

SOTERIOLOGY

Grace in the Orthodox Perspective

“Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase”
(1 Cor 3:7).

Grace of God vs Works of man

- Is a person saved by his works or by the grace of God ?
- Great Controversy in the 16th Century between Roman Catholicism and the Protestantism.
- The Orthodox belief is a moderate approach in between the 2 extremes.

Examples

- Jesus Christ gives authority to His disciples (Lk 10:17) but...in (Mt 17:19) “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”
- Did the people defeat Amalek due to the fighting of Joshua’s army or due to the prayer of Moses? (Ex 17:11)
- How did David defeat Goliath?(1 Sam 17:45-47)

Grace as a Gift from God

- By definition, Grace is a Free gift from God.
- BUT
 - St. Paul pleaded with the Corinthians “not to receive the grace [gift] of God in vain” (2 Cor 6:1)
 - “His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all [the rest of the apostles]” (1 Cor 15:10)
 - “Do not neglect the gift that is in you” (1 Tim 4:14)

- “We are God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor 3:9).
- God will not save you unless your human free will responds to His grace.
- “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Heb 3:8).
- Grace alone will Not save us. We need to contribute.

Grace and Free Will

- Free will is a gift from God and salvation is also a gift from God.
- God's gifts do not contradict or cancel each other.
- Therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit within us does not abolish our free will.
- St. Stephen said to the Jews, "You always resist the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:51)

- St. Paul said, “It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Rom 9:16).
- Does this verse mean that human will and striving (running) do not play a role in salvation?
- “I have finished the race” (2 Tim 4:7).
- “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1),

Homework

- St. Paul said, “It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Rom 9:16).
- Does this verse mean that human will and striving (running) do not play a role in salvation? Explain.