

Welcome to: - Bible House of Grace.



God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Salvation In Philemon. (2013)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises
But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Salvation in Philemon.

INTRODUCTION: since church life is a major part of Christianity worldwide the focus of this article is set upon churches during the early years of the Christian faith rather than upon Salvation to eternal life.

Topics.

- The church in Philemon's house.
- House churches.
- Prepare a guest house.

The Church in Philemon's House.

Philemon 1:2 ----- ²Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier and the church in your house.

Here Paul gives brothers and sisters in the family of Christ the title, soldiers this is because he is writing this letter from a prison in Rome and those proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ at this time were living in a time of great persecution and opposition toward the Christian faith.

House Churches: Notice the church was in Philemon's house as almost every church in the New Testament era was. The observant reader as they journey through the New Testament and the writings of the apostles and Paul will notice that though the word church is mentioned many times there is no mention of any church building.

The global and worldwide church of God: Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt 18:20). There is in the secular global world today a mindset that the church is a Sunday meeting in a religious building but the church should never be limited to the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings though they may form a part of the body of Christ they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes (as the early church did) to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives.

God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around.

Faithful servants and wicked Servants: it is also important to be aware that the word church does not always embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians (Matt. 7:21-23). The principal and fundamental meaning of the word church primarily refers to those who belong to Christ and those who do the will of his Father which in this context is summed up in Jesus command to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 22:37-39) (Mark 12:29-31). In the New Testament this is called the, royal law (James 2:8) and means do-good to others.

Those (especially those who belong to Christ) who deliberately harm people physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and those who use others for their own selfish gain and greed are referred to by Christ himself as workers of iniquity who will be cast out of God's Kingdom which means not everyone who confesses to know Christ is part of his church there are those in his present Kingdom who he calls wicked servants. They use God's grace, Jesus good name and his Gospel for their own selfish gain and line their own greedy pockets with the wealth and riches of this world by making merchandise of those who do belong to Christ.

Jesus said: -

- I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14) (John 10:26-27).

This means that Jesus knows those who are his and those who are not and will not only reject anyone who uses his message of grace, mercy, compassion and love for their own selfish gain, but when he returns will deny them entry into his eternal Kingdom. (Matt. 8:12) (Matt. 22:13) (Matt. 25:30). The church is the reflection of Christ on earth and therefore should be walking in the same Spirit of love, kindness, compassion and grace etc. that Christ its founder walked in while on earth. Sadly in some regions of the world the church has not presented a good reflection of Christ to the secular world, nevertheless there are literally hundreds of thousands of humble Christian brothers and sisters in Christ spending their time helping the poor and the less fortunate, but of course this type of news does not attract the attention of global TV news media since there is no profit to be made in good news.

Finance and the church: building God's house is not about financing opulent mega million dollar buildings, but rather it is about people gathering together to share their faith in any place they are able, nevertheless a building maybe required for practical purposes (i.e., the size of the congregation etc.), but if it is built by cleverly twisting and distorting Scriptures to manipulate the congregation to give from guilt or built upon vast amounts of money borrowed from worldly banks so that the oversight and the congregation are put under extreme financial oppression then the building is not in the will of God, because the borrower has become the slave of the lender (Prov. 22:7).

Building God's house (temple) is about becoming more Christ like, and living in the will of God. New Testament Christianity is fluid and not restricted to a particular building or even a special day. The Christianity Christ taught is so exciting and real, it cannot be contained within the walls of a building, no matter how opulent or how beautiful. The New Testament church has no limitations and overflows into every moment of a Christian's life, it is global, moving and manifested in the lives of all those who are faithful and who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prepare a Guest House.

Philemon 1:22 ----- ²²At the same time, prepare a guest room for me (Paul) for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

Paul is hoping to spend some time living with Philemon and fellowshiping with the church in Philemon's home. This is how much of the Gospel was spread during the early church era. Men like Paul well versed in the Gospel would visit the churches which at this time were mostly in brothers and sisters houses and stay with them for some time teaching those who attended the home church. No-doubt the home church was open everyday for people (saved and unsaved) to visit and be taught the Gospel. It is certain friends, neighbours, and those who attended the home church would invite those they knew and the strangers who visited their towns to the meetings especially when they knew men of Paul's standing were coming. This was one of the ways (there were many others) in which the churches in the towns and cities grew daily during the years of the early church.

