

honoring the Son (John 5:23). I do that by total submission to him. The only way that I can show my love to God is by obeying him (1 John 5:3). My purpose for being on this planet is to glorify God. I could not do this by my own works of righteousness or by meriting a right-standing with him. Consequently, God's plan for my glorifying him is by my faith taking him at his word. That faith is a response to his love and his grace. When in response to his will, I repent and am baptized for the remission of sins, all the glory goes to him since it is his plan and not mine. Those who refuse Bible baptism are refusing God's grace and are not glorifying him. In the same way, Christians who do not accept his will for our lives in living for him do not glorify him. They become like those "whose God is their belly and who glory in their shame." The

only way to give all the glory to God is to do what he says in his word.

Does this mean "perfect obedience"? No, John tells us that "if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). So, I do not live a perfect life or render perfect obedience. I falter, I slip, I fall. To glorify God in such an instance as this means that I turn from my sin in genuine repentance and confess it to him. His grace then forgives, and I keep on walking in the light of his glory. I will be constantly striving to do all that he wants in my life. But I do not rely on my own power to stand in right relationship to God. He is the one who enables. His grace makes it all possible. When I realize this, then I can have a happy and confident walk with God. The "blessed

assurance" comes from his rather than from my own ability or power.

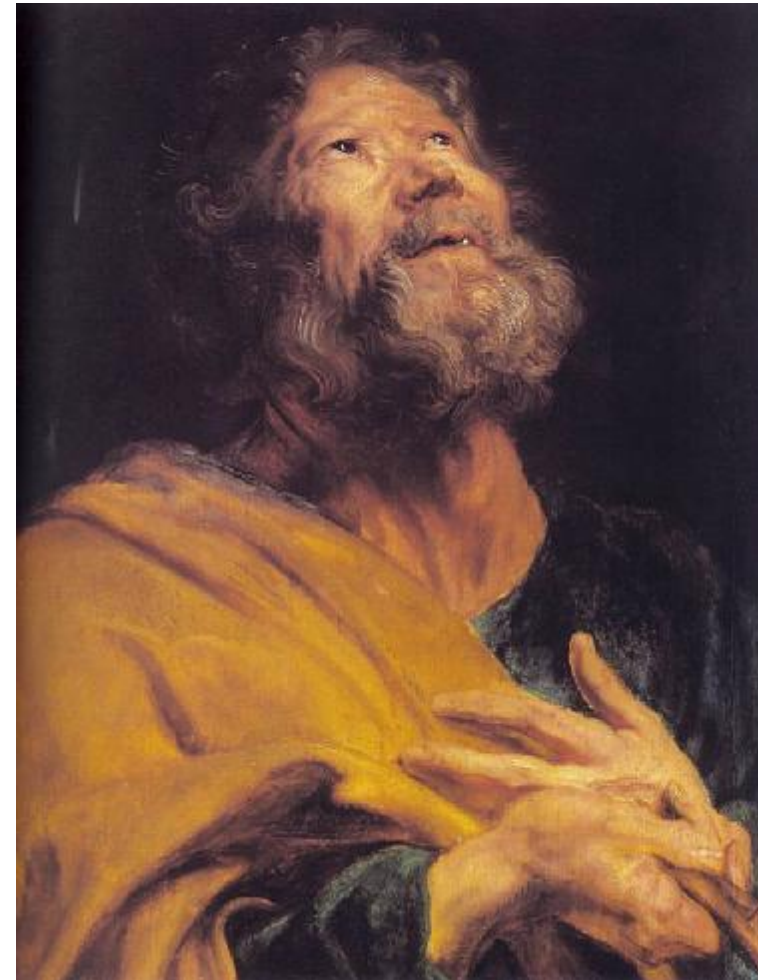
I am so thankful for the grace of God that reaches down into this sinful world and saves me and all who come to him in faith. Because of what he has done, I must bow in total submission to his will. I may not understand all of it perfectly, but I must be constantly seeking, learning, and following. And some glad day because of his grace and love, I can be with him in that glorious city where there is no sin and no sorrow and where I can praise him while eternity's ages roll on and on. Friend, won't you join with those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? You, too, can glorify God in your body while you live here on this earth. ~

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Apostolic Succession



by Bryan Matthew Dockens

A number of religions practice so-called apostolic succession. Roman Catholics believe the man they call "Pope" is the successor of the apostle Peter. Mormons claim twelve to fifteen apostles at all times. Many Pentecostal congregations identify their preachers as apostles. Such claims are totally inconsistent with the scriptures.

The Apostles of Christ Were Not Replaced Upon Their Deaths

It is written, "Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword" (Acts 12:1-2). There is absolutely no record, not even the slightest implication, that a

Depiction of the Apostle Peter by Anton van Dijk

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replacement apostle was named when James was murdered.

