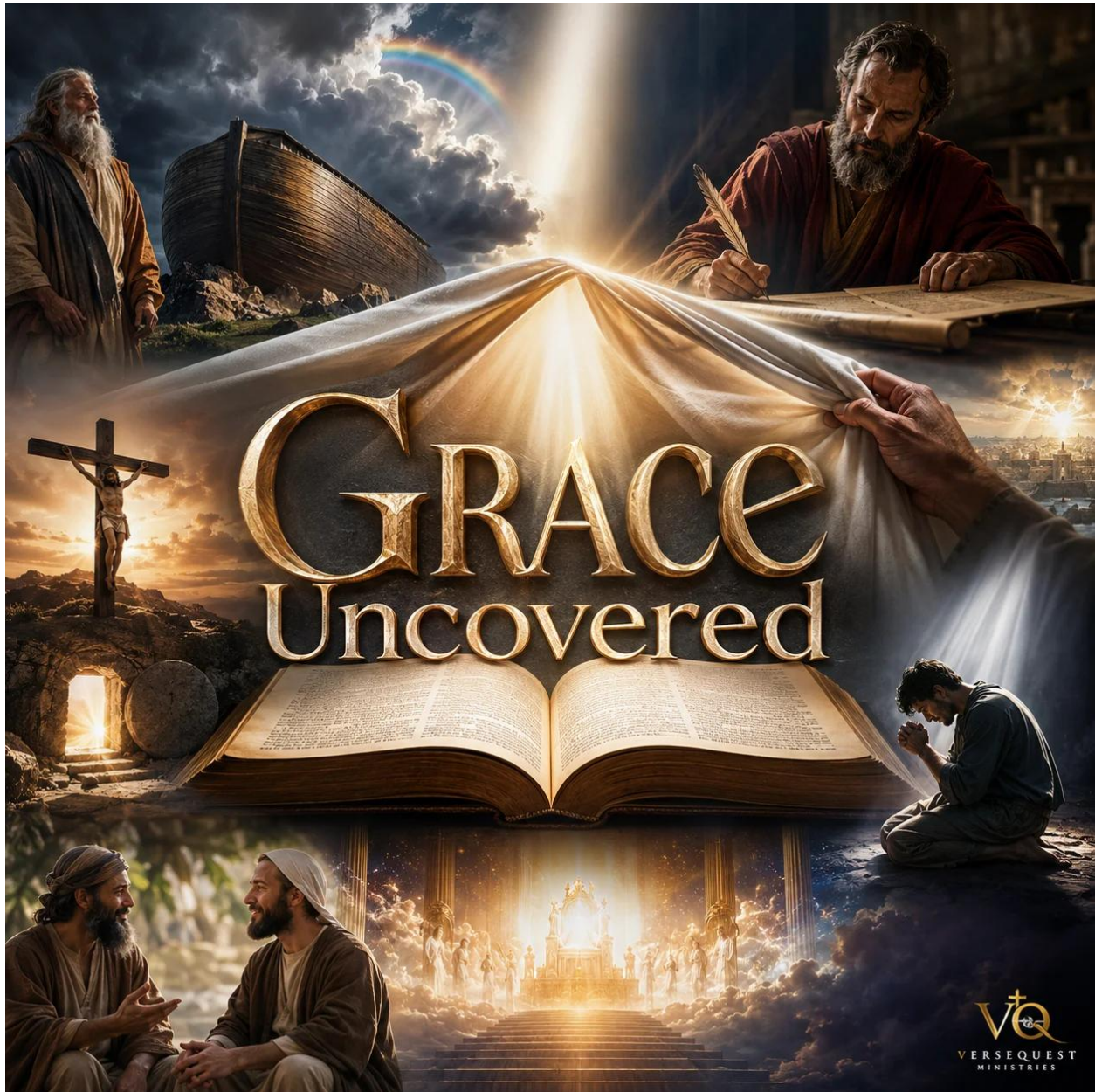


Grace Uncovered

Series 1-15

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VerseQuest Ministries



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Introduction to the Series: Grace Uncovered

There are some words in the Bible that people say so often they stop hearing them. Grace is one of those words. It gets sung, quoted, printed, repeated, and passed around in church language until a lot of people assume they understand it simply because they recognize it. But recognizing a word is not the same as understanding it. A man can say grace for forty years and still never stop to ask what the Holy Ghost actually means by it in Scripture. He can hear about grace at salvation, grace in a song, grace before a meal, grace in a prayer, and grace in a sermon title, and still miss the weight, depth, and range of that word from Genesis to Revelation. That is why this series is called **Grace Uncovered**. The name is deliberate. We are not trying to decorate the word grace. We are trying to uncover it. We are pulling back the layers, stripping away the clichés, and refusing to settle for soft religious language where the Bible gives something much stronger, deeper, and richer. This series is about taking one of the most familiar words in Christianity and showing that it is still one of the most misunderstood.

The reason this matters is because grace is not a side issue in the Bible. Grace is not a sentimental mood. Grace is not God becoming weak toward sin. Grace is not a church word for being nice. Grace is one of the great revelations of how a holy God deals with guilty sinners righteously through Jesus Christ. It appears early in Scripture when Noah finds grace in the eyes of the Lord in a world marked for judgment. It appears in the language of favor, mercy, kindness, and acceptance throughout the Old Testament. It rises into blazing clarity in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is full of grace and truth. Then through the apostle Paul it is unfolded doctrinally in a way that leaves no doubt that grace stands at the very heart of the gospel, the church age, the believer's standing, the believer's strength, and the believer's daily life. So we are doing this series because too many people use the word grace without tracing it, too many preach grace without defining it, too many claim grace while denying it with works, and too many hide behind grace while refusing to let grace actually govern how they live, speak, suffer, endure, and grow.

What this series uncovers is not just one narrow definition of grace, but the many dimensions of grace as the Bible itself unfolds them. We uncover grace before the cross, where it appears in favor shown by one above to one beneath. We uncover grace in Jesus Christ, where grace and truth come together in perfect living form. We uncover grace in Paul, where it becomes the doctrinal backbone of salvation by faith apart from works and the governing principle of his apostleship and ministry. We uncover grace as the very opposite of debt, law, and human merit. We uncover grace as the believer's standing, the believer's teacher, the believer's strength in weakness, the believer's speech toward others, and the believer's path into maturity. We uncover the riches of grace in Ephesians,

where grace is shown not as a thin trickle barely enough to save, but as a vast treasury in Christ tied to redemption, acceptance, forgiveness, and God's eternal purpose. We uncover the danger of abusing grace, twisting grace, frustrating grace, or turning grace into an excuse for carnality. And finally, we uncover how grace runs like a golden thread through the whole Book until the Bible closes with the words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." By the time this series is finished, the reader should not walk away using the word grace more lightly. He should walk away using it more carefully, reverently, and biblically.

So **Grace Uncovered** is not just a study. It is an excavation. It is a doctrinal digging project through the whole Book. It is meant to help the believer see grace in its true scale, from first mention to final benediction, from shadow to fullness, from favor to gospel, from conversion to endurance, from personal salvation to eternal purpose. It is meant to expose false ideas about grace, shallow ideas about grace, lazy ideas about grace, and legalistic attacks on grace. It is meant to show that grace is not weak, not careless, not optional, and not small. Grace is one of the strongest words in the Bible because it rests on the strongest work ever accomplished, the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if this series does what it is supposed to do, it will not merely leave the reader with more information. It will leave him with deeper gratitude for Christ, deeper confidence in the gospel, deeper reverence for the God of all grace, and a deeper understanding of why grace deserves to be uncovered with all the seriousness the Bible gives it.

1 of 15: Grace Uncovered - What Grace Really Is

Introduction

There are certain words in the Bible that men repeat so often they finally wear the sound out of them. Grace is one of those words. It gets stitched onto church bulletins, dropped into songs, printed on coffee mugs, and passed around in Christian talk until half the people using it would not know what to do if you asked them to define it from the Book. They know it sounds holy. They know it belongs in a testimony somewhere. They know it should probably show up between "love" and "blessing" in a Sunday sermon. But when it comes time to nail that word down with Scripture, the thing usually turns into a pile of syrup. Grace becomes a religious mood, a soft smile from heaven, a vague kindness that asks no questions and demands nothing. That is not Bible grace. Bible grace is stronger than that, cleaner than that, and costlier than that. If you do not define grace the way the

Holy Ghost defines it, you will wind up with a counterfeit that comforts sinners in their rebellion or terrifies saints into trying to earn what God already gave freely in Jesus Christ.

The reason the subject matters so much is because grace lies at the heart of the gospel and at the heart of the present age in which the body of Christ stands. Paul does not treat grace like a decorative word. He says we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). He says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). He says believers stand in grace: “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Romans 5:2). He says the whole business is so pure that if you add works to it you ruin it: “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace” (Romans 11:6). That means grace is not a side subject for sentimental Christians. Grace is a doctrinal pillar. Grace is one of the main hinges on which salvation swings. Grace is one of the grand subjects that separates the gospel of Jesus Christ from every religious system ever invented by the flesh, whether Roman Catholic, Protestant legalist, cultist, or backwoods moralist trying to crawl into heaven on his own shinbones.

So this first essay has one job. It has to clear the brush away and show what grace really is. It has to define it from Scripture instead of letting tradition, poetry, and emotional religion define it. It has to show that grace is not God winking at sin, lowering His standards, ignoring His law, or becoming soft toward a wicked race. Grace is God acting righteously toward guilty sinners through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Grace is favor, yes, but it is favor grounded in truth, holiness, justice, blood, and resurrection. Grace is not weakness in God. Grace is strength under control. Grace is the holy God dealing kindly with the unholy because His Son paid the price the unholy could never pay. Once you get that straight, the whole Book starts opening up, and once you miss that, you can spend the rest of your life using the word grace while never understanding the force of it.

1. Grace Is a Bible Word, Not a Church Cliche

The first thing a Bible believer ought to do with the word grace is rescue it from religion. Religion ruins good words. It can turn holiness into pride, faith into mental agreement, love into flattery, and grace into mush. Men use grace today as if it were a Christian version of being nice. They talk about a “gracious spirit” and by that they usually mean a man too timid to tell the truth. They talk about “extending grace” and by that they sometimes mean overlooking corruption, excusing wickedness, and refusing to judge anything plainly. They say, “Well, we all need grace,” and what they often mean is, “Please do not confront me with the Book.” That is not grace. That is cowardice wearing church clothes. Bible words have to be returned to Bible settings, or they become toys in the hands of fools.

When you first meet grace in Scripture, you meet it as real favor shown to the undeserving. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8). There is the first mention, and it is not sentimental at all. Noah is living in a world ready for judgment. The earth is filled with violence. Man’s imagination is only evil continually. God is not overlooking sin. God is getting ready to drown the whole business except for eight souls. Right there, in the middle of wrath, Noah finds grace. That first mention teaches you something immediately. Grace is not the denial of judgment. Grace shines most clearly where judgment is deserved. Grace does not mean God has gone soft. Grace means God has shown favor where destruction was due. That is the first step toward understanding the word correctly.

The problem with the modern church is that it likes the sound of grace but not the structure behind it. People like to sing “Amazing Grace” until you ask them why it is amazing. It is amazing because it saves a wretch. It is amazing because it comes from a holy God to a guilty sinner. It is amazing because it remains righteous while doing so. It is amazing because it does not ask the sinner to patch himself up before receiving it. And it is amazing because it does not merely sympathize with the sinner. It rescues him. The moment you reduce grace to friendliness, politeness, or emotional softness, you have stepped away from the Bible. Grace is bigger than temperament. Grace is a divine action rooted in the nature and work of God.

2. Grace Is Favor Shown to the Undeserving

At the simplest level, grace is unmerited favor. A man receives what he did not earn, did not deserve, and could not demand. You see that all through the Bible in the phrase “find grace in thy sight.” Lot says, “thy servant hath found grace in thy sight” (Genesis 19:19). Moses says, “If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way” (Exodus 33:13). Ruth says to Boaz, “Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?” (Ruth 2:10). Esther obtains “grace and favour in his sight” (Esther 2:17). Those passages show grace as favor bestowed by one in authority upon one in need. It is kindness where no claim exists. It is benevolence where no debt is owed. The receiver is not collecting wages. He is receiving mercy.

That point matters because fallen man always tries to turn grace into something owed to him. The flesh hates being helpless. It hates being bankrupt. It hates being told it deserves hell. It would rather dress up in religion and offer God some stained rag of self-improvement than come like a beggar and receive grace. But the Bible will not flatter the flesh. Romans 4:4 says, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” There are only two possible grounds there. Either God owes you, or He does not. If He owes you, it is debt. If He does not owe you and gives anyway, it is grace. Salvation cannot be both. That is why men stumble over grace. It strips them. It leaves them empty-

handed. It tells the preacher, the prostitute, the scholar, the thief, the Baptist deacon, and the jailbird exactly the same thing. You have no claim on God outside Jesus Christ.

This is why grace is offensive to proud religionists and precious to ruined sinners. A proud man wants credit. He wants a receipt. He wants proof that heaven noticed his effort. But a sinner under conviction will throw all of that overboard if he can only get mercy from God. Grace is for the man who has stopped arguing. Grace is for the woman who knows she cannot fix her record. Grace is for the soul that understands that if God deals with him on the basis of merit, he is finished. That is why the publican went down justified and the Pharisee did not. One man came with a list. The other came with a plea: "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The doorway into grace is not pride. It is helplessness.

3. Grace Is Not God Lowering His Standards

Now here is where people go wrong. They hear that grace is free, and they imagine that means it is cheap. They hear that grace is undeserved, and they imagine that means holiness no longer matters. They hear that grace saves sinners, and they conclude that sin must not be so serious after all. That is exactly backward. Grace does not prove sin is small. Grace proves sin is so terrible that only God Himself could solve the problem. The law was not set aside because it was unfair. The law was fulfilled because it was right. Grace did not arise because God decided to become less holy. Grace came because God remained perfectly holy while making a way to justify the ungodly through the death of His Son.

John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Notice that grace does not come alone. It comes with truth. That will spoil a lot of modern preaching right there. Men want grace without truth, mercy without righteousness, kindness without rebuke, comfort without repentance. But in Jesus Christ, grace and truth come together. He forgives the woman taken in adultery, but He says, "go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). He receives sinners, but He tells them the truth about themselves. He does not soften the Father's standard. He reveals it fully. He does not blur right and wrong. He embodies the very righteousness of God while extending grace to the guilty. Grace without truth is sentimentality. Truth without grace is crushing. In Christ both stand perfect.

That is why Romans 3:24 is one of the greatest verses in the New Testament: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." There it is. Freely by grace, yes. But through redemption, too. Grace is not some mystical fog floating around heaven. Grace has a legal basis. Grace flows through redemption. Somebody had to pay. Somebody had to satisfy justice. Somebody had to bear wrath. Somebody had to answer for sin. Grace reaches the sinner because Christ went to the cross. So if a man defines

grace in a way that makes the cross unnecessary, he has not defined grace at all. He has invented a false gospel with a pretty name.

4. Grace Comes Through Jesus Christ

If you want to know what grace really is, you have to get your eyes on Jesus Christ. Grace is not just a doctrine on a page. Grace arrives in a Person. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). That means when Jesus walked this earth, grace was not abstract anymore. It was moving, speaking, touching, feeding, healing, forgiving, rebuking, and finally dying. Men talk about grace as if it were just a theological category. The Holy Ghost presents grace as bound up with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). Whatever grace is in its saving fullness, it is found in Him.

Look at the way Christ dealt with broken people. He touched lepers. He forgave publicans. He received harlots. He had mercy on blind beggars and demon-possessed wretches and thieves dying beside Him. Yet He never once compromised righteousness in doing so. That is what makes grace so glorious. It is not indulgence. It is holy mercy. The Lord Jesus Christ was the only Man who ever had the right to cast the first stone at everybody, and instead He went to the cross for them. That is grace. The sinless One stepping into the place of the sinful. The righteous One bearing judgment for the unrighteous. The clean One taking the condemnation of the filthy. The very nature of grace is Christward. You cannot separate grace from His person or His work and still have the Bible definition.

This is why Paul says salvation is “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24), and why Ephesians 1:7 says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Grace is rich because Christ is rich. Grace is effective because Christ is sufficient. Grace is righteous because Christ is righteous. Grace does not come to you by osmosis, sincerity, family tradition, church membership, baptismal water, or sacramental machinery. Grace comes through Jesus Christ. If you have Him, you have the fountain. If you reject Him, you reject grace no matter how religious your language sounds. That is why a lost church member can sing about grace for forty years and die without ever meeting the God of grace.

5. Grace Is the Opposite of Works

This point must be hammered because men are born legalists at heart. Even after conversion the flesh likes to creep back toward the idea that God deals with us because of our performance. That is why Paul hits the subject so hard. He says in Romans 11:6, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.” That verse is so plain that a theologian has to work overtime to wreck it. Grace and works are opposites

when the matter under discussion is the ground of justification. If a man is saved by grace, he is not saved by works. If he is saved by works, he is not saved by grace. The moment works enter as the basis of acceptance with God, grace loses its meaning.

Paul drives that same nail in Galatians 2:21: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." That is not gentle language. To add law to righteousness is to frustrate grace. It is to make the death of Christ unnecessary in practice, whatever you may say with your lips. Men may use religious phrases like "cooperate with grace" or "complete what God began" or "maintain your justification through obedience," but once they put their works back into the ground of acceptance before God, they have left Pauline grace and gone back to Cain bringing produce. The flesh loves systems where it can contribute something. The cross strips it naked. Grace says Christ paid it all. Religion says Christ helped, now you finish the rest. Paul says that is another gospel.

Now do not misunderstand the point. Good works have their place. A saved man ought to work. A Christian ought to labor, obey, serve, pray, witness, and live clean. But those works are the fruit of grace, not the root of salvation. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works," and then verse 10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:8-10). There is the order. Saved by grace, then created unto good works. Not saved by works, then rewarded with grace. The modern church tangles that up constantly. Paul does not. Grace saves first. Grace produces second. Works do not purchase grace. Grace produces works when rightly received.

6. Grace Teaches Holiness, Not Sin

The moment grace is preached clearly, some smart mouth always shows up and says, "Well then, if salvation is by grace, people can just live any way they please." Paul heard that nonsense in his own day. Romans 6:1 asks, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" His answer is two words: "God forbid" (Romans 6:2). Then again in verse 15, "shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:15). That means anybody using grace as a license for sin is using grace against Scripture. He is not defending grace. He is twisting it. Grace never meant God quit caring about righteousness. Grace means the believer now has a new standing, a new life, a new power, and a new Master.

Titus 2:11 and 12 should settle the matter forever: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly." There it is in black and white. Grace

teaches. And what does it teach. It teaches denial of ungodliness. It teaches denial of worldly lusts. It teaches sober living, righteous living, godly living. That is why the man who says grace encourages carnality has never understood grace. The law can condemn a sinner, but it cannot change him. Grace not only forgives. Grace also instructs. It does not just declare a man righteous in Christ. It begins schooling him in practical righteousness in life.

The other side of that warning is found in Jude 4, where ungodly men are said to be “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.” That is exactly what happens when grace is severed from truth and holiness. Men turn grace into permission for compromise, impurity, doctrinal sloppiness, and rebellion. The New Testament does not tolerate that corruption for one second. Grace is not leniency toward sin. Grace is divine favor that rescues from sin’s guilt and teaches separation from sin’s power. If a man claims to know grace and loves the world more than Christ, he has something wrong in his doctrine or wrong in his heart. Grace is free, but it is not filthy. Grace saves sinners, but it does not celebrate sin.

7. Grace Is God’s Strength at Work in the Believer

One of the richest things about grace is that it is not only the way a sinner gets saved. It is the way a saint stands, serves, suffers, and finishes. Paul says, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Romans 5:2). Notice that wording. We stand in grace. Grace is not just the front door to the Christian life. It is the ground under the Christian’s feet. Then Paul says, “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is identity. Then in the same verse he says, “his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is energy. Grace not only pardons the sinner. It empowers the servant.

That verse alone wrecks two false ideas at once. First, it wrecks the idea that grace is merely a legal standing with no practical power. Paul says grace was with him in labor. Second, it wrecks the idea that grace makes a man lazy. Paul labored more abundantly than they all. Grace did not make him passive. It made him fruitful. The Lord’s grace turned a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious man into the hardest working apostle in the New Testament. That is what grace does. It transforms. It energizes. It drives. It makes a man grateful enough to spend and be spent for Jesus Christ. When a man uses grace as an excuse for laziness, he is not following Paul. He is following his flesh.

Then there is 2 Corinthians 12:9 where the Lord says to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” That is grace in suffering. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. He asked for removal. God gave sufficiency. Sometimes grace comes as

deliverance, and sometimes it comes as endurance. Sometimes grace changes the circumstance, and sometimes it changes the saint inside the circumstance. A lot of shallow Christians think grace is only proven when God takes the pain away. Paul learned something deeper. Grace can be just as present when the pain remains and Christ's strength carries you through it. That makes grace larger than the average churchgoer imagines. It is not just a doctrine for conversion. It is the operating power of God in a weak believer's life.

Conclusion

So what is grace really. It is not religious syrup. It is not soft-headed tolerance. It is not God pretending sin is no big deal. It is not a heavenly pat on the head for people trying their best. Grace is the undeserved favor of God shown righteously through Jesus Christ to guilty sinners who deserve judgment and can offer nothing in return. It appears in seed form early in the Bible as favor found in the sight of another. It comes in fullness through Jesus Christ, who is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). It operates savingly through His blood, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). It stands opposite of works as the ground of justification. It teaches holiness instead of sin. It strengthens believers for service and suffering. That is grace the way the Book gives it.

This is why the doctrine matters so much. Get grace wrong, and you will either become a legalist trying to earn from God what He only gives in Christ, or you will become a libertine using God's mercy as an excuse to live like the devil. One error denies grace by adding works. The other corrupts grace by removing holiness. Paul avoids both. He says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), and he also says the grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness (Titus 2:11-12). He says believers are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14), and then he says, "God forbid" when anyone suggests that means permission to sin (Romans 6:15). Grace in Scripture is never flimsy. It is holy, strong, doctrinal, and practical all at once.

If this series is going to uncover grace properly, then this first essay had to drive a stake in the ground. Grace is one of the strongest and deepest realities in all the Bible because it tells you how a holy God can save wicked men without surrendering one inch of His righteousness. It tells you why Christ had to die. It tells you why no flesh can glory in His presence. It tells you why salvation is free to the believer and infinitely costly to the Saviour. It tells you why the weakest saint can endure and why the vilest sinner can be forgiven. Grace is not a decorative Bible word. Grace is one of the glories of God revealed in Jesus Christ. And if a man ever truly sees what grace really is, he will never use the word lightly again.