Further Notes Concerning the Global Church.

Since the Bible was written in an entirely different culture to ours and the body of Christ is a global family filled with people from different nations, countries, cultures, backgrounds, knowledge, levels of education (especially religious), deep hurts, broken families and troubled pasts there is always going to be certain amount of Scripture we will all understand differently. Paul in the book of Romans tells us to avoid those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that he taught the brothers and sisters in Rome.

In the context of the entire letter that he wrote to the Roman brothers and sisters the doctrines he had in mind when he said, "Avoid those who cause divisions" are the following three: -

1. Doctrines that teach salvation is by self-effort, works of the law and by strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and keeping religious customs and traditions etc.
2. Doctrines that teach Jews and Gentiles who accept Christ remain as two separate nations in Christ (with the Jews being the more favoured).
3. Doctrines that lead people away from the Lord Jesus Christ and away from godly behaviour.

These are the three major doctrines Paul has focused on in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Rome and the doctrines he has in his mind when he says be careful of those who cause divisions and create obstacles. Naturally within the global house of God there are many varied understandings of many Scripture, but not all teachings are important to know to be saved to eternal life nor does one have to have perfect understanding of every teaching from Genesis to Revelation to know Christ and be in union with him, but of course we must all understand the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life and that we are saved by faith and God's grace and not by self-effort.

No-one has to be a walking Bible encyclopaedia to be in the family of Christ and saved to eternal life, but should any teacher proclaim a message of works and self-effort to be saved or teach that Jews and Gentiles are two separate groups/nations in Christ, or teach doctrines that lead people away from godly behaviour and from Christ Paul says they should be avoided (Rom 16:17-19).

The present spiritual Kingdom and the future literal Kingdom: the global church of God on earth is not opulent majestic buildings, but people who are devoted and faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the world-wide collective group of all (Jews and Gentiles) who belong to the Lord. The church in this present age is an invisible spiritual Kingdom existing now in the heart and mind of all who belong to Christ in every nation of the world. It is outwardly manifested by those who live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and collectively by the faithful global church.

This present spiritual invisible Kingdom existing at this time in the hearts and minds of the faithful who love Christ will be literally manifested on earth to all the world when Christ returns (Luke 13:28-29). The church (the Kingdom of God) worldwide is not a perfect organisation as it is made up of sinners saved by grace struggling to overcome the natural limitations of the flesh (self, ego, pride, greed, lustful thoughts, jealousies, anger, envy, covetousness and such like things).

The Good News of the Christian Gospel is that it proclaims: "Sinners are saved by grace and not by their own self-effort." Over the years I have heard many (almost in horror) say, "That means everyone who believes in Christ can sin as much as they wish and use grace as an excuse to do as they please." But this thinking is simply not true for the following two reasons: -

1. No one who loves another deliberately does things to hurt or offend the one they love, likewise no faithful Christian who loves the Lord who laid his life down to a brutal, bloody and cruel death for them and experiences this love in their heart and mind deliberately lives a corrupt and wicked lifestyle, because they know it will offend the one they deeply love and because they from their heart do not want to bring a bad testimony to his name.
2. God sees the true intentions, motivations, hurts and struggles within our mind and our heart that underlie all our actions and behaviour in everything we do and say so whoever consciously and deliberately uses His grace as an excuse to sin or for their own gain and their own advantage will be judged accordingly.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns all those who belong to him will be made perfect in righteousness only then will the church (the body of Christ and Kingdom of God) be without error and weakness.

Those who know God's love and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ go to church (in whatever form that might be) not to get saved but because they are saved and therefore enjoy being with others who have the same devotion, love and faith.

God's gift of grace: the following words of Paul show the enormous importance of trusting in God's grace in Christ. Paul in his letters wrote: -

- I do not nullify the *GRACE* of God, for if justification were through the law (or any form of religious self-effort), then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:21).

