

27/08/2017

HAGGAI 2:9 = GRACE (The crowning glory of God's grace...)

#SCRIPTURE READING: Haggai 2:9, Ephesians 2:1-10, Matthew 5:1-12

#SERMON=INTRODUCTION: Dear Bride of JC, some of the "oneliners" I've used during the past few Sundays, are: "*The standards under grace (NT) are much higher than under the Law (OT). God's grace is a purifying fire.*" Why, why did I - and do I still - say this?..

+TRANSITION: At present challenges *re* preaching schedule for me/Peter. Given certain realities, not always "on duty" for successive Sundays. Both of us don't always have the opportunity to "follow up" on the previous Sunday. Coupled with that, my "cautious" principle that when I preach judgement, I preach it "hard"; when I share on God's love/grace, I "do it hard". Not always possible to cover/preach the "whole Gospel" every Sunday...Therefore, in the light of some principles shared last Sunday (contrite heart/following JC whole-heartedly), I would like to expand on the abovementioned statements and the theme of grace...

+EXEGESIS&APPLICATION: HAG 2:9 = "*The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, says the Lord of Hosts.*" As with most OT prophecies, I don't believe prophets like Haggai, Ezra & Nehemia were only speaking about the rebuilding of the physical temple, because the reality is that in the natural no Jewish temple rebuild ever came up to the level of Solomon's original temple. *I do believe they were prophetically speaking about something much bigger to come - the difference between the old covenant (OC) & new covenant (NC) = OT&NT.* And God (the Spirit through them) said that the glory of the latter shall be greater than the former.

**And what is the substance of this glory of the (then coming) NC?* What is this "something" that is mentioned only 8 times in the OT, but 123 times in the NT? *Grace!* The glory of God's "latter temple"/of His more glorious covenant, *is the glory of His grace.* You see, *in the OT the evidence of God's grace was fleeting and momentarily.* In fact, incredibly the very 1st mentioning of the word "grace" in Scripture says this very thing: EZRA 9:8 = "*But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage.*" B/S, this is one of the greatest contrasts you'll find between the OC&NC - these brief little pictures of grace, as opposed to the flood-gates of His grace being opened in the NC, *all because of the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ!*

*If you still battle to believe the prophets were primarily speaking *about* the glory to come in the NC (i.e. *about* JC and the grace being achieved through His blood), listen to this: ZECH 4:7b = "*And he [Zerubbabel] shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'*" And this is taken up in JOHN 1:16-17 = "*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" The ultimate confirmation to me (that it is indeed all about Jesus), is 1 PET 2:6 = "*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone [capstone], elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.*" The prophesized glory of the NC, is the crowning glory of God's grace!..

*Now if we realise this, then we will also realise that *if the Lord is constantly to get the full glory in/through our lives - He will see to it that everything is kept on the basis of grace.* With the result that one day - when we stand before His throne - we'll acknowledge it's only by grace that we're standing there. The profound hymn "*Amazing grace*" (the words) - *it is only grace - and grace alone! - that'll take us home...*

***That's exactly why the enemy is always trying to get us off the ground of grace.** If he can't do it by driving us into religious striving, he will do so by false grace (which is presumption). He knows *that if you live either by constant religious effort or in the shaky place many Christians are in today that says no matter what you do/how you behave, grace will cover everything - (he knows) that if he can keep you in one of these two places of legalism or licentiousness, (he knows) he's keeping you out of grace.* B/S in CJ, **grace is the battleground - it's definitely *not* the playground that many (try) to make it out to be.**

***So how do we remain in that "place of grace"?.** The most NB thing to know is that *if you have slipped out of that place of grace, you need to come back boldly, regularly & quickly!* **HEB 4:16** = "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace (praise God there is no longer a throne of judgement for the born-again believer!), so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need." And if you want to discover the greatest, simplest place of grace, you need to look at the words of the One Who Himself is "grace upon grace".

*The word "grace" in the NT, is the word *charis* = *kah-rece* from which we get the English word "charity". Do you immediately grasp this? *When you receive charity, it means you get something you didn't deserve or earn.* In other words, when a charity organisation dishes out charity, *they give it to those in need - but don't necessarily deserve it.* Also, *those who receive, are not necessarily more deserving than those that don't get.* Bottomline: *Grace is getting a blessing you didn't deserve or earn.* Therefore, **"living in grace" means living in God's favour - and that is a place of great blessing!**

*B/S, where is the place where you find the concept of blessing probably more than anywhere else in all Scripture? **The beatitudes.** Jesus pronounces 8 great blessings and *if we could live within those, then we would be living in the fullness of His glory - grace upon grace.* JC came to bless us *with the forgiveness of sins, with eternal life, with the Holy Spirit.* But we also read in **EPH 1:3** = "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord JC, who has *blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*" And this is what He spells out in the beatitudes, *how to receive/kéep on receiving His spiritual blessings, i e His grace.*

*Please note *what Jesus puts first, the most NB way to stay in the grace of God. It's the blessing upon which all the others "hang".* **MATT 5:3** = "Blessed (highly favoured, spiritually prosperous, living in the fullness of grace) are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Poor in spirit" here *simply means humble/humility.* JC says the kingdom of heaven belongs to the humble - both *the present inward kingdom* of righteousness/peace/joy in the Holy Spirit, as well as *the eternal kingdom...* It's also interesting to note that *the Greek noun translated as "poor", is pto-khos which means beggar.* It implies extreme poverty, being without the means of self-support. If you truly know/realise you're a beggar with no means of self-support, what is the only thing you can survive on? Charity!..

B/S, **the only way to keep on receiving blessing and grace, is to keep on walking in humility.** *Pride is the greatest thing that dries up the grace/mercy & blessing of God. Grace is the great antidote to that terrible poison called pride.* Pride is an abomination with God: "He regards the lowly; but the proud He knows from afar." (PS 138:6) See 1 PET 5:5. The strongest things that can be found in the Word of God, are said against pride in all its forms - arrogance, conceit, and all the rest. God hates pride - that's why he makes everything a matter of grace. Our spiritual progress/growth/gain will always be in the measure in which we are aware that it is only by God's grace that we have any place of recognition & anything else.

+CONCLUSION: God's grace is indéed a purifying fire! Amen.

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