2 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Grace Before the Cross

Introduction

One of the quickest ways to make a mess out of your Bible is to take a great word like grace and then handle it like a brick instead of a jewel. A brick is the same all the way through. A jewel flashes different colors depending on where the light hits it. Grace is like that in Scripture. It is there early, it is there often, and it is there truly, but it is not always unfolded with the same doctrinal brightness in every passage. That is where careless Bible readers get themselves into trouble. One crowd says grace did not really exist until Paul, as if Noah never read Genesis 6:8 and as if Moses never spoke with God face to face about finding grace in His sight. Another crowd goes to the opposite ditch and acts like every mention of grace from Genesis to Revelation means exactly the same thing in the same way under the same administration. Both crowds are wrong because both crowds are flattening revelation instead of following it.

The truth is better than either extreme. Grace is in the Bible long before Paul ever wrote Romans, Galatians, or Ephesians. Men found grace in the sight of God and in the sight of rulers, masters, and benefactors all through the Old Testament. Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Genesis 6:8). Moses speaks repeatedly about finding grace in God's sight (Exodus 33:12-17; 34:9). Ruth finds grace in the eyes of Boaz as a stranger from a cursed people (Ruth 2:10). Esther obtains grace and favour before a king (Esther 2:17). David, Joseph, Lot, Jacob, and others all stand in situations where grace appears as favor, kindness, acceptance, or merciful regard shown by one in authority to one beneath him. That is real grace. It is Bible grace. It is not imaginary, and a man has no business acting like God discovered the word in the middle of Acts.

But here is the other side, and it matters just as much. Though grace appears before the cross, and though it shines in many places before Paul's ministry, its full doctrinal force is not yet unfolded the way it later is in the Pauline revelation. Before the cross, grace often appears in narrative, prayer, covenant dealings, providence, favor, and mercy. After the cross, and especially through Paul, grace is opened up as the ground of justification, the standing of the believer, the opposite of works, the operating principle of this present dispensation, and the gospel itself in the phrase "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). So this essay has to hold both truths together. Grace did not start with Paul, but Paul explains it in a way no earlier writer does. If you miss the first truth, you will cut up the Old Testament wrongly. If you miss the second truth, you will mix everything together until you cannot distinguish Noah's favor from the sinner's justification in Christ. A Bible believer has to keep both eyes open.

1. The First Mention of Grace

The first mention of grace in Scripture is no accident. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8). The Holy Ghost could have introduced that word in a garden, at an altar, in a peaceful prayer, or in some domestic scene between a father and son. Instead, He brings it in like lightning against a black sky. The first mention of grace comes when the world is rotten, violence fills the earth, every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart is only evil continually, and God is preparing to wipe the whole business out with a flood (Genesis 6:5-7). Right there, in the middle of corruption and judgment, Noah finds grace. That is your first clue to how the word operates. Grace does not show up because sin is minor. Grace shows up because sin is catastrophic.

There is another thing in that first mention that you should not miss. The text says Noah found grace. It does not say grace found Noah because Noah was charming, talented, or spiritually impressive by the standards of men. Later in the chapter the Bible says Noah was “a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). That is not because Noah earned some legal claim over the Almighty. Noah is still part of Adam’s race. He is not sinless. But in the middle of universal ruin, God sets His regard upon this man and his household. Grace is favor in the face of deserved wrath. That is why the first mention is so strong. It ties grace to divine deliverance where destruction is the rightful due.

Now be careful here. Noah’s case is not yet Paul’s full exposition of grace as “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). The cross has not happened yet. The church has not been revealed yet. The mystery is still hidden. But the seed is there. Noah’s ark is a picture of salvation, and Noah’s grace is a picture of divine favor that rescues in the face of judgment. That is how the Old Testament often handles great truths. It presents them in event, type, shadow, and historical dealing before the doctrinal floodlight is turned on later. If you cannot see that, you will either deny the picture or confuse the picture with the full explanation.

2. Grace as Favor in the Sight of Another

When you keep moving through the Old Testament, you begin seeing a repeated pattern. Grace is often spoken of as favor found “in thy sight” or “in thine eyes.” Lot says, “Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight” (Genesis 19:19). Jacob keeps talking about finding grace in the sight of Esau (Genesis 32:5; 33:8, 10, 15). Joseph finds grace in the sight of Potiphar (Genesis 39:4). The children of Israel say to Joseph, “Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord” (Genesis 47:25). Esther obtains grace before Ahasuerus (Esther 2:17). That wording is not filler. It shows you one of the main Old

Testament senses of grace. It is favor shown by a superior to an inferior. It is kindness from the throne downward, from the master downward, from the benefactor downward.

That is an important foundation because it keeps the word concrete. Grace is not abstract smoke. Grace is not a mystical mist. Grace is benevolent regard. Grace is unearned acceptance. Grace is the hand of one with power resting kindly upon one without claim. Ruth gets this exactly right when she asks Boaz, “Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?” (Ruth 2:10). That is the voice of grace from below. A stranger has no rights. A Moabitess carries no covenant credentials worth boasting in before Israel. Yet favor comes down anyway. That is how grace appears again and again before the cross. Somebody lower receives something from somebody higher that could not be demanded as a debt.

But again, do not flatten the picture. Old Testament grace as favor in another’s sight is real grace, yet it is not always identical to Paul’s later doctrinal use where grace becomes the clear antithesis of works in justification, the believer’s standing in Christ, and the operating principle of the present dispensation. In Genesis, Ruth, Esther, and Samuel, grace often moves in narrative, providential, relational, covenantal, and governmental settings. A man finds grace before a ruler. A woman finds grace before a redeemer. Israel seeks grace before God in a national crisis. Those are genuine operations of grace, but they are not all saying the same thing Paul says in Ephesians 2:8, or Romans 11:6, or Galatians 2:21. The Bible is one Book, but it unfolds truth progressively, and if you refuse that, you will turn your King James Bible into a knot.

3. Moses and Grace in God’s Sight

Some of the strongest Old Testament passages on grace are found in Moses’ dealings with God. Exodus 33 is a gold mine. Moses says to the LORD, “Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight” (Exodus 33:12). Then he says, “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way” (Exodus 33:13). He continues, “For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us?” (Exodus 33:16). And the LORD answers, “I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name” (Exodus 33:17). There is grace all over that chapter, and it is tied to revelation, presence, favor, and covenant mercy.

Notice what Moses does with grace. He does not use grace as a license for carelessness. He uses grace as the basis for asking God to go with His people, reveal His way, and distinguish them from the nations. That is already enough to correct a lot of modern nonsense. Moses does not treat grace like a soft pillow for laziness. He treats it like divine

favor that secures fellowship, guidance, and God's presence in the journey. Grace there is personal and relational. God knows Moses by name. Moses finds grace in God's sight. That grace becomes the ground on which Moses pleads for deeper knowledge and continued presence. That is rich ground, but it is still not identical to Paul saying, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). The two are connected, but they are not interchangeable.

Then in Exodus 34:9, after the sin of the golden calf and the renewal of covenant dealings, Moses says, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." There you see grace tied to pardon and divine presence among a stiffnecked nation. That is a tremendous Old Testament glimpse of how grace works before the cross. God does not abandon His dealings with Israel because of their stubbornness. He continues in mercy and covenant faithfulness. Yet the sacrificial system remains in view, the law remains in force, and the full revelation of justification apart from works through the finished blood of Christ is not yet unfolded. Moses sees grace. He lives under grace in real dealings with God. But he does not yet have Romans spread out before him.

4. Ruth, Boaz, and Grace to the Stranger

If you want one of the sweetest pictures of Old Testament grace, you go to the book of Ruth. Ruth is a Moabitess. Under the law, that is not exactly the kind of pedigree you frame and hang in the family room of Israel's covenant privileges. She is a stranger. She is poor. She is a widow. She has no leverage. She has no power. She has no claim she can wave around. So when Boaz takes notice of her and provides for her, she falls on her face and says, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" (Ruth 2:10). There is that Old Testament grace again. Favor shown by one above to one beneath. Acceptance offered where exclusion might have been expected.

Boaz becomes a beautiful type of the gracious redeemer. He not only permits Ruth to glean; he protects her, feeds her, instructs his young men concerning her, and later redeems the inheritance and takes her to wife. All of that is dripping with grace. Yet it is grace moving in story, picture, kinship redemption, and providence. It is not yet Paul standing up and saying, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). But if you do not see the connection, you are blind. Ruth's astonishment at favor she does not deserve is a perfect Old Testament preparation for the sinner at Calvary. She is the stranger asking, "Why me?" Every saved man eventually asks the same thing if he gets low enough before the Lord.

And do not miss the national and prophetic undertones of the book either. Ruth, a Gentile woman, is brought into blessing through a kinsman redeemer and becomes linked to the line of David. That ought to make any Bible believer sit up. Grace here is not merely private sentiment. Grace is moving along the line of God's redemptive purpose. But again, you must distinguish picture from full doctrinal explanation. Ruth gives you one of the clearest human illustrations of grace before the cross, but the doctrinal weight that Paul later places on grace as the ground of justification for the church in this present age has not yet been spelled out there in Pauline terms. Ruth is the portrait. Romans is the doctrine.

5. Grace in the Psalms, Prophets, and Wisdom Books

Grace is not limited to narrative scenes. It shows up in the poetic and prophetic books as well. Psalm 84:11 says, "the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalm 45:2 says of the king, "grace is poured into thy lips." Proverbs speaks of wisdom as "an ornament of grace" (Proverbs 1:9; 4:9), and says, "He giveth grace unto the lowly" (Proverbs 3:34). Jeremiah 31:2 says, "The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness." Zechariah 12:10 speaks of "the spirit of grace and of supplications." Zechariah 4:7 cries, "Grace, grace unto it." So the word is not hiding in a corner. It is spread across the Old Testament in poetry, prophecy, wisdom, and promise.

Now when you study those passages, you see grace operating in ways that touch speech, humility, national mercy, future restoration, and divine blessing. "Grace is poured into thy lips" shows grace in expression. "He giveth grace unto the lowly" shows grace in God's response to humility. "The spirit of grace and of supplications" points toward a future work of God upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they look upon the one whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10). That is not cheap sentimental language. Grace there is prophetic. Grace there is national. Grace there is tied to repentance and future dealings with Israel. So again, the word is rich long before Paul. No serious Bible student can deny that without mutilating half the Old Testament.

But what you do have to recognize is that these Old Testament uses are often distributed across different contexts without yet being gathered up into the concentrated doctrinal force you find in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. The same word is there, but revelation is still climbing the mountain. A man standing in Proverbs has not yet reached the summit of Romans 5. A prophet speaking of the spirit of grace in Jerusalem has not yet heard Paul say, "ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). So the Bible student must let the earlier uses stand in their own settings while also allowing later revelation to throw brighter light upon the whole theme. That is how you honor the Bible instead of forcing it.

6. Grace in the Ministry of Jesus Before the Cross

When you come to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, grace begins to blaze with a stronger light, though even there the cross has not yet been completed and the church has not yet been revealed. Luke 2:40 says of the child Jesus, “the grace of God was upon him.” John 1:14 says, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth.” Then John 1:17 gives the great statement, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” That does not mean there was no grace in Genesis, Exodus, Ruth, Psalms, or Zechariah. It means that grace and truth arrive in their fullest personal manifestation in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not merely one more recipient of grace. He is the embodied source through whom grace shines with perfect clarity.

Watch how He deals with people before the cross is accomplished. He heals, forgives, receives, feeds, and restores. He touches lepers. He calls publicans. He receives sinners. He pardons the woman taken in adultery while telling her, “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). He speaks words “full of grace and truth” without ever compromising righteousness. That is crucial. Grace before the cross in Christ’s ministry is not mush. It is not tolerance. It is holy favor in action. He does not water truth down to show grace. He shows grace while telling the truth so sharply that hypocrites want Him dead. That is Bible grace in the ministry of the King before Calvary is finished.

Yet even here, you must handle the text carefully. During His earthly ministry, the Lord says He is sent “but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). He ministers under the law, to Israel, in fulfillment of promises, before the full revelation of the mystery of the body of Christ. So while grace and truth are shining in Him personally, the full Pauline doctrine of grace as the standing of the church, the open antithesis to works in justification, and the dispensation of grace to the Gentiles is not yet completely unfolded. Christ is the fountain. Paul later explains the flow. Christ is the source. Paul later expounds the doctrinal administration. If you confuse those distinctions, you will either erase the earthly ministry’s Jewish setting or miss the glory of the later revelation.

7. Paul Does Not Invent Grace, but He Unfolds It

By the time you get to Paul, grace does not suddenly appear out of a vacuum. What happens is that the Holy Ghost takes a word already glowing in Scripture and unfolds its doctrinal force with stunning clarity. Paul says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). He says believers are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). He says, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). He says, “ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). He says, “if by grace, then is it no more of works” (Romans 11:6). He says he was

called to testify “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Then he speaks of “the dispensation of the grace of God” given to him for the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:2). That is the floodlight.

So Paul is not the inventor of grace. He is the inspired expositor of grace for this present age. That is why a Bible believer ought to reject both extremes. The first extreme says grace did not exist before Paul. That is nonsense. Noah, Moses, Ruth, Esther, David, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and John all knew the word and saw its operation. The second extreme says Paul contributes nothing unique and that grace means the same thing in Genesis 6 as in Ephesians 2 without any increase in doctrinal clarity. That is also nonsense. Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles, the wise masterbuilder, the steward of the dispensation of grace, and the one who opens up justification, standing, union in Christ, and the body of Christ in a way not previously revealed. The Bible itself says so.

This distinction is not splitting hairs. It protects the Book. It lets Noah be Noah and Paul be Paul. It lets Moses plead for grace in covenant relation without forcing Exodus 33 to say everything Romans 11 says. It lets Ruth be a gracious type of redemption without requiring the book of Ruth to function like Galatians. It lets John exalt Christ as full of grace and truth while still letting Paul later explain the church’s position under grace. That is not confusion. That is precision. And precision is what keeps a Bible believer from turning revelation into soup. Grace before the cross is real, rich, and precious. Grace after the cross is more fully revealed, doctrinally concentrated, and openly proclaimed through the apostle Paul. Both truths belong in the same Bible, and if you can keep them together without blurring them, you are on your way to handling the word of God rightly.

Conclusion

So where does that leave us. It leaves us with a Bible truth broad enough to fill both Testaments and sharp enough to require division where God divides. Grace did not suddenly pop into existence in the church age like a new invention from heaven’s filing cabinet. Grace is there from the days of Noah onward. Men find grace in God’s sight. Strangers find grace in a redeemer’s eyes. Prophets speak of grace. Kings receive grace in their lips. The lowly are given grace. Israel is promised the spirit of grace. The child Jesus grows with the grace of God upon Him. The Word made flesh is full of grace and truth. Any system that denies all of that because it wants to make Paul the starting point of the word is not studying the Bible carefully.

At the same time, the Book itself will not let you stop there. It will not let you smear all those passages together and act like nothing brightens, nothing advances, and nothing becomes more explicit after the cross and through the apostle Paul. The grace Noah found in the face

of flood judgment is real grace, but it is not yet Paul's clear exposition of justification apart from works. Moses finding grace in God's sight is real grace, but it is not yet "ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Ruth's astonishment at favor from Boaz is real grace, but it is not yet "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Those earlier revelations are true, beautiful, and indispensable, but they are preparatory in many cases, pictorial in others, and progressive in the whole.

That is why this subject matters so much for any serious Bible believer. You cannot preach grace right if you do not know where it appears, how it develops, and where it is fully opened up. Grace before the cross shows God's heart, God's favor, God's mercy, and God's dealings with men in type, history, poetry, prophecy, and the earthly ministry of Christ. Grace after the cross, especially in Paul, shows the doctrinal brilliance of what the cross accomplished and what God is now doing in this present dispensation. You need both. You need the seed and the flower, the picture and the explanation, the shadow and the substance. If you keep those things in place, your Bible gets brighter instead of darker, and the word grace stops being a slogan and starts becoming what it really is: one of the grandest revelations of the character and purpose of God in all of Scripture.

3 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Grace and Truth Came by Jesus Christ

Introduction

There are some verses in the Bible that do not just inform you. They split open a whole mountain range of truth and let you look down into depths you would never have seen otherwise. John 1:17 is one of those verses. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). That is not a throwaway line. That is not a nice poetic contrast for a Christmas sermon. That is a doctrinal thunderclap. The Holy Ghost is not telling you that Moses was bad and Jesus was good. He is telling you that the law came by one servant, and grace and truth came by the Son. He is telling you that in Jesus Christ something arrived in fullness and manifestation that had never stood on this earth in that way before. Grace had appeared before. Truth had appeared before. But in the Lord Jesus Christ both came in their living, breathing, perfect fullness. He did not merely talk about grace. He was full of it. He did not merely speak truth. He was the truth. That makes Him unlike every prophet, priest, king, apostle, and preacher who ever lived.

That is why men are always trying to separate what God joined together in Him. One crowd wants truth without grace. They like hard lines, sharp denunciations, cold orthodoxy, and mechanical correctness. They can spot heresy a mile away, but they have the warmth of a

gravestone in January. Another crowd wants grace without truth. They talk about love, acceptance, kindness, and compassion until sin becomes a personality trait and false doctrine becomes a misunderstanding. They call it balance, but it is not balance. It is corruption. Jesus Christ never leaned into one by sacrificing the other. He was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Not half of one and half of the other. Full of both. He could look a wrecked sinner in the face with compassion and still say something sharp enough to cut through self-deception. He could rebuke Pharisees like a lightning storm and still weep over Jerusalem. He could receive publicans and sinners and still never excuse their sin. He held both together perfectly because He was not a sinner trying to strike a balance. He was the sinless Son of God manifest in the flesh.

So this essay has to go straight to the center. We are not just studying grace as a Bible word here. We are looking at grace where it burns brightest, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to look at John 1 and the contrast with Moses. We are going to see how the Word made flesh embodies grace and truth. We are going to watch Him deal with sinners, outcasts, broken people, and desperate people with perfect grace while never giving away one inch of truth. Then we are going to drive the thing all the way to the cross, because grace is not some vague kindness floating around in heaven like perfume. Grace is the righteous outflow of the blood atonement of Jesus Christ. If you want to know what grace really looks like, do not start with your favorite church cliché. Start with the Son of God standing in flesh before men, and then hanging on a cross under the wrath they deserved.

1. The Word Was Made Flesh

John opens his Gospel higher than Matthew, Mark, or Luke because he starts where none of them start. He does not begin with Bethlehem, Nazareth, or a genealogy. He begins where time has no clock and creation has no dirt yet under its fingernails. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). That verse alone is enough to blow up every cult on earth that tampers with the deity of Jesus Christ. He was not a created being. He was not the first angel. He was not a lesser god. He was God. Then John keeps climbing: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). The One who later walks the roads of Galilee is the One who made the roads, the dust, the hills, the stars over the hills, and the men walking on the roads. Then the shock comes in verse 14, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). There is the incarnation. God in flesh. The infinite in the finite. The eternal in time. The Creator in creation.

Now that matters for grace because grace reaches its fullest manifestation only when the eternal Word is made flesh. Grace in the Old Testament is real. Men find grace in God’s

sight. Prophets speak of grace. Kings are blessed with grace in their lips. But in John 1, grace is not merely mentioned, requested, or pictured. Grace takes on a body. Grace has eyes that look at a leper. Grace has hands that touch the unclean. Grace has feet that walk toward the outcast. Grace has a mouth that speaks to the woman at the well. Grace is no longer just favor described in words. Grace is standing there in human form. That is why John says, “we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Not a little grace. Not occasional grace. Full of grace and truth.

This tells you something else. Grace is personal before it is propositional. That does not mean doctrine does not matter. It means doctrine about grace must be rooted in Christ Himself. If you detach grace from the person of Jesus Christ, you will turn it into an abstract principle. Once that happens, men start defining grace by their feelings, their church culture, or their psychology. One preacher says grace means never confronting people. Another says grace means giving sinners space. Another says grace means being patient with error indefinitely. But John does not let you define grace by atmosphere. He defines it by Christ. Whatever grace is in its fullest earthly manifestation, it looks like Jesus Christ. If your definition of grace makes Him unrecognizable, your definition is wrong.

2. The Law Was Given by Moses

John 1:17 says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” That verse is not a criticism of Moses. Moses was God’s servant, faithful in all his house (Hebrews 3:5). The law was holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good (Romans 7:12). The problem was never with the law. The problem was with the sinner under it. The law told the truth. The law revealed the righteousness of God. The law exposed sin. The law shut every mouth. The law did not flatter anybody. It did not stroke the flesh. It did not negotiate with rebellion. It said, in effect, this is what a holy God requires. Now line up against that, Adam’s race, and see how you fare. The answer was always the same. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Moses gave the law. The law demanded. The law revealed. The law condemned.

But notice the wording carefully. The law was given by Moses. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Moses was a channel. Christ is the source. Moses brought tablets of stone down from a mountain. Christ came down from heaven Himself. Moses could tell Israel what God required, but he could not be the answer to what they lacked. Moses could mediate the covenant, but he could not redeem the conscience. Moses could show men their duty, but he could not change their nature. Moses could point toward sacrifice, priesthood, tabernacle, blood, and mercy seat, but he could not be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The contrast is not between wrong and right,

but between shadow and substance, servant and Son, demand and supply, exposure and fulfillment.

That is why the verse says grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law could state truth, but grace and truth come embodied in Christ. The law could command righteousness, but Christ is made unto us righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). The law could define uncleanness, but Christ could touch the leper and cleanse him. The law could expose adultery, but Christ could forgive the adulterer without denying the filth of the sin. The law could call for sacrifice, but Christ became the sacrifice. So John's contrast is not superficial. It goes down to the marrow. Moses' ministry gave what God required. Christ's coming brought what sinners needed. Moses could tell the truth about your condition. Christ came with grace and truth to deal with that condition completely.

3. Full of Grace and Truth

The expression "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14) is one of the most balanced descriptions in the Bible, which is exactly why the flesh cannot stand it. The flesh always wants to pull one side loose from the other. Men who are proud of being tough on doctrine often become graceless. Men who are proud of being compassionate often become spineless. Jesus Christ was neither. He was full of grace and truth. That means every action He took and every word He spoke had both dimensions perfectly present. When He forgave, it was truthful forgiveness. When He rebuked, it was gracious rebuke. When He healed, it was holy healing. When He received a sinner, He did it without becoming one. When He denounced hypocrites, He did it without any trace of personal corruption or fleshly spite.

