

From: Zack Guess <ZGuess@juno.com>
To: FreeGraceFellowship@yahoo.com
Date: Wed, 26 Apr 2006 15:00:58 -0500
Subject: Re: [FreeGraceFellowship] Credit, or no credit?

Dear Brethren,

It seems like an article I wrote awhile ago, which my good deacon friend, Brother Herman Wilkinson, has posted has generated some interest. I don't have the time I wish to write what I would like, but I would like to offer a few comments. First, I have never believed, stated, or implied that man is a robot. Those familiar with Grace Chapel Primitive Baptist Church, where I am blessed to pastor, know that those precious people are very zealous of good works. I doubt if any current Primitive Baptist preacher preaches more duty than I do.

However, I stand by the article that Brother Herman posted. If any of you good brethren feel comfortable with claiming credit for the good that you do, go for it. I simply cannot do this. I have some small realization of my sinful nature. However, I am a lot worse than I think I am. I agree with Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" I have been blessed to never commit what some would call gross sin. I have never been in trouble with the law. I am blessed to have a reputation for good morality and character. I believe I have a good witness before them that are without.

However, I will have to admit that I would have fallen many times into gross sin, if it had not been for the restraining grace of my wonderful Savior. I agree with a man who once wrote that he was so thankful that either he was strong when a temptation came, or when he was in a particularly weak spiritual condition, God did not allow the temptation to come. So, this man was compelled to give God one-hundred per cent of the credit for his obedience.

We cannot even be properly thankful for God's blessings without the enabling grace of God. John Warburton, one of the good old English Baptists, found this out the hard way. He lived in abject poverty. One time, as he relates in his autobiography, *The Mercies of a Covenant God*, he was in danger of getting into real trouble because he could not pay a debt. He and his family would be liable to be thrown into the "workhouse," which was nothing but a jail. He was in agony. The Lord graciously supplied his need at the last moment. He then was determined to give thanks. However, he found that he could not even have a thankful heart without the grace of God. I am pasting in below his experience:

"Now, thinks I, I will go alone into the chapel, and there will I extol the mercy of my wonder-working God, who has wrought this wonderful deliverance for me, one so unworthy. But I am ashamed to write or speak what came into my mind as soon as ever I entered into the chapel. Instead of blessing and praising God for His wonderful deliverance, it darted into my mind that whoever sent it might have sent a five pound note instead of three, and than I should have had two pounds for other things, which would just have come in well.

“O how I hated myself for these thoughts, and how did my soul struggle, cry and pray to tread these cursed feelings under my feet! I walked to and fro, begging and crying for a thankful heart; but could no more thank God feelingly for the deliverance than I could make a world. And I began to find my heart as hard as the nether millstone, so that **I found that thankfulness was a gift that cometh down from above. And I am confident that thankfulness is as much the gift of God as ever deliverance is.** But, blessed be His dear Name, He can give it when He will; for a few days after this, as I was walking down the street, the dear Lord broke into my soul with such light and love, that He showed me His hand in sending me the deliverance, and with such sweetness, wonder and thanks, that my heart was quite overcome with gratitude. “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,” and those that are taught of God well know that “every good thing is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

Warburton gave God one-hundred per cent of the credit for the ability to be properly thankful. He found out the true meaning of Scriptures such as Hebrews 13:15, “**By him** therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

I realize that God gives us a new nature in the new birth and capacitates us to do good, but I still believe that even with the new nature we need His continual grace to serve Him. I believe this is what is in view of the following beautiful verse from the beloved song, “*Grace, Tis a Charming Sound*” “Grace led my roving feet to tread the heav’n-ly road; and new supplies each hour I meet, while pressing on to God.” I need God’s grace hourly, even every second. If this is truly grace I am compelled to give Him ALL the credit for it.

I agree with John Gill who was commenting on the demoniac, who had the legions of demons cast out of him, and was at the feet of Jesus, “sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind...” This man prayed Jesus that “he might be with him.” In his commentary on Mark 5: 18 Gill said that gracious souls want to be near Jesus. They realize their need of Him. Gill wrote, “for without him they can do nothing; they cannot perform any duty aright, nor withstand any temptation, or bear up under any affliction...”

Brethren, I identify with this. I believe that I have been born again. I believe the blessed Holy Spirit indwells me. However, I still need the direct grace of God in even the everyday duties of life. I continually have to beg God to “lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.”

In short, just like old Brother Morris Oakley, who lived an exemplary life, and who has now gone to be with the Lord, I must take 100 per cent of the blame for all the bad I do, and I must give God 100 per cent of the credit for all the good I do.

Brother Zack Guess