7, 13; 2:8, 9; 5:25, 26; Cf. Acts 19:5--these same Ephesians were baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” that is, “for the remission of sins” [Acts 2:38]--in this way they were saved by grace and redeemed by the blood of Christ).

Likewise, it is true that “grace” is extended to the child of God, but that grace is not unconditional. As for the sinner, so for the saint. There are terms that must be met for grace to be effectually applied (Rom. 8:1, 4; 12, 13; Gal. 5:16-24; 6:7, 8; Jas. 5:19, 20).

(2) Let it be noted that grace “reigns through righteousness,” not through unrighteousness, not through a sinful life, for “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Rom. 5:21-6:23; Gal. 5:16-24).

(3) If a child of God may not be condemned because he is under grace, how shall we practice discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15)?

(4) With this “umbrella” theory, how could one ever “receive...the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1)? It must be possible, for Paul warned against it. Will someone show how one could receive God’s grace “in vain”? Cite passages that show how some may sin and not receive it in vain while others do. Also, explain how one could “fail of the grace of God,” or how one could be “fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4; Heb. 12:15). If grace is that which protects one from failing and falling, even as he sins, how could one “fail of” it or “fall from” it? Would grace itself have to fail before one could fail or fall from grace? Please explain with Scripture.

(5) Does this “umbrella of grace” abrogate the principle of Galatians 6:7, 8? “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Cf. Rom. 2:6- 11; 6:16-18, 23; 8:12, 13). Does the grace of God nullify those verses? Whether sincere or not, is a man the servant of the one he obeys? Whether he is honestly mistaken about the consequences of drinking, or what truly qualifies as an adulterous relationship, is one who lives in those sins shielded by the umbrella of grace? If so, how does that differ from the doctrine of “once saved, always saved”?

Truly, grace reigns through godliness (Titus 2:11-14; 2 Cor. 6:1, 14-17; 7:1; Heb. 12:14).