Take the woman at the well in John 4. The Lord sits by Jacob's well and asks a Samaritan woman for a drink. That alone is gracious, because Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (John 4:9), and men in her world did not go out of their way to dignify women with ruined reputations. But He does not stop at being polite. He starts uncovering her soul. He tells her about living water. Then He tells her, "thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband" (John 4:18). There is grace and truth in one conversation. He engages her. He offers life. He exposes sin. He does not wink at her history, and He does not crush her into the dirt. He leads her through truth into the possibility of grace. A modern preacher would probably ruin the scene by choosing one side. He would either hammer her without mercy or comfort her without confrontation. Christ does neither. He does both perfectly.

Or take the woman taken in adultery in John 8. The scribes and Pharisees drag her in, using her as bait in their trap. The Lord eventually says, "He that is without sin among you, let him

first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7). One by one they leave. Then Jesus says, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). There is grace and truth again. “Neither do I condemn thee” is grace. “Go, and sin no more” is truth. Any fool can do one without the other. A coward can comfort. A brute can condemn. Only the sinless Son of God can absolve without endorsing, and confront without cruelty. That is why He is full of grace and truth. Not alternating between them like moods. Full of both at once.

4. Grace to Sinners and Outcasts

One of the clearest manifestations of grace in the earthly ministry of Christ is the class of people He kept receiving. Publicans, sinners, lepers, blind beggars, harlots, demoniacs, thieves, and social wrecks kept finding their way to Him. That did not happen by accident. Luke 15:1 says, “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.” The Pharisees hated it. They murmured, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2). Thank God He did. If He had only received the respectable crowd, heaven would be empty. The scandal of grace is that the Holy One did not stay behind glass. He received the unclean, not to become unclean, but to cleanse them. He went where the disease was because He was the cure.

Look at the leper in Mark 1. The man kneels and says, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Mark 1:40). Jesus, “moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean” (Mark 1:41). Under the law, leprosy marked a man as unclean, separated, and untouchable. Christ does not become contaminated by the touch. The uncleanness is overpowered by His holiness. That is a picture of grace if there ever was one. It is not mere pity. It is active cleansing mercy. He does not just sympathize from a distance. He touches the untouchable. That is what grace looks like when it takes flesh.

Or consider Zacchaeus in Luke 19, a chief among the publicans and rich. Most men hated him for good reason. He had gotten fat off the system. But the Lord says, “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5). The crowd grumbles, “that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner” (Luke 19:7). Exactly right. He was. That is why He came. Zacchaeus ends the scene saying, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor” and offers restitution where he had extorted (Luke 19:8). Grace did not excuse his sin. Grace changed his direction. Christ did not say, Zacchaeus, your greed is no issue. He brought salvation to the house, and the fruit showed up. That is Bible grace. It seeks sinners, receives sinners, and transforms sinners.

5. Truth Never Compromised

Now this is the part the modern church cannot seem to process. Jesus Christ was the most gracious man who ever lived, and also the most truthful. He never softened reality to make rebels comfortable. He never adjusted the Father's holiness to suit the spirit of the age. He never edited doctrine to keep a crowd. John the Baptist called Him "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29), but He is also the Judge of all. He could say to weary sinners, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), and in the same chapter pronounce woe on Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum for their unbelief (Matthew 11:20-24). He could receive a sinner today and announce eternal judgment tomorrow. That is not inconsistency. That is fullness of grace and truth.

Read Matthew 23 sometime if you think grace means never speaking sharply. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" comes like a drumbeat through that chapter (Matthew 23:13-29). He calls them blind guides, fools, whited sepulchres, serpents, and a generation of vipers. That is strong language because false religion deserved strong language. The same Lord who wept over Jerusalem also told the religious leaders what they were. Why? Because truth matters. Grace does not require the Son of God to lie. Grace is not politeness toward damnable error. Grace is not diplomacy with hypocrites who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. A preacher who thinks he is more loving than Jesus because he never rebukes anybody is not more loving. He is less truthful.

And yet notice something wonderful. Even His rebukes are holy. There is not one speck of carnal spite in them. He is not venting. He is not losing His temper the way a sinner does. He is telling the truth with divine purity. That matters because some rough men like to use "truth" as a cover for flesh. They say they are just being biblical, when in fact they are enjoying themselves too much. Christ never did that. He was full of grace and truth. So if a man wants to follow Him, he will not become soft toward sin, but he also will not become fleshly in his denunciations. The Lord handled both perfectly because He was perfect.

6. Grace and Truth Move Toward the Cross

If you stop with the earthly ministry of Jesus and never reach Calvary, you still have not gone far enough in understanding grace. John 1 points toward the cross even when it is not naming it yet. John the Baptist sees Jesus coming and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). There is the direction. Grace is not just Jesus being kind to troubled people in Galilee. Grace is Jesus moving toward sacrificial death as the Lamb of God. All the tenderness, healing, and compassion in His ministry would not save a single soul if He never went to the cross. Grace has to have a righteous basis. That basis is blood.

Romans 3:24 says sinners are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Then verse 25 says God set Him forth “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:25). That means grace is not floating around untethered. Grace flows through redemption. Grace is tied to propitiation. Grace is connected to blood. God does not save because He stopped being just. He saves because His justice was satisfied in Jesus Christ. The cross is where grace and truth meet in blazing, terrifying glory. Truth says sin must be judged. Grace says the Judge will bear the judgment Himself. Truth says the wages of sin is death. Grace says the sinless Son will die in the sinner’s place. Truth says the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Grace says Christ will taste death for every man (Hebrews 2:9).

That is why the cross is the supreme manifestation of grace. Men saw grace in His eyes before the cross. They heard grace in His words before the cross. But the full cost of grace appears at Calvary. There the spotless Christ is made sin for us, “who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). There grace is no longer merely visible in His dealings. It is poured out in His death. There every type, shadow, altar, lamb, priest, and mercy seat converges. The law demanded death. Truth affirmed it. Grace supplied the Substitute. If you preach grace without blood, you are not preaching New Testament grace. You are peddling a soft counterfeit.

7. Grace Triumphant in Resurrection

The cross is not the end of the story because dead saviors do not save anybody. Grace and truth come by Jesus Christ, and that includes the resurrection. Paul says Christ “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). That means grace is not only seen in His death for sin, but in His victorious rising to secure the believer’s standing. If the grave had held Him, grace would be unfinished. If Christ had remained dead, His claims would be false and the gospel would be empty. But He rose. That resurrection is heaven’s declaration that the payment was accepted, the sacrifice sufficient, death defeated, and the way open.

This is why grace is not mere leniency. Leniency leaves the problem unsolved. Grace in Christ solves it. The resurrection proves that the work is complete enough for God to justify the ungodly who believe on Jesus. It is one thing for a man to feel forgiven. It is another thing for God to declare him justified because Christ rose from the dead. The gospel is not that Jesus made salvation possible if you do your part. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Grace rests there. Grace does not wobble on human effort. Grace stands on a finished death and an empty tomb.

And once He rose, the full riches of grace could be proclaimed openly. John gives you the incarnate manifestation. Paul later unfolds the doctrinal force. Through the risen Christ, grace becomes the believer's standing, inheritance, and hope. "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2). "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). But those Pauline statements are not detached from John 1. They are the doctrinal opening up of what first shone in the person of the incarnate Son. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ in incarnation, in ministry, in cross, and in resurrection. Without any one of those, the picture is incomplete.

Conclusion

So what does John 1 teach us about grace? It teaches us that grace reaches its fullest earthly manifestation not as a theory, a feeling, or a slogan, but in a Person. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). That means grace is Christ-centered from top to bottom. If a man studies grace and somehow winds up talking more about human psychology than Jesus Christ, he missed the point. If he uses grace as a word to excuse sin or blur truth, he missed the point. Grace in Scripture looks like Jesus. It receives the broken, cleanses the filthy, speaks to the outcast, and opens the door of mercy to the guilty, all while telling the truth so plainly that proud men gnash their teeth.

It also teaches us that grace never stands alone as sentiment. It is always bound to truth. Christ never gave away one inch of righteousness in order to appear compassionate. He did not tell lies to comfort sinners. He did not flatter hypocrites. He did not recast sin as a mistake. He forgave, but He also told the adulteress to sin no more. He welcomed publicans and sinners, but He also pronounced woes on unbelieving cities and hypocritical leaders. That is why modern religion cannot imitate Him. It either becomes harsh without mercy or soft without truth. Jesus Christ alone is full of both. He is the perfect revelation of the Father's heart and the perfect standard of the Father's holiness.

And finally, John 1 pushes us all the way to the cross and beyond. Grace is not vague kindness floating around in heaven. Grace is the righteous outflow of Christ's blood atonement, death, burial, and resurrection. The Lamb of God came to take away the sin of the world. The One full of grace and truth went to Calvary under the wrath of God and came out of the grave triumphant. That is why grace can save without compromising righteousness. That is why truth can condemn sin without leaving the sinner hopeless. In Jesus Christ both meet perfectly. So when the Bible says grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, it is not giving you a slogan for a church sign. It is giving you one of the greatest

revelations in all of Scripture. Grace walked among men. Truth looked them in the eye. And both hung on a cross so guilty sinners could live.

4 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Paul and the Gospel of Grace

Introduction

There are some subjects in the Bible that men can afford to be foggy on for a little while and still stumble along without wrecking the whole frame of doctrine. This is not one of them. If a man does not understand Paul and the gospel of grace, he will spend half his Christian life mixing passages that do not belong together, trying to jam Israel into the church, the church into Israel, Peter into Paul, the Sermon on the Mount into the body of Christ, and water into blood until the whole thing looks like a theological junk drawer. The average religious mess in this generation is not caused by too much Bible. It is caused by too little division of the Bible. Men grab the word grace, smile when they say it, sing about it on Sunday, and then handle the Book like God never chose one particular apostle to unfold that grace doctrinally for the present age. But He did. And once you see it, you cannot unsee it. Paul is not just one more New Testament writer giving his devotional impressions. Paul is the apostle to whom the risen Jesus Christ committed the revelation of grace for the church age.

That does not mean Paul invented grace. Grace is in the Old Testament. Grace appears in the Gospels. Grace shines in Jesus Christ, who was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). But when you come into Acts and then move into Romans through Philemon, the Holy Ghost starts putting a spotlight on grace in a way that is unmistakable. Paul does not merely mention grace now and then as a polite greeting. He writes of “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:2), “the grace that is given to me” (Romans 15:15), “the grace of God which is given unto me” (1 Corinthians 3:10), and the repeated phrase “grace be unto you” or “grace to you” at the head of his epistles. That is not an accident. That is not personality. That is not style. That is revelation. Grace in Paul’s writings is tied to his apostleship, his stewardship, his ministry, his message, and his laying of the foundation for the present church age.

So this essay has to make something plain that a lot of religious people resist with all their might. To understand Paul is not to exalt Paul above Christ. It is to honor Christ by recognizing the vessel Christ chose. The Lord Jesus Christ saved Paul, called Paul, taught Paul, sent Paul, and gave Paul the stewardship that defines the doctrinal structure of the body of Christ in this present dispensation. When a man says, “I just follow Jesus, not

Paul,” he sounds spiritual to shallow people, but he is actually insulting the Lord Jesus Christ, because it was Jesus Christ who gave Paul his apostleship. Christ chose twelve during His earthly ministry, but He arrested Paul from heaven after the ascension and entrusted to him the revelation of the mystery and the dispensation of grace for the Gentiles. If you love the Head, you had better pay attention to what the Head said through the apostle He appointed. That is not Pauline hero worship. That is Bible belief.

1. Paul’s Conversion Was a Monument of Grace

If you want to understand why Paul becomes the central human voice on grace, the first place to start is with what grace did to him personally. Paul was not a polite churchgoer who needed a few doctrinal adjustments. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious (1 Timothy 1:13). He was “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1). He made havoc of the church. He consented unto Stephen’s death. He was not hunting for grace. He was hunting Christians. Then on the road to Damascus the risen Jesus Christ stopped him cold. That conversion was not merely dramatic. It was doctrinally loaded. God took one of the worst enemies of the name of Jesus Christ and made him the apostle who would write more about grace than any other man in the New Testament.

Paul never got over that. In 1 Timothy 1:13 and 14 he says, “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” There is his testimony. Exceeding abundant grace. Not minimal grace. Not barely enough grace. Exceeding abundant grace. If God wanted to put a billboard up in human flesh showing what grace can do, He picked the right man. Paul says later, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). Then he adds that he obtained mercy “for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Timothy 1:16). Paul is not just a convert. He is a pattern. He is a display case of grace.

That matters because Paul’s teaching on grace is not merely academic. He is not writing as a detached theologian sitting in a dry room arranging abstractions. He is writing as a man who was apprehended by divine grace in the middle of murderous hatred and transformed into a chosen vessel. So when Paul later writes, “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10), he is not giving you a nice slogan for embroidery. He is saying that everything he became as a Christian, apostle, minister, and laborer was owing to grace. The man himself is part of the message. Christ did not choose a polished saint to expound grace. He chose a former persecutor, so nobody would ever confuse the power of the message with the merit of the messenger.

2. The Gospel of the Grace of God

One of the most important phrases in the New Testament is found in Acts 20:24, where Paul says he received from the Lord Jesus “the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” That phrase deserves to be read slowly. Not just the gospel in a general sense, but “the gospel of the grace of God.” That means grace is not peripheral to Paul’s preaching. It is not one topic among many. It is central to the gospel he was commissioned to testify. He is not merely saying that grace is involved somewhere in the background. He is saying the gospel itself is marked by grace. That is the character of it. That is the genius of it. That is the distinguishing feature of it.

Now that does not mean Paul preached a different Saviour from Peter. Christ is one. The blood is one. The cross is one. The resurrection is one. But the Holy Ghost does mean for you to notice that Paul is the one who takes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and opens up its doctrinal implications for the present age with special clarity. He tells you men are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). He says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). He says, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). He says, “ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). You can read through Paul’s epistles and watch grace rise like a river through the whole landscape. That is why Acts 20:24 matters. It tells you the man himself knew exactly what ministry had been entrusted to him.

This is one reason why so much preaching today is weak. Men preach around grace, near grace, under grace language, beside grace atmosphere, but not the gospel of the grace of God. They mix law and grace, works and faith, Christ and conduct, justification and sanctification, until the listener leaves more burdened than liberated. Paul does not preach that way. He does not say, “Christ died for your sins, now finish your justification with your performance.” He says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). That is the gospel of grace. It does not flatter sin. It does not excuse rebellion. But it does put the sinner’s standing with God entirely on Jesus Christ. That is why Paul’s phrase is so precious. It protects the gospel from religion.

3. The Dispensation of the Grace of God

If Acts 20:24 is a key phrase, Ephesians 3:2 is another one that unlocks a whole room of doctrine: “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.” That verse is not written to confuse you. It is written to clarify you. A dispensation is a stewardship, an administration, a way in which God deals out truth and responsibility. Paul says there is a “dispensation of the grace of God” and that it was “given me to you-ward.” That means Paul’s relationship to grace is not merely that he experienced it

personally. He was entrusted with a stewardship of it for others. He is not just a recipient. He is an administrator in the sense of revelation and ministry. God gave Paul something to distribute doctrinally to the churches.

Now that does not mean grace began when Paul got saved. We already covered that in previous essays. Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Genesis 6:8). Moses found grace in God's sight (Exodus 33:13). Ruth found grace in the eyes of Boaz (Ruth 2:10). Jesus Christ was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). But Ephesians 3:2 does mean that the present administrative unfolding of grace for the church age, especially in its relation to the mystery, the body of Christ, the Gentiles, and the believer's heavenly standing, was committed to Paul in a way not previously revealed. Men fight that because they are afraid of rightly dividing the Bible. But the verse says what it says. Paul had a dispensation of grace given to him for the saints.

This is why you cannot build church doctrine out of isolated kingdom passages and treat Paul like an optional appendix. Christ gave Paul the doctrine for the body. That is why Paul talks about "the mystery" being made known unto him by revelation (Ephesians 3:3), and why he says in verse 9 that he is to make all men see "what is the fellowship of the mystery." The dispensation of grace is bound up with the revelation of truths kept hidden in earlier ages and then made known through Paul. If a man misses that, he will spend his life trying to run the church on kingdom instructions given under another setting, and he will never understand why his Bible keeps knotting up on him. The answer is simple. He is refusing the steward Christ appointed.

4. The Grace Given Unto Me

Paul repeatedly uses language that ought to make any careful reader stop and think. He says in Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me." In Romans 15:15 he says, "because of the grace that is given to me of God." In 1 Corinthians 3:10 he writes, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation." In Galatians 2:9 James, Cephas, and John "perceived the grace that was given unto me." In Ephesians 3:7 he says he was made a minister "according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power." In Ephesians 3:8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." That phrase does not appear once by accident. It appears repeatedly by design.

What does that phrase mean? It does not mean Paul had private salvation different from everybody else's. It does not mean he had special merit. It does not mean grace made him superior as a man. It means grace was tied to his calling, office, stewardship, and

revelation. Grace saved him, yes, but grace also commissioned him. Grace equipped him. Grace authorized him. Grace placed into his hands the responsibility to preach among the Gentiles and lay the church age foundation doctrinally. That is why in 1 Corinthians 3:10 grace is connected with wise masterbuilding. Paul says, "I have laid the foundation." He is not talking about inventing Christianity. He is talking about laying down the doctrinal structure for the church under the revelation given to him by Christ.

This should settle a lot of confusion. When a Bible believer says Paul is central to church doctrine, he is not worshiping Paul. He is recognizing the grace given unto Paul. He is recognizing what James, Cephas, and John themselves recognized in Galatians 2:9. They perceived the grace given to Paul. They understood something specific had been entrusted to him concerning the heathen. That means if a preacher today refuses Paul's unique place, he is actually less discerning than the apostles in Jerusalem were. They saw it. He misses it. The grace given unto Paul is one of the great keys to understanding why his epistles occupy the doctrinal center of Christian living in this age.

5. Apostle to the Gentiles

Paul says plainly in Romans 11:13, "I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." That is not vanity. That is obedience. Paul is not puffing himself up. He is magnifying the office Christ gave him. If a man has been appointed by the risen Lord Jesus Christ as the apostle of the Gentiles, the last thing he should do is apologize for it. And if the church today is largely Gentile in composition, then the office of the apostle of the Gentiles matters a great deal. That alone ought to make every Christian read Paul's epistles with special attention. Yet modern religion will spend months in Matthew, weeks in Proverbs, and years in Psalms, and then dip into Paul like he is one flavor among many on the buffet. That is spiritual malnutrition.

Galatians 2:7 and 8 sharpens the distinction: "the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter... he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles." Men get nervous at that wording because they are afraid of distinctions. But the Book makes them anyway. Peter had an apostleship to the circumcision. Paul had an apostleship toward the Gentiles. Same Christ, same Saviour, same ultimate basis in the blood, but different spheres, stewardships, and revelatory emphasis. Paul's grace ministry is therefore inseparable from his apostolic identity among the Gentiles. That is why he becomes the central doctrinal voice for the church age.

And do not miss how this connects to grace. The grace given to Paul was not only the grace that saved his soul. It was the grace that sent him to the nations. That is why Ephesians 3:8

says, “Unto me... is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Grace there is missional, ministerial, and revelatory. It is God saying, I will take this former persecutor and make him the herald of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations. That is enough to make any Bible believer worship. The man who hated the name of Jesus becomes the man who carries the riches of Jesus to the Gentiles. If that is not grace, then language has no meaning left.

6. Wise Masterbuilder

One of the most important descriptions Paul gives of his own ministry is found in 1 Corinthians 3:10: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation.” There is so much in that verse it could keep you busy for a week. First, the foundation is tied to grace given unto him. Second, Paul describes himself as a wise masterbuilder. Third, he says he has laid the foundation, while others build upon it. That means there is an order here. Paul is not merely adding bricks to a building somebody else already laid out doctrinally for the church age. He is putting down foundation truth under the grace given to him by God.

Now the ultimate foundation is Jesus Christ Himself, because the next verse says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). So do not get confused and imagine Paul is replacing Christ. He is not. He is laying Christ doctrinally as the church’s foundation through the revelation committed to him. There is a difference between the foundation stone and the man commissioned to set forth that foundation in doctrine. Christ is the substance. Paul is the builder under grace. Christ is the Head. Paul is the steward. That distinction is everything. Without it, men either overstate Paul or understate him. The Bible does neither. It gives him the role Christ assigned him.

This is why every preacher ought to “take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1 Corinthians 3:10). If Paul laid the doctrinal foundation for the church under the grace given to him, then the wise man builds on Pauline revelation. The foolish man starts importing materials from the wrong dispensation, wrong setting, wrong audience, and wrong stewardship, and before long he has saints trying to sell all their possessions, pray kingdom prayers meant for tribulation saints, seek signs and wonders like apostolic credentials, and measure salvation by works. Why? Because he did not respect the wise masterbuilder. Men do not usually reject Paul openly. They simply ignore his office in practice. The result is doctrinal chaos.

7. To Follow Paul Is to Follow Christ’s Appointment

There is a pious line that gets tossed around by people who do not understand the New Testament. They say, “I just follow Jesus, not Paul.” That sounds spiritual to a shallow crowd, but it collapses the moment the Book is opened. In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul says, “the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” In Galatians 1:11 and 12 he says the gospel he preached was “not after man,” for he “neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” In Acts 26 he recounts Christ appearing to him and appointing him a minister and a witness. In Ephesians 3 he says the mystery was made known to him by revelation. So when a man pretends he can honor Jesus while shrugging off Paul, he is really dishonoring Jesus’ own revelation and appointment.

Christ from heaven chose Paul. That fact alone should sober a Bible student. The Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry dealt with the twelve in one setting, but after the ascension He arrested Saul of Tarsus, saved him, and gave him revelation for the church age. That means rejecting Paul’s place is not humility. It is insubordination. It is like saying, I love the king, but I will ignore the ambassador he sent with the king’s sealed orders. That is not loyalty. That is rebellion disguised as devotion. The reason Paul is central to grace doctrine is not because Paul elbowed his way into the middle. It is because Christ put him there. The same Lord who said, “Come unto me” also said through Paul, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Understanding that will save a Christian from two opposite errors. On one side, it will keep him from hero worship that treats Paul as though he were the source of grace. He is not. Christ is. On the other side, it will keep him from false humility that pretends Paul is optional. He is not. Paul is Christ’s chosen vessel for the doctrinal unfolding of grace in this present age. So to follow Paul in doctrine is not to step away from Christ. It is to follow Christ’s own arrangement. That is why the church’s ignorance of Paul is so disastrous. It is not merely ignorance of one apostle. It is ignorance of the structure Christ Himself set up for the body.

