The Most Misunderstood Part?

If one were to ask, "What is the most misunderstood concept of the Bible in America today?" I think we would have spirited debate. Would it be the deity of Jesus? The trinity? The book of Revelation? The difference between the Old Testament and New Testament? Prophecy? Creation? The steps to salvation? Heaven and hell? Free will or not? Certainly, these are some major topics of debate between churches and to some degree in the general population.

But I would offer a different answer. During my 46 years of preaching, I have seen the most consistent misunderstanding to be that of God's grace. It seems simple at first, "unmerited favor" or "undeserved kindness." Forgiveness without having to earn it; or perhaps the old acrostic, "God's Riches At Christ's Expense." But in practical, daily application, many seem to forget God's grace and tend to believe, "Well, we just have to be good enough to make it!"

Some years ago, a precious, deeply faithful great-grandmother in her 80s said to me, "I just hope I've been good enough to make it." I popped her bubble when I said, "Let me answer your question… you haven't." Then I reminded her that we are saved by God's grace… good works cannot make sin go away."

She breathed a relieving sigh and answered, "Oh, of course. Why can't we remember that?"

I think the problem probably stems from the reality that *we can't be good enough to go to heaven on our own, but we can easily be bad enough to go to hell!* Yipes! Isn't that pretty scary? Absolutely! But it's also absolutely true!

One commentator told this story:

> There are three steps in a Christian's life:
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> 1. Wow, salvation and the Christian life are just too good to be true.
> 2. Whoa, the commandments are getting pretty hard to keep.
> 3. Ugh, it's just impossible to keep all these commandments perfectly!
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> And at that point, we are well-primed to understand and accept God's grace.

Where are you along that path? Have you realized that you can't be good enough to go to heaven, but you can be bad enough to go to hell? One sin is all it takes. H*ave you come to grips with the reality that no amount of good works can make even one sin go away?*

The last time I looked, Ephesians 2:8, 9 still says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast." It's a gift that must be accepted for sure, but acceptance does not mean it is earned. To belabor the point, notice carefully that verse 9 says it is a *gift*. I pray the each of us understands and remembers God's amazing grace!

Ray Wallace