Judas Iscariot was succeeded, but it was not his death which prompted the vacancy. In the process of replacing him, the eleven prayed and spoke of the "apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell" (Acts 1:25). It was not his death, but his sin which removed Judas from office. Therefore, to suggest a need for modern apostles is to incriminate all previous apostles.

The Qualifications of Apostleship are No Longer Attainable

When the eleven sought out Judas' successor, they identified the qualifications, saying, "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22). The criteria for an apostolic candidate were that the man was a companion of Jesus and the twelve from the days of John's ministry until the ascension of Christ, and that he was a witness of the Lord's resurrection. These conditions were so limiting that, even in those early days, just two men could be found who met them (Acts 1:23). Those who claim to be modern-day apostles ignore the severely limiting qualifications of the original.

Furthermore, apostles were chosen by Christ (Luke 6:13). Even Judas Iscariot's replacement was decided by the Lord. "They cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).

Scripture affirms this was God's doing, for "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33). None who claim modern apostleship can substantiate the notion that they were chosen by Jesus.

The Apostleship of Paul was Exceptional

He wrote, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all he was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (I Corinthians 15:3-10).

Paul claimed to have been the last person to witness the resurrected Christ. Not even his detractors disputed this (I Corinthians 9:1). Certainly, none since him can accurately claim this most essential qualification.

Moreover, Paul identified his role as an apostle by describing himself as "one born out of due time." He was the unique apostle, the only one exempt from the quali-

cation to have accompanied the other apostles during Jesus' earthly ministry, although he was most definitely chosen by Christ (Acts 9:15), like the rest.

If dozens, scores, even hundreds of apostles have walked the earth since Paul, his claim to have been "born out of due time" is altogether meaningless. In fact, if the claims of the so-called modern-day apostles are true, then those "born out of due time" were the original twelve! Modern claimants must turn the scriptures upside-down or ignore them altogether to assert their contrived apostolic authority.

Beware of False Apostles!

Just as Satan, the master of deception and father of lies, can transform himself into an angel of light, so those who serve him can transform themselves into righteous ministers, even apostles of Christ (I Corinthians 11:13-15). "Those who say they are apostles and are not" will be found liars when tested (Revelation 2:2). ~



"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Revelation 2.2

The Paradox of Grace

by Forrest D. Moyer

Peter spoke to the gathering in Jerusalem on the question of circumcision and law keeping and said: "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are" (Acts 15:10-11). The yoke of which Peter spoke was the Law of Moses. Some of the Judaizers were trying to bind some segments of that law upon the Gentiles who had become Christians. Paul and Barnabas had strongly resisted such an effort at Antioch (Acts 15:1-2). Now in the meeting, Peter likewise resists such Pharisaical demands. He wants the Jews to realize that their salvation, like that of the Gentiles, is by the grace of the Lord Jesus. The meticulous keeping of the law of Moses could not bring salvation to them.

Paul beautifully demonstrates how salvation comes to us in Ephesians 2. Based on the fact that God is rich in mercy, that he has great love, that he shows us the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness, he saves us, raises us up with him and sits us with him in the heavenlies in Christ (vv. 4-7). Then in vv. 8-9 Paul avers: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and

that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Since I am not saved by works of human righteousness but by God's grace, some have concluded that man has nothing whatsoever to do with his salvation.

Here is where the paradox of grace enters. It is true that nothing that I do can merit salvation for me. It is by his marvelous grace. And yet, strangely enough, our Lord demands all that we have and are. He expects us to deny ourselves and take up his cross daily and follow him (Lk. 9:23). He expects us to "present our bodies as a living sacrifice" to him (Rom. 12:1). He expects my body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). He urges me to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" (Heb. 10:23). He tells me that Jesus is the "author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him" (Heb. 5:9). Really, he demands my everything - my every thought, my every action, my every word, my heart, soul and mind. And yet he says that I am saved by his grace. How can it be that I am saved from past sins and continue to be saved from current sins by his grace and yet have him demand all that I am? If his grace saves me, why should I need to deny myself and take up his cross? Why should I be concerned about obeying him at all? This is the paradox of grace!

You see, the reason that I cannot be saved by works (of any kind) is that I would have to perfectly work or obey the law under which I live. Paul said that in Galatians 3:10-12: ". . . Cursed is every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.' Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'" To be justified by keeping a law, one would have to keep that law perfectly. Since no one perfectly keeps the law (any law), he cannot be saved by perfect law keeping. Even if we could be saved by perfect obedience, then we would have occasion to boast in our perfection. We would glorify ourselves. God's plan is for all glory to be given to him through Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:21). Since I am weak, frail, imperfect and unworthy, I must have one who is all-powerful and totally perfect in which to put my faith. When by faith I receive salvation by grace, I give him all the praise. I cry out, "Worthy art thou!" (Rev. 5)

But not only so, when I put myself under Jesus as my Lord and do what he says (Lk. 6:46), I am giving glory, not to myself, but to him. When I take up his cross daily and follow him, it gives all the glory to God and none to myself, for I must deny myself. The way that I glorify the Father is by