Conclusion

So when we talk about Paul and the gospel of grace, we are not talking about a side issue for Bible students who enjoy fine points. We are talking about one of the central keys to understanding the New Testament itself. Paul is the converted persecutor who became the pattern of grace. Paul is the preacher entrusted with “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Paul is the steward of “the dispensation of the grace of God” given to him for the saints (Ephesians 3:2). Paul is the man who keeps speaking of “the grace given unto me,” because grace in his ministry is not merely personal pardon but divine commission, revelation, stewardship, apostleship, and doctrine. Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles who

magnifies his office because Christ gave it to him. Paul is the wise masterbuilder who laid the foundation doctrinally for the church to build upon. That is not small.

And once that settles into a man's bones, the whole New Testament starts clearing up. He stops trying to run the church on kingdom instructions that belong in another setting. He stops mixing law and grace until grace loses its meaning. He stops reading Paul like a devotional appendix and starts reading him like the Spirit of God intended. The great doctrines of justification by faith, the believer's standing in Christ, the body of Christ, the mystery, the relation of Jew and Gentile in one new man, the opposition between grace and works in justification, and the heavenly position of the saint all begin to stand in their proper place. Why? Because the vessel Christ chose is finally being heard.

So no, understanding Paul is not exalting Paul above Christ. It is honoring Christ by recognizing whom Christ sent and what Christ revealed through him. The same Jesus who died, rose, and ascended is the Jesus who gave Paul his apostleship and revelation. The same Christ full of grace and truth is the Christ who committed to Paul the unfolding of grace for this present age. That is why any believer serious about grace must become serious about Paul. Not because Paul is the Head, but because the Head appointed him. Not because Paul is the source, but because Christ made him the steward. And when a man gets hold of that truth, he is not joining a cult of Paul. He is finally beginning to handle the New Testament like a Bible believer instead of like a religious scrapbook.

5 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Saved by Grace Through Faith

Introduction

There are few truths in the Bible that make religious flesh squirm like this one. Men do not mind hearing that God is love, that Jesus was kind, that prayer is important, or that the Bible has wisdom for daily living. What they cannot stand, unless the Holy Ghost breaks them, is being told that salvation is absolutely free to the sinner and absolutely impossible for the sinner to earn. That cuts the pride out by the roots. It strips the church member, the moral man, the baptized grandmother, the catechized teenager, the tithe-paying businessman, the altar-walking hypocrite, and the polished Pharisee all down to the same level as the drunk in the ditch and the harlot in the alley. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Not some. All. And when a man finally sees that he is not measured against his neighbor, his denomination, or his own improved habits, but

against the glory of God, he starts understanding why grace has to be grace. If God saves at all, He must save freely, or nobody gets in.

That is why this subject is one of the great flagship truths of all Scripture. Paul says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). He says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). He says in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Those are not side verses for children's Sunday school. Those are doctrinal pillars. Knock those pillars out, and you do not merely weaken Christianity. You destroy the gospel itself. Every false religion on earth, whether dressed in pagan beads, priestly robes, Protestant respectability, or cultic jargon, keeps trying to smuggle human merit back into the matter. Some say you need sacraments. Some say you need law-keeping. Some say you need church membership. Some say you need works to maintain what grace supposedly started. Some say faith gets you in, but conduct keeps you justified. All of them share one disease. They cannot stand the thought that God saves guilty sinners on the sole basis of Jesus Christ.

So this essay has to drive a doctrinal stake through the heart of that confusion. Salvation is not earned, purchased, deserved, inherited, negotiated, improved upon, or maintained by human works. Men are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Grace is the very opposite of debt. Grace is not God rewarding the sinner for trying. Grace is God saving the sinner who cannot pay. Grace is not cheap because it is free to you. It is costly beyond all measure because the full price was paid at Calvary by the Lord Jesus Christ. So we are going to walk through Romans 3, Romans 4, Ephesians 2, Titus 3, and the surrounding truth of Scripture until this point is nailed down so tightly that no priest, preacher, theologian, legalist, or religious salesman can pry it loose without first throwing away the Book.

1. All Have Sinned and All Come Short

The foundation of salvation by grace through faith begins with bad news, because until a man knows how bad the disease is, he will never appreciate the cure. Romans 3 does not flatter anybody. It builds a courtroom case against the whole human race. Paul strings together Old Testament citations and says, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Then he says, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11). That tears the halo off religious flesh right there. Men talk as if humanity is climbing toward God and needs only a little push. Paul says humanity is gone out of the way, become unprofitable, and corrupted from throat to feet (Romans 3:12-18). Then he sums it all up with the hammer blow, "For all have sinned, and come short of the

glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Not of the glory of Moses, or the glory of your pastor, or the glory of your church denomination, but the glory of God.

That matters because as long as a man thinks he is only slightly off, he will imagine his effort can close the gap. Religion thrives on that illusion. It tells men they are basically decent and need only improvement, discipline, sacraments, vows, rituals, penance, moral effort, or church participation. But Paul says the standard is the glory of God, and all have come short. That means the gap is not a crack to step over. It is a canyon. And the sinner does not have wings. He has sin. This is why salvation has to be by grace. If all have sinned and all come short, then nobody can present merit before God as the basis of acceptance. A man drowning in the ocean does not need swimming lessons. He needs rescue. Adam’s race does not need polishing. It needs redemption.

That is also why Romans 3 says, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). The law does not justify because the law was never given to lie about your condition. “For by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). The law turns the light on. The law stops mouths. The law condemns. It shows you what righteousness looks like, but it does not give you righteousness. That is the sinner’s problem. He thinks exposure equals cure. It does not. A mirror shows dirt, but a mirror does not wash faces. The law shows guilt, but the law does not justify the guilty. Once that point settles in, grace starts to make sense.

2. Justified Freely by His Grace

After Romans 3 buries the whole human race under the verdict of guilt, the Spirit of God turns around and unveils one of the sweetest truths in all the Bible. “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). There are at least three words in that verse that can keep a man shouting for a month if he believes the Book. The first is justified. That is not improved. That is not partially cleaned up. That is not put on probation. Justified means declared righteous in God’s sight. The second word is freely. That means without cost to the sinner, without merit in the sinner, without payment from the sinner. The third phrase is by his grace. That means the whole thing comes from God’s unmerited favor, not from human achievement.

Now notice the order. Paul does not say justified freely by your repentance, your baptism, your obedience, your church attendance, or your sacramental cooperation. He says justified freely by his grace. This is where all religion breaks down. Religion always wants a co-payment. It does not mind Jesus helping. It just cannot stand Jesus doing it all. The flesh wants to hand God something, even if it is a dirty handkerchief, just so it can feel involved. But the verse does not leave room for that. Freely is freely. Grace is grace. The only

contribution you made to your salvation was the sin that made it necessary. Everything else came from Him.

But the verse does not stop there. It says this free justification is “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). That keeps grace from being sentimental nonsense. Grace is free to the sinner, but it is not baseless. Grace does not mean God looked down from heaven and decided to ignore His own righteousness. Grace means the payment was made by another. Redemption means a price was paid to secure release. So while justification is free to you, it was infinitely costly to Christ. Grace is not cheap. It is expensive enough to require the blood of the Son of God. That is why anybody who calls grace cheap has not understood the cross. Grace is free because Christ paid in full.

3. Grace Is the Opposite of Debt

Romans 4 is one of the cleanest doctrinal chapters in the Bible on this point because it demolishes works salvation with language so plain a child can understand it. Paul says, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Romans 4:4). There are the two categories. Grace and debt. If a man works for wages, the employer owes him. That is debt. If a man receives something he did not earn, that is grace. Those two things cannot occupy the same slot when the issue is the ground of justification. If God saves you because He owes you, it is debt. If God saves you while owing you nothing but judgment, it is grace. Paul does not muddy that line. He brightens it.

Then he presses the matter further: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5). That verse is dynamite. Not to him that worketh harder. Not to him that worketh better. Not to him that mixes works with faith. “To him that worketh not, but believeth.” Why? Because the matter under discussion is not Christian service or sanctified labor. It is justification before God. And God justifies the ungodly, not the partly godly, not the nearly righteous, not the sacramentally assisted, but the ungodly. That is why faith is the hand that receives salvation. Faith brings nothing and receives everything. Works bring something and therefore corrupt grace.

This is exactly why Romans 11:6 says, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.” Paul is not playing word games. He is drawing a doctrinal line in granite. Add works to grace as the basis of salvation, and grace is no more grace. Not less grace. No more grace. That means every religious system that adds human merit to the ground of justification has stepped out of grace at that point, even if it keeps using the word. A counterfeit twenty-dollar bill still says twenty, but it is still counterfeit. A

church can preach grace fifty times and still deny grace completely if it makes human performance part of the saving transaction.

4. By Grace Are Ye Saved Through Faith

If Romans 3 and 4 are a doctrinal courtroom, Ephesians 2 is the rescue report after the dead have been made alive. Paul says believers were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Dead men do not cooperate much. Dead men do not improve. Dead men do not respond to motivational speeches. Spiritually speaking, the sinner is not sick in need of a tonic. He is dead in need of life. Then Paul says God, “for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” (Ephesians 2:4-5). Notice again the timing. God acted when we were dead in sins, not when we were becoming promising religious prospects.

Then comes the verse every Christian ought to have branded onto his heart: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Salvation is by grace. The means of reception is faith. And the whole arrangement is “not of yourselves.” Why? Because it is “the gift of God.” Gifts are not wages. Gifts are not reimbursements. Gifts are not earned distinctions for meritorious service. A gift is bestowed. Salvation is God’s gift. You do not buy a gift, and you do not boast in a gift as though you paid for it. That is why the next verse says, “Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9). God set the thing up in such a way that no sinner can get to glory and strut.

This is what destroys sacramentalism and all religious performance schemes in one sweep. If salvation is by grace through faith, not of yourselves, and not of works, then baptism does not save, communion does not save, church membership does not save, priestly absolution does not save, penance does not save, confirmation does not save, last rites do not save, and law-keeping does not save. None of those things belongs in the ground of salvation. They belong somewhere else, or not at all, but not there. Paul has fenced that ground off with barbed wire. By grace. Through faith. Not of yourselves. Not of works. If a man wants to add something after that, he is not correcting Paul. He is contradicting him.

5. Not by Works of Righteousness Which We Have Done

Titus 3 is another place where the Holy Ghost puts the matter so plainly that only a determined religionist can miss it. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). Notice the wording. It does not merely say not by wicked works. It says not by works of righteousness which we have done. That wipes out all the respectable props men lean on. Moral reform, charity, prayer habits, fasting,

church participation, ethical living, social decency, and religious effort are all excluded as the ground of salvation. Why? Because the problem with man is not merely that he has done bad things. The problem is that his righteousness is unusable as a basis for acceptance before God. Isaiah 64:6 says, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” That means the problem is deeper than behavior. It is nature.

Titus then says God saved us “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5), and in verse 7, “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). There it is again. Justified by his grace. Not justified by a combination package of grace plus ritual plus perseverance plus righteousness. Justified by his grace. That means eternal life is inheritance, not wages. Heirs receive because of relationship, not because they earned a paycheck. And that relationship comes by the saving action of God, not by the sinner climbing a ladder of merit. Titus will not let a man slip one polished good deed into the foundation.

This also exposes the vanity of inherited religion. Some people act as though salvation runs in bloodlines. They were born into a Christian home, raised in church, baptized young, confirmed later, and taught some doctrine, so they assume grace came with the family name. But Titus says no. God saves according to mercy, not according to pedigree. John 1:13 says those who receive Christ are born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Grace does not descend through the family tree like eye color. It comes through the new birth. A godly father cannot transfer saving grace into his child’s soul by genetics. Every man must come as a sinner and receive the gift himself by faith in Jesus Christ.

6. Faith Receives, Works Attempt to Pay

One reason people stumble over salvation by grace through faith is because they do not understand what faith is doing. Faith is not a meritorious work that earns salvation. Faith is the empty hand receiving what God offers in Christ. Romans 5:1 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Faith does not replace grace as though grace were God’s part and faith were your payment. Faith is simply the God-appointed means by which the sinner receives grace. That is why grace and faith fit together so perfectly. Romans 4:16 says, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” Faith keeps the glory where it belongs. Faith says amen to God’s testimony about His Son and refuses to pretend that the sinner contributes merit.

This is also why unbelief is so serious. Unbelief is not merely intellectual hesitation. Unbelief is the refusal of God’s testimony and therefore the refusal of grace itself. If God says salvation is in His Son, and a man says, no, I will bring my own righteousness, that

man is not merely making a theological mistake. He is rejecting grace. He is calling the sacrifice of Christ insufficient in practice, whether he says that with his mouth or not. John 3:18 says, “he that believeth not is condemned already.” Why? Because faith is the appointed response to the gospel. It does not earn grace. It receives grace. Refusing faith leaves a man standing in his own sin.

This is where self-righteousness gets exposed for what it is. A self-righteous man does not mind talking about Jesus as long as Jesus is treated like an assistant. He wants Christ to help, inspire, guide, and supplement, but not to replace his merit entirely. That is why publicans and harlots often got into the kingdom before the religious crowd. The public sinner had less to protect. The self-righteous man had an entire identity built around not needing grace. He would rather polish his chains than admit he needs deliverance. Faith cuts across all of that. Faith says, I have nothing. Christ is enough. Grace says, exactly.

7. Grace Is Free to Us Because Christ Paid the Cost

A lot of people hear that salvation is free and assume that means it is small, light, or easy in the sense of being cheap. That is another fleshly mistake. Salvation is free to the sinner, but it is not cheap in terms of what it cost God to provide it. First Peter 1:18 and 19 says, “ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... But with the precious blood of Christ.” Redemption was not purchased with pocket change. It was bought with blood. Acts 20:28 speaks of “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” That is the price tag. If a man says grace is cheap because it is free to him, he has looked at the gift and ignored Calvary.

Romans 3:25 says God set forth Christ “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” That word propitiation means satisfaction. The wrath of God against sin was not brushed aside. It was satisfied. The justice of God was not suspended. It was honored. The holiness of God was not lowered. It was vindicated. Grace, therefore, is not God becoming soft on sin. Grace is God remaining just while justifying the believer because Christ bore the full judgment due to sin. That is why Romans 3:26 says God can be “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Grace is righteous because grace comes through the cross.

This is what makes grace so glorious. If salvation were cheap, it would not be worth much. But because it cost the Son of God His blood, His suffering, His shame, His separation under wrath, and His death, grace shines with the very glory of divine love and holiness meeting together. The sinner gets it free. Christ paid in full. That is not cheap. That is immeasurable. And once a man sees that, the grace of God stops being a slogan and becomes a marvel. It also kills boasting. A man does not boast in the hand that received a gift when the gift was purchased with another man’s blood. He falls down and thanks God.

Conclusion

So what does it mean to be saved by grace through faith? It means exactly what the Book says. It means all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It means no flesh can be justified by the deeds of the law. It means God justifies freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It means grace is the opposite of debt, and therefore works have no place in the ground of justification. It means salvation is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. It means we are saved not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy. It means faith receives what grace provides, and Christ paid the full price at Calvary so the sinner could go free.

That truth confronts every false system men have ever invented. It confronts sacramental religion that says water, wafers, priests, and rituals help save. It confronts moral religion that says good living and respectable behavior tip the scale. It confronts inherited religion that says family tradition puts you near God. It confronts legalism that says grace starts the work but law keeps it going. It confronts every preacher who adds a human appendix to the gospel and then wonders why nobody has assurance. The answer is simple. Once you add works to the ground of salvation, grace is no more grace. You may still sing about it, but you have denied it where it matters most.

And this is why saved sinners ought never to use the word grace lightly. Grace is not cheap because it is free. Grace is free because Christ paid. Grace does not excuse sin. Grace saves from it. Grace does not flatter flesh. Grace strips it. Grace does not reward effort. Grace rescues the helpless. Grace does not leave the believer boasting in himself. Grace leaves him boasting in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. So if a man asks what it means to be saved by grace through faith, tell him plainly. It means you brought your sin, Christ brought His blood, and God brought salvation. That is the gospel. That is the glory of grace.

6 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Grace or Works

Introduction

There are not many places in the Bible where the Holy Ghost draws a line more sharply than He does between grace and works, and yet there are not many places where religious men work harder to blur that line than right there. They do it with sermons, systems, sacraments, catechisms, altar calls, creeds, confessions, covenant language, and enough theological smoke to choke a horse. They use the word grace because they know they have to. The New Testament is soaked in it. But then they turn right around and smuggle works

back in through the side door like burglars in church clothes. They say salvation is by grace, but. They say faith saves, but. They say Christ died for all, but. That little word but has damned more doctrine than a stack of atheists ever could. The truth is plain. Either grace saves, or works save. Either Christ finished the work, or He did not. Either God justifies the ungodly freely by grace, or He waits for them to bring something He can use. The Bible does not leave those things foggy. Men do.

That is why this subject has to be handled with a knife and not a feather. Romans 11:6 is not a suggestion. It is not devotional material for a Hallmark card. It is a doctrinal explosion. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Romans 11:6). Paul does not say grace is mostly grace with a little works mixed in. He does not say grace gets you started and works help you maintain. He does not say God saves by grace and keeps you saved by performance. He says if it is by grace, it is no more of works. That means the two do not work together as the basis of justification. They are not dance partners. They are opposites. They are different principles, different grounds, different systems. One says God gives because Christ paid it all. The other says God rewards because man contributed something. If you mix them in justification, you do not improve grace. You cancel it.

And that is exactly what most of the modern church has done. It has baptized works salvation, perfumed it with Christian language, tucked it into respectable doctrine, and handed it to the people as if it were the gospel. Some say baptism finishes what faith started. Some say obedience proves salvation in such a way that the proof becomes the basis of assurance. Some say sacraments convey saving grace. Some say final justification depends on perseverance in works. Some say grace enables you to do what earns the rest. All of that is just old Cain with a necktie on. It is the same rotten instinct man has always had, to bring God the labor of his own hands and expect acceptance. So this essay is going to get blunt. Grace or works is not a minor topic. It is one of the great dividing lines between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the gospel of man. If the modern church gets this wrong, it gets the foundation wrong.

1. Grace and Works Are Opposites

The first thing that has to be settled is that grace and works are not complementary when the issue is justification before God. They are opposites. Romans 11:6 says it as plainly as language can say anything: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). That verse is not difficult. The only thing difficult about it is watching theologians twist themselves into pretzels trying to get around it. Paul states the matter like a man driving fence posts. Grace and works cancel each other as grounds of salvation. If

one is in, the other is out. If works enters as the basis of acceptance with God, grace stops being grace. If grace is the basis of acceptance with God, works is shut out of that place.

Notice how absolute the wording is. Paul does not say grace is mostly grace with a seasoning of works. He says “no more of works.” Then he turns it around and says if it be of works, then it is “no more grace.” That is not partial. That is total. The reason is simple. Grace means unmerited favor. Works means earned reward. Grace means God gives what is not deserved. Works means a man receives according to what he has done. The two ideas are not just different shades of the same color. They are entirely different categories. You cannot say a wage is a gift without changing the meaning of wage. You cannot say a gift is wages without changing the meaning of gift. Paul knew that. The Holy Ghost knew that. The modern church pretends not to know that because it cannot bear to leave man out of the saving transaction.

This is one of the reasons religious men hate Paul so much, even while pretending to admire him. Paul refuses to leave them any wiggle room. He slams the door on the proud flesh. He tells the moral man, the ceremonial man, the intellectual man, the church man, and the heretic all the same thing. You are either saved by grace or you are trying to save yourself with works. There is no holy blend. There is no balanced middle ground. There is no safe hybrid. Once you understand that, a lot of church language starts to sound suspicious. The moment somebody says, “Of course salvation is by grace, but...” you should reach for your Bible and check your wallet, because somebody is about to rob you.

2. Works Turn Grace into Debt

Romans 4:4 is another hammer blow against works religion: “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Romans 4:4). There is the issue in plain language. If a man works for a wage, the employer owes him. That is debt. The wage is not a gift. It is an obligation. The worker earned it. That is how work functions. Paul brings that common-sense principle into the doctrine of justification and says if salvation comes by work, it is not grace. It is debt. That means if you are trying to earn acceptance with God through religious performance, you are not asking for grace. You are presenting an invoice. You are telling God He owes you because you did your share. That is blasphemous at the root, even if it is wrapped in pious language.

Then Paul says in the very next verse, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5). There it is. Not to him that worketh more. Not to him that mixeth faith and works. Not to him that worketh with enough sincerity to earn some help from God. “To him that worketh not, but believeth.” Why? Because the issue is not Christian service. The issue is how a sinner gets

justified before a holy God. In that matter, works are shut out. Faith receives what grace gives. The sinner does not earn righteousness. It is counted to him by faith in the God who justifies the ungodly. That phrase alone wrecks most religion. God justifies the ungodly, not the improved.

That is why grace and works cannot be blended without turning salvation into a transaction of merit. The moment you say baptism contributes to justification, debt has entered. The moment you say repentance is a work that completes salvation, debt has entered. The moment you say law-keeping helps secure acceptance, debt has entered. The moment you say sacraments transmit saving merit to a worthy receiver, debt has entered. The moment you say grace is given in proportion to human cooperation so that justification depends partly on the man, debt has entered. And once debt enters, grace leaves. The Holy Ghost did not accidentally choose that language. He chose it because it exposes the whole religious instinct of the flesh. Flesh always wants to earn. Grace always says you cannot.

3. Adding Works Frustrates Grace

Galatians 2:21 should be nailed over every seminary door and every pulpit in America: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). Notice the force of that statement. Paul does not say adding law to grace enriches grace. He says it frustrates grace. It insults grace. It nullifies grace in practice. It turns the death of Christ into something vain, unnecessary, or at least incomplete in its practical effect. That is how serious this is. This is not a disagreement over emphasis. This is not a family quarrel among Christians who all mean well. This is a direct collision between the finished work of Christ and every attempt to add human righteousness to the ground of acceptance before God.

Look at the logic. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). That means if any system can produce the righteousness God requires through law-keeping, performance, ritual obedience, sacramental participation, or moral attainment, then why did Christ have to die? Why the cross? Why the blood? Why the agony? Why the curse? Why the cry, "It is finished" (John 19:30)? Why did the Son of God become sin for us if men could climb into righteousness by their own effort? Paul sees the issue clearly. Law and grace are not just two helpful paths to the same destination. One path says Christ's death was absolutely necessary. The other implies it was supplementary. Paul calls that frustration of grace.

And let us be plain about something. Religious systems do not usually say Christ died in vain with their mouths. They do it with their structure. They say, yes, Christ died, but now you must do this, and this, and this, in order to secure or maintain saving righteousness. In

that arrangement, Christ is not enough. He is part one of a program. He opens the possibility, and the sinner completes it. Paul says that arrangement frustrates grace. It turns the cross into a religious starter kit. It makes Christ a helper instead of a Saviour. And a Christ who is not enough to save by grace is not the Christ of the New Testament.