This means, when a brother or sister in Christ begin to justify themselves through the law and self-effort they nullify the grace of God and by their actions declare that Christ's death was of no value.

Equally as horrific as this Paul states: -

- When we forsake *GRACE* we separate ourselves from Christ because it was only by *GRACE* that God made us alive in Christ (Gal. 5:4) (Eph. 2:5).

Paul to highlight even more the majestic glory of grace wrote with absolute boldness that: -

- It is only by *GRACE* that any brother or sister has been saved (Eph. 2:8).

Paul in these verses is shining a brilliant floodlight on the truth that every brother and sister in Christ is saved, solely by faith and by grace and it is not their own doing, but the gift of God. This means that without grace no-one can be united to Christ and whoever is without Christ is separated from God and without God no-one can be saved to eternal life which means that in regards to eternal salvation, Christ, God, grace and faith, are all on an equal par with each other since no-one can be saved to eternal life without any one of them.

The early church and home meetings: ponder for a moment: when the early church came together after Christ's death and resurrection it was made up of Jews who had been indoctrinated with Moses Law for nearly four-thousand years, Samaritans who had married foreign wife's and adopted their pagan practises, and Gentiles who knew nothing about God or the Old Testament Scriptures. These groups of vastly different mindsets were coming together in home churches to worship God. Though there was amongst their meetings a multitude of different views all had one thing in common, Jesus was central in their lives; he was the one that they were coming together for.

They no-doubt loved talking about Christ and studying the Scriptures together, I suspect much like university students who when given an assignment get together in a spirit of friendship so they can learn from each other by sharing their thoughts, ideas and discoveries to improve their learning and their knowledge. They don't argue and impose their thoughts onto the group, but simply share in a spirit of discovery their ideas, and all have the knowledge and awareness that some ideas will be accepted and others may end up in the bin, but they have learnt through their school years that to improve their knowledge, enhances what they are studying and enriches their learning they need to be with others who have an interest in the same thing. It is for this same reason the early church gathered together in homes in the regions they lived in.

The underlying motivation of those who belong to Christ's family gather together (go to church) is not to get saved, but because they are saved and therefore desire to be with other people who have the same passion and belong to the same family so they can openly worship God, talk about the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ. The church has never been and never will be a perfect community even the Bible teaches that it is made up of both wise and good servants and foolish and wicked servants.

Added to this not one of us is without sin and everyone who belongs to the church has a certain amount of ego and pride and an inward focus toward self, therefore we all have human limitations. Nevertheless when the Lord Jesus Christ returns he will separate the wise from the wicked and all those who have been faithful and

belong to him will literally be made perfect in righteousness. Then the church (also referred to as the Kingdom of God and the body of Christ) will be literally and eternally manifested on earth without error and without weakness. (Luke 13:28-29).

Two invisible spiritual global kingdoms: the Bible teaches that satan already has a kingdom existing now in this world, it is an invisible spiritual kingdom existing now in the heart and mind of men and woman from all nations throughout the world who wilfully and deliberately deny God and are led by self, ego and pride, which is manifested globally in self-centeredness, (me first) and at its worst wickedness and cruelty toward other humans. Contrasted to this is God's invisible spiritual Kingdom existing now in the heart and mind of men and woman from all nations throughout the world who worship God and are led by the Spirit of Christ. This Kingdom is manifested globally by those who endeavour to live a life that honours God and by those who love their neighbour as themselves and by those who deny self, ego and pride and at its best by those who put others before self by helping the poor and the less fortunate.

FOOTNOTE: many today think that providing they regularly attend a church building every week they will be saved this is a great deception. Even though regular attendance to a church maybe a good thing and many maybe saved within its walls it should be made clear to all that the act of going to a church every week has no power to save anyone to eternal life. It is the message of the cross and the proclaiming of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that has the power to save and not the act of going to church meetings or even the strict adherence to ceremonial rites, holy days, or legalistically keeping religious customs and traditions. It matters not if someone religiously attends church every Sunday if they do not respond from the heart to the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ all their church attendance is in vain.

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