4. The Galatian Heresy Is Still Alive

The book of Galatians is not ancient history. It is the morning paper. Paul says, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Galatians 1:6). Notice that phrase, “the grace of Christ.” Then notice what leaving that grace is called. Another gospel. Not another denomination. Not another style. Another gospel. The Galatians were not turning into atheists. They were not embracing paganism. They were becoming religious. They were adding circumcision and law to the finished work of Christ. That is always how the false gospel works. It does not usually come in with devil horns and a pitchfork. It comes in with Scripture quotations, religious language, and a sales pitch about obedience and seriousness.

Paul says in Galatians 5:4, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” That verse gets abused by both sides. The legalist uses it to say a saved man can lose salvation. The loose talker uses it without understanding it. Paul is not saying they lost eternal life because they sinned too much. He is saying that in seeking justification by law, they moved off the principle of grace and placed themselves in a position where Christ’s saving effectiveness was denied in practice. They fell from grace as a doctrinal ground and functional position by turning to law for justification. The issue is not losing salvation by bad behavior. The issue is corrupting the gospel by adding works.

That same Galatian disease is all over the place today. It is in sacramental churches, holiness churches, cults, covenant communities, Reformed systems that blur final justification, and Baptist churches that say one thing with their doctrinal statement and another thing with their invitation. It is everywhere men start with Christ and then smuggle Moses back in. It is everywhere faith is treated like the down payment and law is treated like the monthly installment. It is everywhere preachers thunder against grace because they are afraid people might get too free. Paul did not preach timid grace. He preached grace sharp enough to make legalists furious. That is exactly why Galatians reads like a blowtorch. He is defending the gospel itself.

5. Religious Systems Redefine Grace to Keep Works

One of the slickest tricks religion ever pulled was learning to keep the word grace while emptying it of its meaning. That way it can sound biblical while teaching works. So men say

grace is God helping you do what earns salvation. Or grace is a power infused through sacraments that enables cooperation. Or grace is the first step, but final justification depends on your obedience. Or grace is God doing His part while you do yours. All of that is baptized works salvation. It is the old serpent whispering, "Yea, hath God said?" except now he is wearing a choir robe. The whole point is to preserve the appearance of Christian doctrine while protecting the pride of human contribution.

The Roman sacramental system is one version of it, where grace gets packaged into rites, water, bread, penance, priestcraft, and ceremony until Christ's finished work is effectively replaced by a church-controlled process. But do not stop there and act like the problem is only Rome. Protestantism has manufactured its own versions. Some churches preach that salvation is by grace, but if you do not keep performing at a certain level, your salvation was never real or will not hold up at the end. Others turn "evidence" into the practical ground of assurance until the soul is looking at works instead of Christ. Others preach such a confused message that a sinner leaves thinking faith gets him in the door and performance keeps the house from collapsing. It is all the same disease. Grace is mentioned, but works does the real heavy lifting.

Paul does not allow that corruption. He says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9). He says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). He says, "to him that worketh not, but believeth" (Romans 4:5). Once you line those verses up, all the religious redefinitions start sounding like noise. Grace does not mean God helps you save yourself. Grace means God saves you because Christ finished the work and you cannot contribute merit to it. Any system that keeps the term grace while preserving works as part of the basis of salvation is not more balanced. It is more deceptive.

6. Grace Excludes Boasting Because Christ Did It All

One reason the flesh hates grace so much is because grace leaves no room for boasting. Ephesians 2:9 says salvation is "Not of works, lest any man should boast." That is exactly what works religion is built to preserve, even when it pretends to be humble. A man wants to say, I did my part. I remained faithful. I cooperated enough. I yielded enough. I suffered enough. I obeyed enough. I kept the covenant enough. He wants something to point to that distinguishes him from the lost man not merely by Christ but by his own contribution. Grace crushes that instinct. Grace says you brought the sin, and Christ brought the righteousness. Grace says the only hand you contributed was the empty one that received.

Romans 3:27 asks, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." Then Paul tells you why. "By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27). Works produces boasting

because works leaves room for credit. Faith excludes boasting because faith receives what another accomplished. That is why salvation by grace through faith is so offensive to self-righteous religion. It equalizes the human race at the foot of the cross. The professor and the prostitute, the pastor's son and the prison inmate, the religious mother and the thief on the cross all come the same way. By grace. Through faith. In Christ alone. That is humiliating to pride and glorious to the broken sinner.

And that is exactly as God designed it. First Corinthians 1:29 says, "That no flesh should glory in his presence." Then verse 31 says, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). God did not construct salvation so men could clap for themselves in heaven. He constructed it so the Son gets the glory. Grace does that. Works robs that. The man who insists on adding works to salvation is not simply being cautious about holiness. He is trying to preserve room for the flesh to stand up and say, at least partly, I helped. Grace says, sit down and worship.

7. Christ Finished What Works Could Never Begin

When the Lord Jesus Christ cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He did not mean it is started and you finish it. He meant it is finished. That includes the work necessary for the sinner's acceptance before God. Hebrews says, "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). That is the force of grace. Christ finished what works could never begin. Law could expose sin. Ritual could symbolize cleansing. Sacrifices could picture atonement. Priests could minister in shadow. But none of that could put away sin the way Christ did. He did not come to assist your righteousness. He came because you had none. He did not come to make your works sufficient. He came because your works were useless as a ground of justification.

This is why Paul keeps tying grace to redemption, blood, and Christ's finished work. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Grace is not God pretending there was no debt. Grace is God settling the debt through the blood of His Son. That means works adds nothing because there is nothing left to add. What are you going to contribute to a finished redemption? A church attendance chart? A sacrament? A reformation of habits? A vow? A ceremony? A season of obedience? All of that is dust compared to Calvary. The sinner who brings works to the cross is like a man trying to pay off a national debt with a paper clip.

And here is the tragedy. A lot of sincere people never rest because they have been trained to think salvation depends partly on them. So they live in fear, not because Christ is insufficient, but because their doctrine is crooked. They are always checking themselves, measuring themselves, wondering if they repented enough, yielded enough, endured

enough, proved enough, obeyed enough. The answer is always the same. Not enough. You will never be enough. That is the whole point of grace. Christ is enough. The only soul that ever finds peace with God is the soul that stops trying to make works complete what grace already settled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

So the issue is plain. Grace or works is not a small debate among specialists. It is one of the great dividing lines between truth and error in the modern church. Romans 11:6 says if it is by grace, then it is no more of works. Romans 4:4 says if it is by works, then it is debt, not grace. Galatians 2:21 says if righteousness comes by law, then Christ died in vain. Those verses do not leave room for a blended gospel. They do not permit grace as the headline and works as the fine print. They force a choice. Either Christ saves freely by grace through faith, or man contributes merit to his acceptance before God. The New Testament chooses the first and curses the second.

That is why adding works to salvation does not improve grace but frustrates it. It insults the cross. It turns the blood of Christ into an incomplete payment. It transforms the finished work into a religious partnership. It lets men talk about Jesus while really trusting sacraments, obedience, law, endurance, or performance. It is not a harmless mistake. It is another gospel. And the saddest part is how often that false gospel wears orthodox-looking clothes. It uses the right terms while denying the right truth. It says grace but means help. It says faith but means contribution. It says Christ but means Christ plus. Paul would not tolerate it for five minutes.

So let the matter stand where the Book puts it. Salvation is by grace through faith because Christ did what works never could. The sinner is justified freely because the Son paid fully. Works belongs in the Christian life as fruit, testimony, growth, service, reward, and fellowship, but never as the ground of justification before God. Put works there, and grace is no more grace. Leave grace where God put it, and Christ gets all the glory. That is the issue. Not church preference. Not theological style. Not whether people think you are too strong. The issue is whether the sinner stands before God in Christ alone or in Christ plus his own filthy rags. The Bible answers that plainly. Grace or works. Pick one. God already did.

7 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Under Grace, Not Under Law

Introduction

Few statements in Paul's writings stir up more confusion, more suspicion, and more knee-jerk religious panic than this one: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The moment a man quotes that verse plainly, some legalist somewhere starts clutching his pearls like somebody just kicked the Ten Commandments off Mount Sinai. He hears "not under the law" and immediately imagines drunkenness, adultery, rebellion, doctrinal anarchy, and Christians dancing on the roof with a whiskey bottle in one hand and a doctrinal loophole in the other. That reaction tells you more about the legalist's heart than it does about the verse. He cannot imagine holiness apart from law because he has never understood either the law or grace. In his mind, if fear of punishment is weakened, sin must take over. But Paul says the exact opposite. He does not say sin will take dominion because you are under grace. He says sin shall not have dominion over you because you are not under the law, but under grace.

That verse alone ought to make a Bible believer sit up and pay attention. Paul is not careless with words. He is not saying the believer floats through life without moral reality, without accountability, without holiness, or without standards. He is saying there has been a change in covenant standing, a change in spiritual position, and a change in divine dealing. The law exposes sin, defines sin, condemns sin, and gives the sinner no power to conquer the thing it condemns. Grace, on the other hand, places the believer in Jesus Christ, gives him a new standing before God, unites him to Christ's death and resurrection, and breaks the dominion of sin in a way the law never could. The law can point a finger. Grace can raise a dead man. The law can pronounce a sentence. Grace can produce a saint. The law can tell you what righteousness is. Grace can place you in the Righteous One.

That is why this essay matters so much. "Under grace, not under law" is not a slogan for lazy Christians who want to dodge obedience. It is not a bumper sticker for spiritual cowards who cannot handle the plain commands of the New Testament. It is a doctrinal reality that explains the believer's relationship to God in this present age. If a man gets this wrong, he will either drift into lawlessness by abusing grace, or he will drift into bondage by denying it. One ditch says grace means sin is no issue. The other ditch says grace is too dangerous, so put the Christian back under law to keep him in line. Paul will have neither. He says believers are not under law but under grace, and then he immediately says, "God forbid" to the charge that this means a license to sin (Romans 6:15). So we are going to walk through this carefully and show that grace does not produce lawlessness at all. It produces a new standing, a new relationship to God, and a new power for holy living.

1. What the Law Does and Does Not Do

Before you can understand what it means to be under grace, you have to understand what the law does. The law is not evil. The law is not flawed. The law is not some embarrassing Old Testament relic Paul was trying to apologize for. Paul says plainly, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). That ought to settle the matter. The law is holy because it reflects the character of a holy God. It tells the truth about righteousness. It tells the truth about sin. It does not bend, flatter, negotiate, or excuse. It says, in effect, this is what God requires. Here is holiness. Here is truth. Here is what love, purity, justice, and righteousness look like under divine command. The problem is never with the law. The problem is with the sinner under it.

Paul says in Romans 3:20, “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” That means the law reveals. It exposes. It uncovers. It shines a light into the soul and says, here is the dirt. It stops mouths and brings the whole world guilty before God (Romans 3:19). In Romans 7:7 Paul says, “I had not known sin, but by the law.” Then he gives the example of coveting. The law said, “Thou shalt not covet,” and all of a sudden the sinner’s heart is exposed for what it is. So the law has a real and necessary function. It names sin. It condemns sin. It defines transgression. But notice what it does not do. It does not justify the sinner. It does not empower the sinner to fulfill it. It does not deliver the sinner from the dominion of the thing it reveals.

That is where legalists always get tangled up. They treat the law as though it were medicine, when in Scripture it often functions more like a diagnosis. A thermometer can tell you you have a fever. It cannot remove the fever. A mirror can show dirt on your face. It cannot wash your face. The law tells you that you are a sinner. It cannot make you righteous. It tells you that coveting is sin. It cannot kill coveting in your flesh. It tells you that adultery is wicked. It cannot cleanse the adulterous heart. So when Paul says the believer is not under law, he is not insulting the law. He is telling you that the law was never God’s instrument for producing victorious Christian living in a justified believer. It exposes sin. It does not conquer it.

2. What It Means to Be Under Law

To be under law is not merely to know that the law exists. It is to stand under its authority, demands, condemnation, and covenant force as the governing principle of your relationship to God. The Jew under the Mosaic system stood there nationally and covenantally. The law addressed him in a particular covenant arrangement and said, Do this and live, disobey and be cursed. Paul says in Galatians 3:10, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” Why? Because the law does not just offer commandments. It pronounces judgment on every failure. It says, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians

3:10). That is what it means to stand under law. You are under a system that demands perfect obedience and curses failure.

Now once you understand that, Romans 6:14 becomes much clearer. Paul is not saying the believer lives in some moral vacuum where nothing matters. He is saying the believer is no longer standing before God under a system that makes law the governing covenant principle of his acceptance and standing. Romans 7:4 says, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ.” Then verse 6 says, “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held.” That is strong language. Dead to the law. Delivered from the law. Not because the law became wrong, but because Christ’s body and death changed the believer’s relationship to it. The man in Christ is not standing before God as one who must earn acceptance by legal performance. He stands in Another.

This is why legal religion is so oppressive even when it talks a lot about holiness. It keeps the soul in a realm of demand without supplying life. It says, do, do, do, but never gets the man out from under the curse of failure. It leaves him measuring, straining, fearing, comparing, collapsing, promising, repenting, and trying harder, all under a system that cannot justify him or empower him. Some churches call that seriousness. Paul calls it bondage when it is used as the governing principle of standing before God. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” That yoke is not holiness. It is legal bondage. There is a difference, and if a man cannot tell the difference, he will torment saints while congratulating himself for defending righteousness.

3. What It Means to Be Under Grace

Now if the believer is not under law, what is he under? Paul says, “under grace” (Romans 6:14). That means grace is not just an atmosphere or a feeling. It is a governing principle. It is the realm in which the believer stands before God. Romans 5:2 says, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” There it is. We stand in grace. Not visit grace. Not dip into grace now and then when we fail. We stand in grace. That means grace is the sphere of divine dealing for the justified believer in Christ. It is the realm of acceptance, favor, position, and supply grounded in Jesus Christ. Under grace means God deals with the saved man on the basis of Christ’s finished work, not on the basis of the law as a covenant of acceptance.

That does not mean grace is soft on sin. It means grace has dealt with sin through the cross and now places the believer in union with Christ. Romans 6 begins by grounding the entire matter in identification with Christ’s death and resurrection. “Know ye not, that so many of

us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3). Then, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death” (Romans 6:4). Then, “Like as Christ was raised up from the dead... even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). That is under grace. It is not simply being excused. It is being transferred. It is being placed into Christ, counted with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. Grace changes the believer’s position.

So under grace means the believer now relates to God through Christ, in Christ, and on the basis of Christ’s work. He is justified freely by grace (Romans 3:24), stands in grace (Romans 5:2), and is no longer under the condemning rule of the law as the principle of acceptance. Grace is not permission to sin. Grace is the new realm in which the justified man lives before God. It is a realm with resources the law never had. The law could say, do not covet. Grace says you died with Christ and now live unto God. The law could say, thou shalt not. Grace says sin shall not have dominion over you. The law could demand. Grace can transform.

4. Sin Shall Not Have Dominion Over You

One of the great ironies in the whole debate is that legalists think law is what keeps sin under control, while Paul says grace is what breaks sin’s dominion. Romans 6:14 does not say, sin shall not have dominion over you because you are under the law. It says, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” That is exactly backward from the way most religious flesh reasons. The flesh says, put people under rules and fear, and then sin will stay in line. Paul says sin does not lose dominion that way. The law can provoke, expose, and condemn, but it cannot break dominion. Grace can. Why? Because grace unites the believer with Christ and supplies what the law never could.

Romans 6:6 says, “our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Then verse 7 says, “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” That is not sinless perfection. It is positional and governing truth. The believer in Christ is no longer under sin’s lordship in the same way he once was. Why? Because he died with Christ judicially and is alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:11). That is why Paul says, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Romans 6:12). He is not telling a lost man to behave better. He is telling a saint to live in light of what grace has already made true in Christ. Grace breaks dominion first in position, then works it out practically in life.

That is something the law could never accomplish. The law could tell Israel what they ought to be. Grace makes the believer a new creature in Christ and gives him the indwelling Spirit of God. The law could curse the sinner for failure. Grace says, “The law of the Spirit of

life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). There is the difference. Under law, sin is exposed and condemned, but the flesh remains powerless to conquer it. Under grace, the believer is placed in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, counted dead to sin, and empowered to walk in newness of life. No wonder Paul says sin shall not have dominion under grace. Grace does what law never could.

5. Does Under Grace Mean We Can Sin? God Forbid

The legalist’s favorite objection is the one Paul already answered before the legalist ever thought of it. “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid” (Romans 6:15). There is your answer. Not maybe not. Not generally no. “God forbid.” That means if a man hears Paul’s doctrine of grace and immediately concludes it means permission to sin, he has not discovered a flaw in grace. He has exposed a flaw in his own understanding. Paul did not shrink from preaching grace because sinners might abuse it. He preached grace so clearly that sinners did abuse it, and then he answered the abuse without surrendering the doctrine. That is how the apostle handles truth. He does not weaken grace to avoid misunderstanding. He preaches it fully and then crushes the misunderstanding.

Notice also that Paul’s answer to the objection is not to put the believer back under law. He does not say, you are right, let us return to Moses so sin will not spread. He says in Romans 6:16 that whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are. Then in verses 17 and 18 he thanks God that they had obeyed from the heart and were “made free from sin” and “became the servants of righteousness.” That is grace logic, not law logic. Paul’s answer to the abuse of grace is the transforming power of grace. The believer has a new heart orientation, a new master, and a new relationship to righteousness. Grace does not merely forgive him and leave him unchanged. Grace reorients him to obedience from the heart.

Then Titus 2:11-12 puts the matter beyond argument: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly.” Grace teaches. And what does it teach? Denial of ungodliness. Denial of worldly lusts. Sober living. Righteous living. Godly living. So if someone says grace promotes lawlessness, the answer is simple. No, counterfeit grace does. Real grace teaches holiness. The grace of God is not an excuse for sin. It is the very thing that trains the saint to depart from it. That is why the man who abuses grace is not proving grace wrong. He is proving that he either does not understand grace or has not received it rightly.

6. Grace Produces a New Relationship to God

One of the greatest differences between law and grace is the kind of relationship each one places at the center. Law speaks in the tone of demand from above to those below. Grace speaks in the tone of acceptance, sonship, and nearness through Christ. Under law, man stands as a transgressor before commandments. Under grace, the believer stands as a justified son in the Beloved. That is why Romans 8 moves from no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1) to the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). Grace changes more than the ledger. It changes the relationship. The believer is not merely a lawbreaker trying to improve. He is a child of God in Christ learning to walk with his Father.

Galatians 4 says something similar. Paul contrasts bondage under the elements of the world with sonship in Christ. “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). Then he asks, “how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” (Galatians 4:9). There it is. Going back under legal bondage is not spiritual maturity. It is regression. It is turning from sonship liberty back to servant fear as the controlling principle. That does not make a man holier. It makes him more confused about how God deals with him in Christ. Grace says you are accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6). Law says perform or be cursed. Those are not the same relationship.

This is why legalism usually produces one of two results: pride or despair. If a man thinks he is doing fairly well, legalism puffs him up. If he is honest enough to see how badly he is doing, legalism crushes him. Grace produces something different. Grace humbles the man because all acceptance is in Christ, not in himself. But it also steadies him because his standing with God does not rise and fall with his fluctuating performance. That new relationship becomes the basis for holy living. The child obeys not to become a child but because he is one. The saint pursues holiness not to climb into acceptance but because he already has acceptance in Christ. That is under grace.

7. Grace Produces Holy Living from a New Power

At this point, the legalist usually says, fine, but if you remove law as the governing principle, what power is left to produce holiness? The answer is the grace of God working through union with Christ and the indwelling Spirit. Romans 8:3 says, “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son... condemned sin in the flesh.” Then verse 4 says the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). There is the power the law never had. The problem was not with the law but with the flesh. Grace addresses that by putting the believer in Christ and giving him the Spirit. The law could command righteousness. Grace provides the power for it through the Spirit of God.

This is why Paul says in Galatians 5:16, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” He does not say, put yourself back under Sinai and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. He says walk in the Spirit. Then in verse 18, “if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Galatians 5:18). That verse alone ought to make some people sit very still for a while. Spirit-led living and being not under law go together in Paul’s doctrine. Why? Because grace is not the absence of moral power. It is the presence of divine power in a new covenant standing. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is not produced by legal bondage. It is produced by life in the Spirit under grace.

So grace does not leave the believer lawless. Grace leaves him alive unto God, led by the Spirit, instructed by the Word, identified with Christ, and empowered to live holy in a way the flesh under law never could. That is why the legalist’s objection finally collapses. He thinks if you do not use fear and legal demand as the engine, holiness will disappear. Paul says no, grace produces deeper holiness because it reaches deeper than external command. It touches position, nature, relationship, power, and desire. It moves obedience from stone tablets outside the man to the work of God inside the man. The Christian life under grace is not lower than the law. It is higher, because it flows from Christ Himself.

Conclusion

So what does it mean to be under grace and not under law? It means the believer is no longer standing before God under the law as the covenant principle of acceptance, condemnation, and divine dealing. It means he is justified freely by grace, stands in grace, and has been united with Jesus Christ in death and resurrection. It means the law still tells the truth about righteousness and sin, but it is not the believer’s master, husband, or governing principle before God. The saint has become dead to the law by the body of Christ and is now alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. That is not chaos. That is Christian doctrine.

It also means grace does what law could never do. The law exposes sin but cannot break its dominion. Grace places the believer in Christ, gives him the Spirit, and says, “sin shall not have dominion over you” (Romans 6:14). The law can curse failure. Grace can produce obedience from the heart. The law can demand righteousness. Grace can make a man a servant of righteousness. The law can define holiness. Grace can teach holiness. That is why Paul never backs away from saying believers are not under law. He says it boldly because he knows grace is not weaker than law. Grace is stronger. It does not merely command the right thing. It supplies the right standing and the right power in Christ.

And finally, under grace does not mean under indulgence. It does not mean sin does not matter. It does not mean antinomian foolishness where a man waves a doctrine around to

cover a dirty life. Paul answered that with “God forbid” before the question was out of your mouth. Grace produces a new relationship to God, a new standing in Christ, and a new power for holy living. So let the legalist tremble at it if he wants to. The Bible still says what it says: “ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). And if a man really believes that the way Paul meant it, he will not become less holy. He will finally begin to understand where holiness actually comes from.

8 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Shall We Continue in Sin?

Introduction

One of the quickest ways to find out who really understands grace and who is just playing with church words is to watch what happens after grace is preached clearly. The flesh always reacts the same way. If you say salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, and that the believer is not under the law but under grace, some fellow will eventually pop up with a crooked grin and say, “Well then, I guess you can just live however you want.” That is not a new objection. That is old rotten flesh talking. Paul heard it in the first century, and the Holy Ghost answered it before the legalists and loose talkers of the modern church were ever born. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Romans 6:1-2). That is not a soft answer. That is not a maybe. That is a hammer blow. If a man hears the doctrine of grace and concludes that grace is permission to sin, he has not found a problem in grace. He has exposed a problem in his own heart.

This subject matters because grace is one of the most beautiful truths in the Bible and one of the most abused. One crowd abuses grace by denying it and dragging saints back under legal bondage. Another crowd abuses grace by turning it into a spiritual hall pass for carnality, worldliness, impurity, and rebellion. The first crowd cannot stand liberty. The second crowd cannot stand holiness. Both crowds are wrong because neither one lets the Bible define grace. Real grace saves without works, but it never leaves the saved man where it found him. Real grace does not make sin harmless. Real grace does not excuse filth. Real grace does not shrug at worldliness. Real grace breaks sin’s dominion, changes the sinner’s standing, gives him a new relationship to God, and then teaches him how to live in a way that fits the Saviour who bought him.

So this essay is going to deal with one of the ugliest lies in modern Christianity, the lie that grace is basically divine permission to stay carnal. We are going to go straight through Romans 6, Titus 2, Jude 4, and the surrounding passages until this matter is nailed down hard enough to make both legalists and loose talkers uncomfortable. Grace is not a cloak

for sin. Grace is not a sophisticated excuse for compromise. Grace is not a doctrine for people who want Christ as fire insurance while they keep their heart in the world. Grace frees the believer from sin's dominion and then instructs him in holiness, sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. If a man says he loves grace and also loves his rebellion, he does not know grace the way the Book teaches it. He may know the vocabulary. He does not know the doctrine.

1. Paul Asked the Question Before the Critics Did

The first thing that ought to be said is that Paul was not scared of this objection. He preached grace so clearly that people accused him of encouraging sin. That alone tells you something. If a preacher never gets accused of making grace too free, chances are he has never preached grace as freely as Paul did. Romans 5 ends with one of the most staggering statements in the New Testament: "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Now once Paul says that, he knows exactly what the flesh will do with it. The flesh always looks for a loophole. So he raises the question himself: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1). Notice that. Paul does not avoid the question. He asks it. He knows the twisted mind of man. He knows somebody will hear abounding grace and think he found a theological hiding place for his wickedness.

Then comes the answer: "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2). That is Paul's answer to the charge that grace encourages sin. Not yes, but be careful. Not no, but try your best. "God forbid." The Greek scholars can polish their glasses all they want. In plain English, that means absolutely not. Perish the thought. The very suggestion is repulsive. Why? Because the believer's relationship to sin has changed. Paul does not answer the objection by putting the saint back under Moses. He answers it by appealing to the believer's union with Christ. "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Grace is not just pardon. Grace changes the believer's standing in relation to sin.

That is the point loose talkers always miss. They think grace is merely a new policy in heaven. Paul says grace is tied to a new position in Christ. The question is not whether a Christian can still sin. Of course he can, or the New Testament warnings would be pointless. The question is whether the Christian can continue in sin as his normal realm, his comfort zone, his unchallenged dominion, and then point to grace as justification. Paul says no. Why? Because grace is not a doctrine that leaves the believer where Adam left him. Grace places him into Christ, and once that happens, the whole relationship to sin changes.

2. Dead to Sin Does Not Mean Free to Enjoy It

The expression “dead to sin” in Romans 6:2 is one of those truths that shallow people either ignore or misuse. Paul goes on to explain it: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3). Then, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death” (Romans 6:4). Then he says, “our old man is crucified with him” (Romans 6:6). That is not water baptism doing magic. That is spiritual identification with Jesus Christ. The believer has been united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. So when Paul says the saint is dead to sin, he is not saying the flesh has been eradicated. He is saying the believer’s judicial and positional relationship to sin has changed because he is now in Christ.

That truth destroys the whole idea that grace is a divine excuse for the old life. If you died with Christ to sin’s realm, why would you treat grace as permission to build a house there? Paul says in Romans 6:6 that the old man was crucified with Christ “that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” There it is. The point of union with Christ is not theological ornament. It is practical deliverance from sin’s mastery. Verse 7 adds, “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” Again, that does not mean sinless perfection in the flesh. It means sin no longer has the same rightful claim of dominion over the man who is in Christ. Grace changes masters. Grace changes realms. Grace changes standing.

That is why a Christian who uses grace as permission to wallow in sin is denying the very truth grace established. He is acting as though Christ’s death left him in the same dominion from which Christ died to free him. Grace does not say, go back to the sty and call it liberty. Grace says you died with Christ and are alive unto God. Legalists hate that because it sounds too powerful and too free. Loose talkers hate it because it sounds too holy and too demanding. But it is Bible. The believer is not free to enjoy sin as his rightful realm. He is free from sin’s dominion so he can live unto God.

3. Under Grace Does Not Mean Under Indulgence

Romans 6:14 says, “ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The legalist hears that and panics. The carnal man hears that and smirks. Both of them miss the verse. Paul immediately follows it with, “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid” (Romans 6:15). There it is again. The same objection. The same answer. Under grace does not mean under indulgence. It does not mean God changed His mind about holiness. It does not mean righteousness no longer matters. It does not mean all standards dissolved at the cross. It means the believer’s relationship to God is no longer governed by the law as a covenant of demand and condemnation, but by grace in Christ. That is a change in standing, not a permission slip for corruption.

In fact, Paul says the exact opposite of what the legalist fears. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Notice that carefully. Grace does not create dominion for sin. Grace breaks dominion. Legalists think law keeps sin under control, but Paul says being under grace is why sin shall not have dominion. Why? Because grace gives what law never could. Law can expose sin. Law can condemn sin. Law can curse the sinner. But grace unites the believer with Christ, gives him the Spirit, and places him in a new relationship where sin is no longer his rightful lord. Under grace means under a stronger principle, not a weaker one.

That is why men who accuse grace of producing license usually have no idea what Paul means by grace. In their minds, the only thing restraining sin is external pressure, fear, and legal demand. They cannot imagine holiness produced from union with Christ, life in the Spirit, gratitude for redemption, and the inward teaching of grace. But the New Testament does imagine it, teaches it, and commands it. Grace does not produce anarchy. Grace produces a new man who is now called to yield himself unto God “as those that are alive from the dead” (Romans 6:13). That is not indulgence. That is resurrection ground.

4. Grace Teaches, and It Teaches Holiness

Titus 2 is one of the clearest passages in the entire Bible on this subject. Paul says, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). If he had stopped there, the hyper-grace crowd would have a field day. But he did not stop there. He continues, “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly” (Titus 2:12). There is the curriculum of grace. Grace teaches. And what does it teach? Not indulgence. Not compromise. Not how to explain away carnality. Grace teaches denial. Denying ungodliness. Denying worldly lusts. Then it teaches positive conduct: live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

That passage alone exposes how fake the modern abuse of grace really is. Real grace is not indifferent to sin. Real grace is an instructor against sin. If a man claims to understand grace and treats holiness like legalism, he is not following Paul. He is arguing with him. Grace says deny ungodliness. The carnal Christian says manage it. Grace says deny worldly lusts. The compromise preacher says contextualize them. Grace says live soberly, righteously, and godly. The flesh says do not get extreme. But the Holy Ghost is not confused. Grace brings salvation, and grace teaches a saved man how to live in light of it. So the man who uses grace to defend impurity, worldliness, or rebellion is not magnifying grace. He is slandering it.

Notice also that Titus says this takes place “in this present world” (Titus 2:12). That matters because some people think holiness is only for future reward or special ministry. Paul says

no. Grace teaches godly living right now, in this present world, while surrounded by temptation, pressure, lust, commerce, entertainment, compromise, and every crooked thing the age throws at the saint. Grace is not an ivory tower doctrine. Grace is street-level power for present godliness. It reaches into the believer's habits, speech, desires, conduct, and choices. The grace of God is not only the hand that saves. It is the teacher that trains.

5. Jude Warns About Turning Grace into Filth

Jude 4 gives one of the strongest warnings in the New Testament against the abuse of grace: "For there are certain men crept in unawares... ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." There it is in black and white. Grace can be twisted. Grace can be turned. Grace can be perverted in men's mouths and systems. And what do they turn it into? Lasciviousness. That is looseness, sensuality, moral filth, and shameless license. Jude is not talking about innocent misunderstanding. He is talking about ungodly men corrupting grace into a cloak for flesh. That ought to make any Bible believer watchful, because this corruption is not new. It was already crawling around in the apostolic age.

You can see the same spirit everywhere today. Men preach a message where grace means sin is no longer serious because the cross covered everything. They talk as if conviction is legalism, separation is bondage, sobriety is old-fashioned, and holiness is lack of understanding. They make room for impurity, compromise, flirtation with the world, and doctrinal looseness, then call it freedom. Jude says that is not freedom. That is ungodliness twisting grace into lasciviousness. The false teacher does not usually say, let us deny grace. He says, let us redefine it so the flesh can breathe easier. That is more dangerous, because it sounds spiritual while making room for corruption.

And do not miss the rest of Jude 4. These men are "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." That means corruption of grace is Christological at the root. When you turn grace into a license for sin, you are not merely making a moral mistake. You are denying the Lordship, holiness, and saving purpose of Jesus Christ. Grace does not leave Christ out front while the flesh drives the car. Grace puts Christ on the throne. So when a man uses grace as a shield for rebellion, he is not honoring the cross. He is insulting the Lord who died there.

6. Grace Does Not Make Sin Harmless

One of the most poisonous ideas loose talkers spread is that grace somehow reduces the seriousness of sin for the believer. They may not say it that bluntly, but that is where their doctrine leads. If all sin is already forgiven, they reason, then sin must no longer matter very much. Paul would blow that logic to pieces. In Romans 6 he says the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). He says believers are not to yield their members as instruments of

unrighteousness unto sin (Romans 6:13). He says we are to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God (Romans 6:11). None of that sounds like sin became harmless. Grace saves from sin, but it never baptizes sin into something acceptable.

In fact, grace makes sin look worse, not better, because grace shows what it took to deal with it. If sin were small, Christ did not need to die. If sin were harmless, there was no need for blood atonement. If sin were light, there was no need for the Son of God to be made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). The cross is the measure of how serious sin is. Grace does not tell you sin is no big deal. Grace tells you sin is such a big deal that only God in flesh could bear the judgment for it. So the saint who says, I am under grace, therefore sin is not a major concern, has turned the whole gospel upside down. Grace did not lower the cost of sin. Grace revealed it in blood.

That is why worldliness, impurity, bitterness, drunkenness, fornication, rebellion, and every other work of the flesh are still deadly matters in the Christian life. Not deadly in the sense of undoing Christ's finished work for the believer, but deadly in their practical effects, their grieving of the Spirit, their corruption of testimony, their damage to fellowship, their invitation to chastisement, and their insult to the One who saved us. Hebrews 12 reminds believers that the Lord chastens His sons (Hebrews 12:6). Grace does not eliminate chastening. Grace gives the relationship in which chastening takes place. A father disciplines a son precisely because he is a son. So no, grace does not make sin harmless. It makes sin more hateful because the saint now sees it in the light of Calvary.

7. Grace Frees, Then Grace Instructs

The biblical pattern is always the same. Grace frees the believer from sin's dominion, and then grace instructs the believer how to live in light of that freedom. Romans 6 first grounds everything in union with Christ, death to sin, and freedom from dominion. Only then does Paul say, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Romans 6:12). The command comes after the position is established. That is how grace works. Grace does not say earn freedom by behaving better. Grace says you have been placed in Christ, now live accordingly. The indicative comes before the imperative. The fact comes before the command. That is why Christian holiness under grace is never a ladder to climb into acceptance. It is the outworking of an acceptance already secured in Christ.

That pattern shows up all over Paul's writings. In Colossians, believers are risen with Christ, therefore they are to seek those things which are above (Colossians 3:1). In Ephesians, they are accepted in the beloved and redeemed through His blood, therefore they are to walk worthy (Ephesians 1:6-7; 4:1). In Romans, they are justified by faith and stand in grace, therefore they are to present their bodies a living sacrifice (Romans 5:1-2; 12:1). Grace

always gives first, then commands. Law demands first and leaves the sinner condemned. Grace secures the man in Christ and then instructs him in a life that matches the gift. That is why grace is stronger than law. It works from life, not toward life.

So when the believer asks, how should I live under grace, the answer is not, however you please. The answer is, in a way that reflects the One who saved you. Grace says your body is the Lord's. Grace says your mouth belongs to God. Grace says your mind should be renewed. Grace says worldly lusts are to be denied. Grace says righteousness and godliness are now fitting because the Saviour is yours. Grace frees from the old tyrant and then teaches the liberated man how to walk as a son of God. That is not bondage. That is holy liberty.

Conclusion

So what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? The Holy Ghost already answered it, and He answered it perfectly: "God forbid" (Romans 6:2). Grace is not permission to sin. Grace is not a loophole for carnality. Grace is not a refined excuse for worldliness, impurity, compromise, or rebellion. Grace changes the believer's standing in Christ, breaks sin's dominion, unites the saint to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then instructs him in holiness. That is Bible grace. Anything less is corruption.

That is why both the legalist and the loose talker miss the point. The legalist hears grace and thinks moral chaos because he has never understood power apart from law. The loose talker hears grace and thinks personal indulgence because he has never understood holiness as the fruit of union with Christ. Paul rejects both errors. He says believers are not under law but under grace, and then he says the grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. He says sin shall not have dominion, and then he says do not let it reign. He says we are dead to sin, and then he says present yourselves unto God. That is not contradiction. That is grace doing what law never could.

So if a man wants to know whether he really understands grace, let him examine what kind of life his doctrine encourages. If his version of grace makes room for a dirty life, a worldly heart, a careless tongue, a compromised walk, and a rebellious spirit, he does not have Pauline grace. He has a counterfeit. Real grace saves the sinner freely, but it never leaves him comfortably married to the sins Christ died to free him from. Real grace delivers, teaches, cleans, humbles, and transforms. Grace does not make sin safe. Grace makes holiness possible in a man who could never have produced it on his own. And once a believer sees that clearly, he will never again use the grace of God as a cloak for the very thing grace came to conquer.

9 of 15: Grace Uncovered - The Grace Given Unto Me

Introduction

There are certain phrases in Paul's writings that ought to make a Bible believer stop reading for a minute and sit still with the Book open. "The grace given unto me" is one of them. That phrase is not decoration. It is not Paul being poetic. It is not a polite way of saying he feels thankful for salvation. When Paul keeps talking about grace given unto him, he is talking about something much bigger than private religious experience. He is talking about commission, office, stewardship, revelation, and ministry. He is talking about the hand of God resting on a man in such a way that the man's whole calling is explained by grace. That is why the phrase matters so much. If you reduce it to a warm testimony about personal forgiveness, you will miss half of what Paul is saying and most of what makes his apostleship so important for the body of Christ.

Now of course the grace of God did save Paul personally. No man who ever read Acts 9 honestly could miss that. The persecutor was stopped, blinded, broken, and converted by the risen Jesus Christ. Paul never got over that. He says, "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant" (1 Timothy 1:14), and, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). But when you move through Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians, you find something more. Paul does not just say grace saved me. He says grace was given to me. And in those passages that grace is tied to speaking, writing boldly, laying a foundation, preaching among the Gentiles, and administering the dispensation of grace for the present age. In other words, grace in Paul is not only a doctrine he preaches. It is the governing principle of his calling.

That matters now more than ever because the modern church either ignores Paul's unique office or turns him into a generic devotional writer who just happened to write letters with some useful material in them. But Paul does not talk that way about himself, and the Holy Ghost does not present him that way either. The Lord took a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious man and made him the apostle of the Gentiles, the steward of the mystery, and the wise masterbuilder for the church age. That transformation itself was grace. The office was grace. The revelation was grace. The ministry was grace. And if a man does not understand that, he will never fully grasp why Paul speaks with the tone, authority, and doctrinal force that he does. So this essay is going to get right down into the heart of that phrase and show that "the grace given unto me" is one of the keys to understanding Paul's entire apostolic calling.

1. Grace Given Unto Me Is More Than Personal Testimony

When most Christians hear the word grace, they immediately think of personal salvation, forgiveness, and the mercy of God toward a sinner. That is right as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough in Paul's case. Paul uses the phrase "the grace given unto me" in settings where he is not merely talking about being saved. He is talking about his function, his message, and his office. Romans 12:3 says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you." That is not merely a testimony about how grateful he is to be forgiven. That is apostolic speech. He is grounding his instruction in grace given to him. Then in Romans 15:15 he says he wrote "the more boldly unto you in some sort... because of the grace that is given to me of God" (Romans 15:15). Again, the grace given to him is connected to bold writing and authoritative ministry.

That means Paul is not using grace in a loose sentimental way. He is using grace in an official way. Grace there includes divine appointment, enabling, stewardship, and right to speak. God did not just save Paul and let him pick a line of Christian work he found interesting. God gave him grace in the sense of a calling that carried authority and responsibility. That ought to correct the shallow way many read Paul. They treat his letters like optional reflections from a deeply spiritual man, when Paul himself roots his exhortations and doctrines in grace that was given to him by God. He is not improvising. He is ministering under commission.

The same thing is true in Galatians 2:9 where James, Cephas, and John "perceived the grace that was given unto me." That verse is not saying they discovered Paul had a warm heart for Jesus. They perceived something specific about his office and calling. They recognized that grace had been given to him in a way tied to his apostleship toward the Gentiles. So right at the start, you have to get this settled. In Paul, grace is not only the mercy that rescued him from hell. It is also the divine endowment, stewardship, and commission that shaped his whole ministry. If you miss that, you will read over the phrase and lose one of the great keys to rightly dividing the New Testament.

2. The Persecutor Was Made an Apostle by Grace

One of the reasons Paul's use of this phrase is so powerful is because of what he used to be. The man was not a religious neutral before grace touched him. He was not a harmless seeker. He says in 1 Timothy 1:13, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." In Acts 8 and 9 he is making havoc of the church, consenting to Stephen's death, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1). If God had dealt with Saul of Tarsus on the basis of works, he would have gone to hell under a storm cloud of righteous wrath. Instead, the Lord Jesus Christ stopped him, saved him, and then did something even more astonishing. He did not merely spare him. He appointed him.

That is why Paul speaks the way he does in 1 Corinthians 15:9 and 10: “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). Notice that carefully. He does not merely say grace saved me. He says grace made me what I am. And what was he? An apostle. A preacher. A laborer. A chosen vessel. Grace did not simply rescue him from the consequences of his past. Grace actively refashioned his identity and office. That means his apostleship itself stands as a monument of grace. The same Lord he persecuted gave him the ministry he did not deserve.

This is why the phrase “the grace given unto me” carries so much force when Paul uses it. He knows what he was and he knows what God made him. There is no pride in that phrase, but there is authority in it. Paul is not boasting in himself. He is glorying in what grace accomplished. The persecutor was turned into the preacher. The destroyer was made a builder. The enemy of the church was made the wise masterbuilder of the church age. That is grace in its fullest practical sense. It did not merely pardon a sinner. It commissioned an apostle. And once you see that, the phrase stops sounding casual and starts sounding like one of the heaviest apostolic expressions in the New Testament.

3. The Grace Given Unto Me Authorized His Voice

Romans 12:3 says, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you.” That is a remarkable way to begin an exhortation about sober-mindedness and spiritual gifts. Paul does not say, I say because I have studied hard, or because I happen to have strong opinions, or because I have earned the right by experience. He says he speaks “through the grace given unto me.” That means the very act of instructing the church is tied to a divine bestowal of grace. His voice as an apostle is not self-generated. It is grace-governed. Grace gave him the right, the burden, and the office through which he speaks.

Romans 15:15 says much the same thing: “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort... because of the grace that is given to me of God.” That verse destroys the idea that Paul’s boldness was just personality. Some people read Paul and think, well, he was a forceful man, so he wrote forcefully. But Paul himself tells you what lies behind the boldness. Grace given to him of God. That means his bold writing was not just temperament. It was stewardship. God gave him grace to speak plainly, directly, and authoritatively to the churches. When Paul presses, warns, rebukes, and instructs, he is not freelancing. He is operating under grace given to him.

That has huge implications for how the body of Christ reads Paul. He is not one voice among many equal voices in the New Testament. His writings carry a distinct weight because his office carries a distinct grace. This is why the modern habit of treating Paul as

merely one inspirational writer among several is so dangerous. Paul himself ties his speech and writing to grace given him by God. If the Holy Ghost thought that mattered, then a Bible believer had better think it matters too. It is not enough to say, yes, Paul was helpful. The right thing to say is this: God gave grace to Paul in such a way that his speaking and writing for the church carry apostolic authority rooted in divine commission.

4. The Grace Given Unto Me Made Him a Wise Masterbuilder

One of the clearest and most important statements on this subject is 1 Corinthians 3:10: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation.” There is so much in that verse that it ought to stop a man in his tracks. First, Paul connects his masterbuilding directly to grace given unto him. Second, he describes himself as a wise masterbuilder. Third, he says he laid the foundation. That is not the language of a casual helper in the construction project. That is foundational language. Paul is saying the grace given to him equipped and authorized him to lay down foundational truth for the church.

Now the next verse protects the doctrine from abuse: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). So Christ is the foundation in the ultimate sense. Paul is not replacing Christ. He is laying Christ doctrinally as the church’s foundation through the revelation committed to him. That distinction is everything. Christ is the basis. Paul is the masterbuilder under grace who lays that basis out for the church age in doctrinal form. That is why the church’s life and doctrine must be built on Pauline revelation rightly understood. If Paul laid the foundation according to grace given to him, then anybody who builds contrary to that grace is building crooked from the start.

This is why so many ministries end up confused. They build with mixed materials from mixed programs because they never recognized the grace given to Paul as wise masterbuilder. They drag Israel’s kingdom expectations into the body of Christ, put saints back under legal bondage, confuse water and Spirit, signs and faith, land promises and heavenly places, because they never started where the foundation was laid. Paul says grace was given to him for that work. That means the doctrine of grace is not merely something he happened to enjoy preaching. It was part of the very equipment and appointment by which he laid the foundation. That makes this phrase central to all church doctrine.

5. The Grace Given Unto Me Was Recognized by Other Apostles

Galatians 2:9 says, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me.” That verse is one of the strongest proofs that

Paul's calling was not merely a private inward feeling. It was something that could be perceived. The recognized leaders among the apostles saw it. They perceived the grace given to Paul. That means Paul's office and stewardship were visible and identifiable enough that the other apostles acknowledged a distinct grace resting upon him for his ministry, especially toward the heathen. This was not Paul inventing a title for himself. It was a divine reality recognized by others.

Notice also what happens after that perception. They gave to Paul and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision" (Galatians 2:9). That is not division in the sense of competing gospels. It is division in the sense of spheres and stewardships. The grace given to Paul was recognized as tied to a distinct apostolic commission. James, Cephas, and John did not erase Paul's calling into a generic sameness. They recognized the grace given him and the sphere attached to it. That ought to settle a lot of modern confusion. If the apostles themselves acknowledged a distinct grace in Paul's office, then the church today ought to stop pretending all apostolic ministry in the New Testament functions the same way in the same setting.

This verse also guards us from the accusation that emphasizing Paul's unique ministry is somehow disrespectful to Peter or the twelve. It was not disrespectful when James, Cephas, and John did it, so it is not disrespectful now. They perceived the grace given unto Paul. The problem in the modern church is not that too many believers recognize Paul's office. It is that too few do. They flatten the whole New Testament into one undifferentiated mass and then wonder why they cannot sort kingdom language from church doctrine. Galatians 2:9 tells you why. They ignored the grace given to Paul that the pillars themselves recognized.

6. The Dispensation of Grace Was Given Me to You-Ward

Ephesians 3 is one of the richest chapters in the Bible on this whole matter. Paul says, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward" (Ephesians 3:2). There is the phrase again, and this time it is tied directly to dispensation. That means grace given to Paul is not only about his personal commission but about an administrative stewardship for others. "Given me to you-ward." God gave something to Paul for the benefit of the saints, especially the Gentiles. That "something" is called the dispensation of the grace of God. So grace here is not merely an inward blessing. It is a stewardship entrusted to Paul for the present age.

Then Paul says in verse 3, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery" (Ephesians 3:3). That means the grace given to Paul includes revelation. He is not simply repeating publicly known truth in a slightly different tone. He is receiving and transmitting

revelation from the risen Christ. Then in verse 7 he says he was made a minister “according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power” (Ephesians 3:7). There you see it all tied together - grace, gift, ministry, power, and revelation. And in verse 8, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8). There is no way around it. Grace given to Paul is part of the whole structure of his calling.

This chapter is one of the great reasons the phrase matters so much. It shows that Paul’s apostleship is inseparable from grace, revelation, and stewardship. The grace given him was not an ornament. It was the governing principle of his ministry. He was entrusted with the dispensation of grace, made a minister by the gift of grace, and given grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles. That is why a man who does not understand the grace given to Paul will never fully grasp the distinct character of Paul’s ministry. He may admire Paul’s zeal, but he will miss the architecture of his calling.

7. Grace Given Unto Me Was the Governing Principle of His Entire Calling

By the time you line up Romans 12:3, Romans 15:15, 1 Corinthians 3:10, Galatians 2:9, and Ephesians 3:2, 7, and 8, the picture becomes unmistakable. Grace given unto Paul governs his whole calling. It explains his speaking, his writing, his boldness, his apostolic office, his masterbuilding, his revelation, his ministry, and his Gentile commission. This is not grace as a pleasant background note. This is grace as the operating principle of Paul’s entire apostolic existence. The man thinks, writes, preaches, and builds under grace given unto him by God. That is why the phrase keeps recurring. It is one of the Spirit’s ways of telling you: do not read Paul like a private devotional man. Read him as a commissioned steward under grace.

This also means that Paul’s apostleship itself was an expression of grace from top to bottom. Grace took the persecutor and made him the preacher. Grace took the enemy and made him the ambassador. Grace took the blasphemer and made him the apostle. Grace gave him authority to speak. Grace entrusted him with revelation. Grace appointed him to the Gentiles. Grace made him a wise masterbuilder. Grace enabled him to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. When Paul says, “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10), he is not merely saying grace cleaned up his private life. He is saying grace made his office, ministry, and labor what they are.

And this is one of the biggest lessons the church needs to recover. Grace in Paul is not just the doctrine that sinners are saved freely. It is also the principle by which God structured the whole present ministry of Christ through His apostle to the Gentiles. That is why

understanding “the grace given unto me” is so important. It keeps you from sentimentalizing grace. It keeps you from trivializing Paul’s office. It keeps you from flattening apostolic ministries into one undifferentiated lump. And it keeps you from treating Paul like an optional writer when the Lord Himself made him the steward of grace for this present age. The phrase is not small. It is one of the hinges on which church doctrine turns.

Conclusion

So what is the importance of Paul’s repeated phrase, “the grace given unto me”? It is this: grace in those passages is not limited to personal forgiveness, though it certainly includes that. It extends to commission, office, stewardship, revelation, ministry, and apostolic authority. Romans 12:3 ties it to his speaking. Romans 15:15 ties it to his bold writing. 1 Corinthians 3:10 ties it to his laying the foundation as a wise masterbuilder. Galatians 2:9 shows that other apostles perceived it. Ephesians 3 ties it to the dispensation of grace, the revelation of the mystery, the gift of ministry, and the preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles. That is a massive range, and it all comes under the heading of grace given unto Paul.

This is why Paul’s apostleship cannot be treated like a side detail. The Lord Jesus Christ did not merely save Saul of Tarsus and then leave him to find a niche in Christian service. He gave him grace for a specific office and specific stewardship. He took the persecutor and made him the apostle of the Gentiles. He took the destroyer and made him the wise masterbuilder. He took the enemy of the church and made him the foundational doctrinal voice for the church age. That is grace in action at the highest level of calling. Not because Paul deserved it, but because Christ purposed it. And once a man sees that, he starts to understand why Paul writes with such authority, boldness, and precision.

So this phrase ought never to be skimmed over again. When Paul says “the grace given unto me,” he is not just having a thankful moment. He is pointing to the divine source and structure of his whole apostolic ministry. He is saying, in effect, everything I am doing for the body of Christ stands on grace God gave me to do it. That is why the church must hear Paul. Not because Paul is above Christ, but because Christ appointed Paul. Not because grace began with Paul, but because grace for this present dispensation was entrusted to him in a distinct way. And if the saints today ever recover the weight of that phrase, they will handle Paul’s epistles with more reverence, more clarity, and a lot less confusion.

Introduction

There are some truths in the Christian life that sound beautiful in a sermon but hit altogether different when they land in your ribs at two in the morning. Grace is one of them. A lot of people know grace as the doctrine that saves a sinner. Fewer know grace as the power that keeps a saint from caving in when everything in him says he ought to collapse. It is one thing to sing about grace when the bills are paid, the body feels strong, the church is stable, the family is peaceful, and the skies are blue. It is another thing entirely to learn grace when the flesh is worn thin, the prayers seem delayed, the burden will not lift, the thorn will not leave, and the Lord's answer is not the one you wanted. That is where most shallow religion starts coming apart. It can celebrate grace at conversion, but it has no doctrine for grace in exhaustion, grace in pain, grace in humiliation, grace in attack, grace in pressure, and grace in the kind of weakness that makes a man feel like he has nothing left to give.

That is why 2 Corinthians 12:9 is one of the deepest verses in the New Testament. Paul says, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). That is not a pretty slogan for a greeting card. That is a battlefield revelation. The Lord did not tell Paul, your pain is imaginary. He did not tell him, toughen up and stop talking about it. He did not say, if you had enough faith, the thorn would already be gone. He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." In other words, the answer to the problem was not always immediate removal. Sometimes the answer was sustaining grace inside the problem. That is one of the hardest and richest lessons a Christian ever learns. Grace is not only what gets a man into Christ. Grace is what keeps a man standing when life under the sun seems to be trying to grind him into powder.

And that lesson is desperately needed now. There are wounded believers all over the place who think weakness means God is done with them. There are weary servants who imagine their usefulness ended when their strength ran out. There are tested Christians who think the presence of pressure must mean the absence of grace. The Bible teaches the opposite. Grace is often seen most clearly where natural strength gives out. Grace can shine in a prison cell, on a sickbed, under reproach, in a discouraging season, during prolonged spiritual warfare, and in the humiliating place where a man finally learns he cannot carry himself. So this essay is going to go straight into 2 Corinthians 12 and then out through the rest of Scripture to show that grace is not only pardon at the beginning. Grace is God's sustaining power in the hard middle. Sometimes grace is seen in deliverance, yes. But sometimes grace shines even brighter when the Lord leaves the thorn in place and holds His servant up with strength not his own.

1. Paul's Thorn Was Real, Painful, and Humbling

Second Corinthians 12 begins in a high place and then drops into a low one. Paul has just spoken of visions and revelations of the Lord, of being caught up to the third heaven, and of hearing unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). That is extraordinary ground. If anybody in the New Testament had reason to become swollen with spiritual pride on the human side, Paul did. So the Lord, who knows how dangerous flesh is even in a saved apostle, did something that confounds modern religion. He balanced extraordinary revelation with a painful humbling. Paul says, “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2 Corinthians 12:7). There it is. Not a light inconvenience. Not a vague discomfort. A thorn in the flesh.

Now whatever the exact physical or circumstantial form of that thorn was, one thing is clear. It was not pleasant, and it was not small. The language is too strong. A thorn in the flesh and a messenger of Satan to buffet him means repeated striking, beating, pounding, harassment. This was not Paul overreacting to a minor irritation. This was something severe enough to drive him to earnest prayer and lasting enough to make him speak of it as a defining lesson in his ministry. That matters because modern Christianity tends to either glamorize suffering or deny it. The Bible does neither. Paul’s thorn was real. It hurt. It pressed him. It humbled him. The apostle of grace was not floating above pain in a mystical cloud while writing letters about victory.

And notice the purpose in the text. “Lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Corinthians 12:7). That means the Lord was doing something deeper than simply allowing pain. He was guarding Paul from pride. That ought to sober any believer who imagines that spiritual usefulness automatically means exemption from humbling weakness. Sometimes the very reason the Lord allows pressure is because the vessel is being used, not because the vessel is worthless. The flesh thinks, if God loved me and was pleased with me, He would remove every thorn. The Bible says sometimes the thorn is proof that God is preserving the usefulness of the vessel by keeping it low. That is not cruelty. That is severe mercy. The Lord would rather have a humble apostle under pressure than a proud apostle intoxicated with revelation.

2. Paul Prayed for Removal and Heaven Did Not Say Yes

One of the comforting things about Paul is that he was not plastic. He was not a fake saint smiling through agony and pretending pain did not hurt. He says plainly, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me” (2 Corinthians 12:8). That is honest prayer. He did not enjoy the thorn. He did not romanticize it. He did not pretend he was above asking for relief. He went to the Lord about it repeatedly. That alone should help a lot of Christians. There is no super-spiritual virtue in acting as though pain does not matter to

you. Paul prayed for removal. He asked specifically. He asked earnestly. He asked more than once. So there is nothing unspiritual about asking God to take away the thing that is pressing you hard.

But then comes the hard lesson. The answer was not what Paul asked for. Heaven did answer, but not with removal. The Lord did not say, yes, Paul, the thorn is gone. He said, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9). That means one of the deepest trials in the Christian life is not unanswered prayer in the sense of silence. It is answered prayer in the sense of a different answer than the one you wanted. Paul wanted subtraction. God gave supply. Paul wanted the thing to depart. God gave grace to endure the thing. That is where many believers get shaken, because they think divine love must always take the shortest road to relief. Sometimes it does not. Sometimes divine love takes the road that leaves the servant weaker in himself and stronger in Christ.

That truth has to be learned or a man will become bitter. He will say, I prayed, and the Lord did not care. But that is not what happened in Paul’s case, and it is not what happens in the believer’s case either. The Lord cared enough to answer with something better than mere comfort. He answered with Himself. “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Not borrowed grace. Not abstract grace. “My grace.” That is personal. That is the Lord Jesus Christ saying, what you need in this hour is not only change in circumstance but supply from Me inside the circumstance. A lot of Christians want a God who only removes burdens. The Bible reveals a God who sometimes carries His child under the burden in such a way that the carrying does more for the soul than the removing would have done.

3. Sufficient Grace Is Not Small Grace

The Lord’s answer to Paul was not, you have enough grace to barely scrape by if you grit your teeth. He said, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9). That word sufficient is one of the great words in the Christian life. It means enough. Enough for the pressure. Enough for the buffeting. Enough for the exhaustion. Enough for the disappointment. Enough for the season that does not change as quickly as you thought it should. Grace is not always abundant in the sense of emotional thrill. Sometimes grace is sufficient in the sense that it quietly keeps the saint from going under. There are believers who expected fireworks and got daily bread instead. But daily bread is still grace, and often it is the very form of grace that keeps a man closest to the Lord.

This is where modern triumphal religion goes wrong. It often presents grace as if it must always result in visible escape, obvious breakthrough, immediate victory, or dramatic deliverance. Now thank God the Lord does deliver. He breaks chains. He heals. He rescues. He opens prison doors. He turns mourning into joy. The Book is full of those moments. But

the same Book also shows saints carried by sufficient grace in times when the trouble remained for a season. The three Hebrew children were preserved in the furnace, not kept from entering it (Daniel 3:25). Paul and Silas sang in the prison before the doors opened (Acts 16:25-26). Timothy had his often infirmities and was not rebuked for weakness but guided in it (1 Timothy 5:23). The God of Scripture does not limit Himself to one pattern. Sometimes He delivers out of, and sometimes He strengthens in.

And notice that the Lord did not say your own grace is sufficient, or your maturity is sufficient, or your theology is sufficient. He said, "My grace." That matters because many believers break down by looking inward for strength that was never meant to be found there. Your willpower is not sufficient. Your flesh is not sufficient. Your emotional endurance is not sufficient. Your track record is not sufficient. But His grace is. That is why the Christian life cannot be lived independently. The saint who knows he needs grace every hour is actually closer to victory than the saint who thinks he can run on stored-up strength. Sufficient grace is not small grace. It is Christ's own supply meeting the saint exactly where the saint is weakest.

4. Strength Made Perfect in Weakness

The second half of the Lord's answer is even more searching: "for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). That verse is enough to offend the whole spirit of the age. Men want strength made perfect in strength. They want God's power to ride in on the horse of their competence, charisma, drive, emotional energy, and visible momentum. But the Lord says His strength is made perfect in weakness. Not because weakness is noble in itself, but because weakness empties the vessel of self-confidence and creates room for divine power to be seen for what it is. As long as a man can carry himself, he tends to think he is doing the carrying. Once he cannot, he begins learning who was always holding him up in the first place.

That is why Paul responds the way he does: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). That is not spiritual masochism. Paul is not saying he enjoys pain for pain's sake. He is saying he values what weakness teaches him about the power of Christ. He has learned that infirmity is not always the end of usefulness. Sometimes it is the setting in which Christ's power rests most evidently upon the servant. The word rest there carries the idea of tabernacling, dwelling upon, overshadowing. Paul would rather have visible weakness with the power of Christ resting on him than fleshly strength that leaves him leaning on himself. That is a lesson no flesh wants, and every fruitful servant must learn.

This turns worldly measurements upside down. The world says strength means visible success, personal independence, impressive force, and the ability to manage life without leaning too obviously on anything outside yourself. The Lord says strength is made perfect in weakness. The world says hide weakness. The saint learns to bring it to Christ. The world says vulnerability is dangerous. The Lord says brokenness is often the place where My power settles. Again, that does not mean Christians should glorify incompetence or neglect responsibility. It means they must stop despising the very conditions in which God often works most deeply. Weakness can be the stage on which divine strength is best seen, because no one can then mistake the source.

5. Grace in Weariness, Pressure, and Daily Ministry

Paul's lesson in 2 Corinthians 12 was not an isolated private devotional experience. It fits the whole pattern of his life and ministry. This is the same apostle who spoke of being "troubled on every side, yet not distressed... perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). That is grace in ministry. Not absence of pressure, but divine preservation under pressure. Paul knew what it was to be stoned, shipwrecked, beaten, hungry, sleepless, burdened, and continually pressed with the care of all the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Yet he did not fold up into nothing. Why? Not because he had iron nerves. Because grace was operating.

This is an important correction for weary servants. Some men think if they are tired, burdened, or discouraged, that itself proves something is wrong with their walk. Sometimes it proves they are human. Elijah sat under a juniper tree and wanted to die (1 Kings 19:4). Jeremiah wept. David cried. Paul despaired even of life at one point in Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8). The issue is not whether a servant ever feels pressed. The issue is where the servant turns when he is pressed. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:9 that they had "the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." There is the same lesson again. Weakness strips self-trust and pushes the soul onto God.

And that is where grace often operates most practically, in the ordinary grind of carrying burdens while still belonging to Christ. Grace is what keeps a mother praying when she is emotionally exhausted. Grace is what steadies a preacher when he has poured himself out and still faces criticism, misunderstanding, and spiritual warfare. Grace is what keeps an older saint from collapsing under disappointment when the body will not do what it once did. Grace is what keeps a missionary pressing on when visible fruit seems sparse. Grace is what sustains the wounded believer who has cried to the Lord more than once and still wakes up with the same burden. Grace is not always dramatic. Sometimes it is the quiet power that keeps a servant faithful through another difficult day.

6. Grace Does Not Cancel Warfare, but It Equips the Saint in It

It is worth noticing that Paul calls the thorn “the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2 Corinthians 12:7). That means weakness and pressure are not always merely natural circumstances. Sometimes they sit inside a larger context of spiritual warfare. Now the Lord remained sovereign over the whole matter, because the thorn served His humbling purpose, but the satanic buffeting was real as well. That is instructive. The believer can be under grace and still face intense warfare. In fact, some of the fiercest warfare often comes precisely where grace is doing significant work. The enemy does not usually waste much effort on a saint already asleep in compromise. He goes after those whose usefulness threatens his kingdom.

Ephesians 6 tells believers to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10). That is grace language in armor form. The strength is not self-generated. It is “in the Lord.” The armor is God’s armor. The standing is by grace. The warfare is real. The saint is to take the whole armor of God because he wrestles not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12). Grace does not exempt the believer from the fight. Grace equips him in the fight. The legalist imagines rules are enough. The shallow charismatic imagines emotion is enough. Paul says the saint needs divine strength and divine armor.

That means a believer should not interpret every struggle as proof that grace is absent. Sometimes the very presence of battle means the man is walking where the enemy resists him. The key question is not whether the buffeting exists, but whether the saint is learning the Lord’s sufficiency in the midst of it. Paul did not deny the satanic element, and he did not worship it either. He took the matter to the Lord and then received grace for the ongoing conflict. That is where many believers need correction. They are waiting for grace to mean no war, no opposition, no pressure, no weakness. But often grace means you are kept upright, armed, and useful in the middle of all of that.

7. Weakness Is Not the End of Usefulness

One of the great lies the devil tells afflicted Christians is that weakness means their useful days are over. The body is not what it was. The mind is tired. The schedule is burdened. The pain is recurring. The disappointment lingers. The tears come easier than they used to. So the devil whispers, now you are finished. But 2 Corinthians 12 says the opposite. Weakness is not always the end of usefulness. Sometimes it is where the power of Christ rests most plainly on the servant. Paul says, “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (2 Corinthians 12:10). Why?

“For when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). That is not a riddle. It is grace logic.

Moses was eighty before the Lord publicly sent him to confront Pharaoh (Exodus 7:7). Caleb was eighty-five when he still wanted the mountain because the Lord had kept him (Joshua 14:10-12). Anna served God with fastings and prayers in advanced age (Luke 2:36-37). Paul wrote some of the deepest truth in the New Testament while carrying burdens most modern Christians would not survive for a week. John received Revelation in exile on Patmos (Revelation 1:9). The Bible is not a book that worships youthful strength or polished efficiency. It is a book that again and again shows God using weak vessels, aged servants, suffering saints, and pressed men in ways that make the glory unquestionably His.

This is a word many wounded believers need. Your usefulness is not measured only by visible activity, outward force, or the size of your natural energy. A bedridden saint can still witness by patience. A tired mother can still glorify God in daily faithfulness. A grieving believer can still display the sufficiency of Christ by not quitting. A preacher with a thorn can still lay down truth that strengthens generations after him. Weakness may change the form of your usefulness, but it does not automatically end it. Sometimes the most powerful ministry a believer ever has comes when everybody can see that if he is standing at all, Christ must be the One holding him up.

Conclusion

So what is grace for strength in weakness? It is the Lord Jesus Christ saying to His pressured servant, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is not only grace at the beginning when a sinner is justified. It is grace in the middle when a saint is battered, burdened, weary, and humbled. It is grace when the prayer for removal receives a different answer. It is grace when the thorn stays for a season. It is grace when the Lord does not always change the circumstance immediately but instead supplies strength inside it. It is grace when weakness becomes the very place where the power of Christ rests most plainly on the believer.

That means the Christian must stop despising every condition of weakness as though it were automatically the end of spiritual usefulness. Paul’s thorn did not make him useless. It made him dependent. His infirmity did not cancel his ministry. It purified it. His weakness did not disqualify him from grace. It drove him deeper into it. And the same is true for the saints now. Grace can sustain through sickness, sorrow, weariness, disappointment, criticism, fear, spiritual warfare, and long seasons of unanswered longing. Grace is not only seen in escape from hardship. Sometimes grace shines brightest in a believer who remains faithful under hardship because Christ’s strength is carrying him.

So let this truth settle in deep. If you are wounded, grace is still for you. If you are weary, grace is still for you. If you have asked the Lord more than once and the thorn still has not departed, grace is still for you. The Lord did not tell Paul, your pain means I have left you. He told him, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” That is enough to keep a saint alive, faithful, useful, and worshipful until the Lord says the warfare is done. Weakness is not always the end of usefulness. Sometimes it is the place where heaven writes its clearest testimony across a human life: this man is being held up by grace.

11 of 15: Grace Uncovered - By the Grace of God I Am What I Am

Introduction

There are some verses in the Bible that do not merely describe a doctrine. They open up a whole life and let you see what that doctrine looks like when it gets hold of a man from the inside out. First Corinthians 15:10 is one of those verses. Paul says, “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is not a slogan for a coffee cup. That is not a soft sentimental line for a church bulletin. That is a man standing in the wreckage of his old life and the reality of his new calling and saying, if you want to know how I got from there to here, the answer is grace. Not personality. Not breeding. Not discipline. Not religious background. Not second chances in the ordinary human sense. Grace. The grace of God took a man who deserved judgment, interrupted him on the road to Damascus, and remade him so completely that the persecutor became the preacher and the enemy became the apostle.

Now that verse matters because grace is often talked about in ways too small for the Bible. A lot of people talk about grace as if it were merely the doctrine that gets a sinner forgiven. That is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Grace does forgive the past, but grace also remakes the man. Grace does not merely erase guilt from the heavenly record. Grace begins altering the earthly life. It changes direction, identity, affections, labor, speech, burden, and purpose. Paul did not say, by the grace of God I was excused and left alone. He said, “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That means grace reached into his present existence and shaped the very kind of man he had become. Grace is not only pardon from punishment. Grace is transformation under the hand of God.

And there is another side to that verse that hits just as hard. Paul says, “and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all” (1 Corinthians 15:10). There goes the lazy man’s version of grace. There goes the soft church version of grace that imagines grace is a warm blanket you wrap around carnality while you

do as little as possible for Jesus Christ. Paul says grace bestowed on him was not in vain because it produced labor. Not laziness. Not passivity. Not spiritual sloth. Labor. And not small labor either. “More abundantly than they all.” Then he adds, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). So this essay is going to open that verse up and show that grace is not only what forgives a sinner. Grace remakes him, energizes him, humbles him, and makes him fruitful. Grace does not produce loafers. Grace produces transformed men.

1. Paul Never Forgot What He Had Been

One of the reasons 1 Corinthians 15:10 carries so much weight is because Paul never lost sight of what he used to be. In the verses immediately before it, he says, “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9). That is not false humility. That is accurate memory. Paul knew exactly what his old life looked like. He was not one of those religious men who quietly edited the darkness out of his testimony and presented himself as a man who had merely taken a better path in life. He knew he had been a persecutor. In Acts 8 and 9 you see the man in full motion, consenting to Stephen’s death, making havoc of the church, entering into houses, haling men and women to prison, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2). That is what he was.

He says it plainly in 1 Timothy 1:13: “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.” Not misunderstood. Not merely zealous in the wrong direction. A blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. That matters because grace shines brightest against the black background of what a man really was. The shallower a man’s view of sin, the shallower his view of grace. Paul never played games with his past. He did not dramatize it more than the truth required, and he did not soften it less than the truth demanded. He called it what it was. That is why his statement, “by the grace of God I am what I am,” does not sound sentimental. It sounds like a man who knows there is no natural explanation for the difference between Saul of Tarsus and Paul the apostle.

That is one reason many Christians never go very deep in grace. They keep too much of themselves polished up in their own imagination. They want grace, but only after they have made themselves look decent enough to receive it. Paul did not do that. He put the old man in the light and said, that was me. The church destroyer was me. The blasphemer was me. The violent religious fool was me. And if I am anything useful now, the answer is grace. Not because grace made his past smaller, but because grace proved bigger than his past. A man who remembers what he was will talk about grace differently than a man who thinks he always deserved a little help from heaven.

2. Grace Did Not Merely Rescue Paul, It Reassigned Him

Grace in Paul's life was not only a rescue operation. It was a reassignment. The Lord did not merely stop Saul of Tarsus from going to hell. He laid hold of him for a purpose. In Acts 9, after striking him down on the Damascus road, the Lord says of him, "he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). There is grace doing more than pardoning. There is grace appointing. There is grace taking a man whose whole life had been aimed in the wrong direction and turning him around for divine use. The man who had breathed out threatenings against the name of Jesus Christ was now chosen to bear that name before nations. That is not self-improvement. That is grace in sovereign operation.

This comes through again in Galatians 1:15 and 16, where Paul says, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." That is one of the great grace statements in the New Testament. Called me by his grace. Not called me because I got my act together. Not called me because I proved faithful first. Called me by his grace. And what was the result? Christ revealed in him, and Christ preached by him among the heathen. Grace not only turned him from what he had been. Grace turned him toward what God intended him to become.

That is an important lesson because many people reduce grace to cancellation only. They think grace means God crossed out the bad record and that is the end of the story. But in Scripture grace often goes beyond cancellation into commission. Grace not only says, I will not hold your past against you in Christ. Grace says, I will now use your life for My glory. Paul became a chosen vessel. The destroyer became a builder. The persecutor became a preacher. The man who had once tried to silence Christian witness became one of the loudest and clearest witnesses the church ever had. That is why he says, "by the grace of God I am what I am." Grace did not merely save him from something. It made him into something.

3. Grace Changed Paul's Identity

When Paul says, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10), he is talking about identity. Not identity in the shallow modern sense where men sit around trying to invent themselves, but identity in the biblical sense of what kind of man grace had now made him. Before grace, he was Saul the persecutor. Under grace, he became Paul the apostle. Before grace, he was an enemy of the church. Under grace, he became a servant of Jesus Christ. Before grace, he was pushing against the name of Christ. Under grace, he

was spending and being spent to exalt that name. Grace did not merely improve an old version of Saul. Grace made something radically new out of him.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” That was not a theory to him. He was living proof of it. Grace had not simply attached some Christian vocabulary to his existing nature. It had remade the direction of his life. In Philippians 3 he lays out all the fleshly credentials he once counted important - circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee, concerning zeal persecuting the church - and then says, “what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:7). That is identity change. Grace rearranged what mattered to him. The old trophies became refuse compared to knowing Christ. That is not behavior modification. That is a new center of gravity.

And notice how humble the verse keeps him. He does not say, by my resolve I am what I am. He does not say, by my giftedness I am what I am. He does not say, by my discipline, education, or commitment I am what I am. “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That keeps all the glory where it belongs. A transformed identity under grace leaves no room for self-congratulation. Paul could look at his apostleship, his doctrine, his endurance, his labor, and his fruit, and still trace the whole thing back to grace. That is one of the marks of a genuinely transformed man. He does not deny that something has changed. He simply refuses to credit himself as the source of it.

4. Grace Bestowed Was Not in Vain

The second half of 1 Corinthians 15:10 is just as important as the first: “and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.” That means grace can be bestowed upon a man in a way that is meant to have effect, fruit, weight, consequence, and visible outcome. Grace is not decorative. Grace is not ornamental theology. Grace is not a passive idea floating over the Christian life like perfume. Grace bestowed is meant to accomplish something. When Paul says it was not in vain, he means it did not hit a dead wall. It did not arrive without result. It did not sit there like unused treasure. Grace did something in him. Grace took hold.

This is exactly where the modern counterfeit of grace gets exposed. There is a version of grace floating around today that sounds as though grace means nothing is really expected, nothing is really produced, and nothing really changes except your legal status in heaven. Now your standing in Christ is glorious and essential, but the New Testament does not stop there. Paul says grace bestowed upon him was not in vain. That means grace had practical outcome. It was not idle. It was not theoretical. It moved, worked, energized, shaped, and

produced. A man can talk about grace all day and still resist what grace is trying to do in him if he treats grace like mere permission to stay the same.

This is why the Bible warns about receiving the grace of God in vain. In 2 Corinthians 6:1 Paul says, “we then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” That verse is not telling saved men they can undo the finished work of Christ. It is warning them not to let grace go fruitless in practical operation. Grace is meant to take effect. It is meant to lead somewhere. It is meant to produce obedience, labor, endurance, holiness, gratitude, and usefulness. So when Paul says the grace bestowed on him was not in vain, he is saying grace did not stop at his pardon. It kept working into his ministry and life in a way everyone could see.

5. Grace Produced Labor, Not Laziness

Here is where 1 Corinthians 15:10 really starts stepping on toes: “but I laboured more abundantly than they all” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is an astonishing statement. The same man who says everything he is traces back to grace also says grace produced extraordinary labor. Not less labor. More labor. “More abundantly than they all.” That destroys the idea that grace makes a Christian passive. It destroys the lazy man’s doctrine of grace. It destroys the notion that if a man really understands grace, he will stop striving, stop serving, stop sacrificing, stop pressing, and just float through life enjoying his positional truth. Paul understood grace better than anybody in the New Testament, and he labored harder than anybody in the New Testament.

Now that does not mean Paul was boasting against the other apostles in a fleshly way. He is making a doctrinal point. Grace did not make him soft. Grace made him tireless. Grace did not produce sloth. Grace produced labor. The man crossed land and sea, took stripes, endured imprisonments, went hungry, spent nights without sleep, carried the care of the churches, and kept going. Why? Because grace was working in him. That is one of the great corrections needed now. There is a kind of fake grace teaching that practically says, if you feel any burden to labor, you must be slipping into works. Paul would have laughed that thing out of the room. He says grace bestowed on him was not in vain, “but I laboured more abundantly than they all” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

This also shows that grace and effort are not enemies when effort is the fruit and not the ground. Paul was not laboring to earn grace. He was laboring because grace had gotten hold of him. That is a completely different thing. The legalist works toward acceptance. The man under grace works from acceptance. The legalist labors to be approved. The man under grace labors because he already is approved in Christ and cannot get over the mercy

shown to him. Grace does not cancel labor. It purifies the motive of labor. It takes labor out of the realm of self-salvation and puts it into the realm of grateful service.

6. Yet Not I, But the Grace of God Which Was With Me

After saying he labored more abundantly than they all, Paul immediately guards the truth from being misunderstood. He says, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is one of the most balanced statements in the Christian life. He really labored. He did not pretend he had not. But he refused to let the credit settle on him as though he were the source. The labor was real. The sweat was real. The endurance was real. The ministry was real. Yet the energizing source behind it all was “the grace of God which was with me.” That is how grace works in a fruitful servant. It does not erase the man into passivity. It fills the man so completely that whatever he does for Christ must finally be traced back to grace.

This balance is missing in two directions today. One crowd talks so much about human effort that grace practically disappears. They make ministry sound like the triumph of iron will, careful planning, and hard-nosed determination. Another crowd talks so much about grace that they begin sounding like people who do nothing and then congratulate themselves for not trying in the flesh. Paul allows neither error. He labored. That was real. Yet not he, but grace with him. There is a holy mystery there. The believer exerts real effort, endures real hardship, and makes real choices, yet in all of it the glory returns to grace because grace is the source of life, strength, burden, and fruit.

This is why Paul can say elsewhere, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Not through Paul which strengtheneth Christ. Through Christ which strengtheneth Paul. The same idea appears in Colossians 1:29 where Paul says, “Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” There it is again. Labor and striving, yes, but according to His working. Grace does not replace the servant with a puppet. Grace indwells, strengthens, moves, and empowers the servant in such a way that the servant’s labor becomes the very theater where divine grace is displayed. That is what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 15:10.

7. Grace Produces Endurance and Fruitfulness

When you look at Paul’s life as a whole, 1 Corinthians 15:10 becomes even richer. This was not a brief burst of zeal after conversion that quickly cooled off. Grace sustained him through years of labor, suffering, opposition, loneliness, criticism, beatings, prisons, dangers, hunger, cold, shipwreck, false brethren, and the care of the churches (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). That means grace not only ignited him. Grace kept him. Grace was not a passing spark. It was a continual fire. It kept producing endurance and fruitfulness in

a man who, by all human reckoning, should have quit a dozen times over. That is why his testimony is so strong. Grace can take hold of a man and keep him moving when natural strength would have folded long ago.

You can see that same thought in 2 Timothy 4:7, where Paul says, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” That is the language of a man who has been carried by grace all the way to the end of a hard course. He did not say, I had a good beginning and then spent the rest of the race coasting. He fought. He finished. He kept the faith. Grace had made him durable. That is something Christians desperately need to hear. Grace is not just for the opening chapter of your life with Christ. Grace is for the long road. Grace is for the years. Grace is for the nights when no one notices. Grace is for the seasons when the fruit seems slow. Grace is for staying power.

And fruitfulness under grace does not always look identical in every life. Paul’s labor was apostolic, missionary, doctrinal, church-planting, and foundational. Not every saint will have the same form of labor, but the principle remains. Grace produces motion toward Christ, not drift away from Him. Grace produces burden, not apathy. Grace produces endurance, not surrender to the flesh. Grace produces usefulness, not excuse-making. Grace may make one man preach, another woman pray, another believer give, another endure suffering faithfully, another disciple labor quietly in unseen service, but in all of them real grace moves. It is not sterile. It is not vain. It works.

Conclusion

So what does Paul mean when he says, “by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10)? He means grace not only forgave his past, it remade his present. The blasphemer became a preacher. The persecutor became an apostle. The destroyer became a builder. The enemy became a servant of Jesus Christ. And Paul traces the whole transformation back to grace. Not because his will was never involved, but because his will was not the source. Grace arrested him, called him, transformed him, commissioned him, and kept working in him. That verse is one of the clearest testimonies in all the Bible that grace is bigger than pardon. Grace changes the man.

And then Paul says that grace bestowed on him was not in vain, because it produced labor. Grace did not make him spiritually lazy. Grace made him fruitful. Grace did not turn him into a spectator. Grace made him a worker. Grace did not excuse passivity. Grace energized endurance, sacrifice, suffering, and relentless service. Yet even there, Paul refuses to glorify himself. “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). There is the balance. Real labor, real fruit, real endurance, all traced back to real grace. That is the kind of doctrine that kills both legalism and laziness in one blow.

So let this stand plain. Grace is not a sleepy doctrine for careless Christians. Grace is one of the most active, energizing, life-remaking truths in the New Testament. If a man says he understands grace, but his life remains unmoved, unburdened, unchanged, and unfruitful, he may know the vocabulary of grace without the power of it. Paul knew the power of it. That is why he could say, “by the grace of God I am what I am.” And if the grace of God ever really gets hold of a believer, that believer may never become an apostle like Paul, but he will not remain what he was. Grace does not merely forgive the old man. Grace makes a new man live for Jesus Christ.

12 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Speaking with Grace

Introduction

There are a lot of Christians who can define grace in a doctrinal argument and then deny it with their mouth before lunch. They know Ephesians 2:8. They can quote Romans 3:24. They can explain grace versus works, law versus grace, and maybe even throw in a few words about the dispensation of grace if you press them hard enough. But then you listen to how they talk to their wife, how they answer a critic, how they correct a younger believer, how they deal with somebody who is confused, weak, or out of line, and you realize something ugly very fast. They know the doctrine of grace in their head, but grace has not reached their tongue. The result is a strange kind of Christianity that can be very accurate and very ugly at the same time. It is possible to be right on paper and wrong in spirit. It is possible to defend truth with a carnal mouth. It is possible to preach grace and speak like the devil.

That is why the Bible does not present grace merely as a doctrine to admire. It presents grace as something that should shape the believer’s speech, attitude, and conduct toward other people. Paul says, “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). He says in Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Those are not minor verses. Those are direct commands. A believer’s mouth is supposed to become a channel through which grace is ministered. That does not mean the saint goes soft, becomes spineless, or refuses to speak hard truth when hard truth is needed. Grace is not cowardice. Grace is not compromise. Grace is not the fear of confrontation dressed up in religious language. Grace means that truth comes through a mouth governed by God instead of a mouth governed by flesh, pride, bitterness, irritation, ego, or the thrill of saying something sharp just because it feels good.

And that lesson is badly needed because there are two ditches on this subject, and both of them are full of Christians. One ditch is soft speech that refuses to tell the truth. It hides under words like kindness, grace, patience, and understanding, but really it is just cowardice. It does not want conflict. It does not want discomfort. It does not want to lose approval. The other ditch is harsh speech that mistakes flesh for boldness. It loves the crack of the whip. It enjoys being feared. It says it is just being direct, just being biblical, just being strong, when often it is simply letting bitterness, pride, and carnality come out dressed in Bible words. This essay has to cut through both ditches. Speaking with grace means more than being nice, and it means less than being soft. It means truth delivered in a way that edifies, convicts, helps, and honors God. It means a tongue ruled by Christ.

1. Grace Must Reach the Mouth

One of the first signs that grace is doing more than just sitting in a man's creed is that it begins to alter the way he talks. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." There are three things in that verse that matter. First, "always." Not just on Sunday. Not just in a theological debate where you are trying to impress people. Not just when you are calm. "Always." Second, "with grace." That means speech governed by grace, marked by grace, carrying grace. Third, "seasoned with salt." So gracious speech is not bland speech, not weak speech, and not speech that has no preserving power or no sharpness when sharpness is required. Salt bites. Salt preserves. Salt keeps corruption back. Grace and salt together make for biblical speech.

That verse alone destroys both extremes. The soft man who thinks grace means never being sharp has forgotten the salt. The harsh man who thinks salt means he can say anything any way he wants has forgotten the grace. The Bible joins them together. That is what the flesh hates. The flesh always wants one without the other. It wants the sweetness of grace with no edge of truth, or it wants the edge of truth with no softness of grace. But the Holy Ghost says your speech is to be with grace and seasoned with salt. That means a Christian mouth should be able to help, heal, answer, rebuke, and clarify without becoming corrupt.

Then Ephesians 4:29 drives the point further: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." No corrupt communication. That is strong language. Corrupt speech is rotten speech, speech that tears down, poisons, defiles, degrades, inflames, and spreads decay. Paul says stop it at the mouth. Do not let it proceed out. Then he gives the positive command: "but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29). There it is again. Grace is something that can be ministered through speech. That means your mouth is not neutral territory. It either ministers rot or

grace. There is no third option where your corrupt tongue is somehow excused because you happen to be doctrinally sound.

2. Gracious Speech Is Not Cowardly Speech

Now let us settle something quickly. Speaking with grace does not mean being afraid to tell the truth. A lot of spineless Christianity hides behind the word grace because it does not want confrontation. It never wants to be misunderstood. It never wants to offend anyone. It never wants to draw a hard line. It thinks if a rebuke sounds unpleasant, it must be ungracious. That is nonsense. Jesus Christ was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), and He said things that made religious men furious enough to want Him dead. He told the woman in John 4 the truth about her immoral life (John 4:17-18). He told the Pharisees they were blind guides, fools, hypocrites, serpents, and a generation of vipers (Matthew 23:13-33). None of that was cowardly softness. Yet none of it was fleshly corruption either. It was truth governed by perfect holiness.

A gracious mouth, then, is not a mouth that avoids hard things. It is a mouth that speaks hard things for the right reasons, in the right spirit, and under the rule of God instead of the rule of the flesh. Paul told Titus, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority” (Titus 2:15). That is Bible. A preacher who never rebukes anybody is not more gracious than Paul. He is less obedient. A father who never corrects his children is not more loving. He is less faithful. A believer who never warns the erring saint is not more compassionate. He is less useful. Grace does not silence truth. Grace governs how truth is spoken and why it is spoken.

Second Timothy 2:24 and 25 gives the balance beautifully: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” Notice what that says and what it does not say. It does not say stop instructing people who are wrong. It says do it in meekness. It does not say avoid correction. It says avoid striving. It does not say surrender the truth. It says be gentle, apt to teach, patient. So gracious speech is not the absence of correction. It is correction delivered by a servant under control. Cowardly speech withholds truth to preserve peace. Gracious speech tells truth in a way that aims at restoration and help.

3. Religious Harshness Is Not Spiritual Strength

The other ditch is just as dangerous. There are people who think a cutting mouth is proof of boldness. They can quote hard verses, speak with force, and make a room uncomfortable, and they assume that means they are powerful for God. Sometimes it just means they are carnal and loud. Flesh has a sharp edge too. James 3 is not written to lost pagans. It is written to people who need to learn that the tongue can be “a fire, a world of iniquity”

(James 3:6). He says, “the tongue can no man tame” (James 3:8), and then warns about bitter envying and strife in the heart (James 3:14). That tells you something. A man can sound strong and still be full of bitter fire.

Proverbs says, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). That does not mean soft in the sense of compromising truth. It means measured, governed, wise, non-fleshly. “Grievous words” are words that inflame the situation unnecessarily. Some Christians do that all the time and call it zeal. It is not zeal. It is often ego mixed with impatience. They enjoy putting somebody in his place. They enjoy the sting. They enjoy the reaction. They call it being “real.” But the Bible says that kind of speech stirs up anger. It does not say it ministers grace. Some people think if their words hurt, they must have been powerful. They may simply have been ungoverned.

You see the same thing in James 1:19 and 20: “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” That verse should be nailed to every Christian phone, pulpit, keyboard, and front door. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. That means your irritation, your offended pride, your religious temper, and your fleshly outburst do not become holy just because you attach Bible words to them. A lot of harsh religious speech is not strength. It is simply flesh in a church suit. Grace in the mouth restrains that. Grace does not remove firmness, but it kills the poison.

4. Speech Should Edify, Not Merely Dominate

Ephesians 4:29 says the right kind of speech is “good to the use of edifying.” That is a powerful test for every believer’s mouth. Edifying means building up. It does not always mean making people feel comfortable. Sometimes a wall is strengthened by removing rotten parts. Sometimes edifying words sting first and heal later. But even then, the aim is to build, not merely to dominate. A lot of Christians do not talk to help. They talk to win. They talk to impress. They talk to be feared. They talk to prove they are right. They talk to keep somebody beneath them. That is not edifying. That is ego management.

First Thessalonians 5:11 says, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another.” Romans 14:19 says, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” That means a believer should ask, what is my mouth producing in the person hearing me? Am I building clarity, conviction, faithfulness, sobriety, and strength? Or am I just unloading pressure and leaving damage behind? Even when a rebuke is necessary, the ultimate aim is still to build. Paul did not write hard things because he enjoyed crushing people. He wrote to rescue churches from destruction. That is a big difference.

This is especially important in dealing with younger believers, weak believers, and confused believers. Not every person who is wrong is rebellious in the same way. Some are ignorant. Some are hurting. Some are unlearning years of confusion. Some are proud and need a sharper answer. Some are tender and need a more careful one. Colossians 4:6 says you should know “how ye ought to answer every man.” That means every man is not answered exactly the same way. Wisdom discerns the difference. Flesh uses the same hammer on everything. Grace knows when to press, when to wait, when to warn, when to comfort, and when to cut straight.

5. Bitterness and Pride Rot the Tongue

One reason some believers never learn to speak with grace is because their mouth is running on poison stored in the heart. Jesus said, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). That means your tongue is not your main problem. Your tongue is the loudspeaker. The real problem is the condition of the heart behind it. If bitterness is in there, bitterness will come out. If pride is in there, pride will come out. If envy is in there, envy will come out. If resentment is in there, it will leak into speech even when the words are dressed up religiously. That is why Ephesians 4 puts these things together. Verse 29 deals with corrupt communication, and verse 31 says, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you.”

Notice that. Evil speaking is connected with bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamour. The tongue does not rot in isolation. It rots because something inside is rotting. Then verse 32 gives the alternative: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” There is grace in relationship. Grace remembers what God did for you and lets that govern how you deal with others. That does not mean you excuse sin, surrender doctrine, or let evil go unchecked. It means your correction, warning, and even your refusal are not driven by personal poison. You are not speaking as an avenger of your own wounded pride. You are speaking as a man under grace.

Proverbs 27:4 says, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous.” That is why a believer has to be careful with the spiritualized version of personal offense. Sometimes men are not angry because God’s truth is under attack. They are angry because their ego got nicked. Then they convince themselves their harshness is zeal for righteousness. It is not. It is uncrucified self. Grace in the heart humbles a man enough to make him less impressed with his own importance. And a humbled man usually speaks differently than a proud one. He may still speak strongly, but there is less poison in it because he is not defending his throne.

6. Grace-Filled Speech Knows How to Answer

Colossians 4:6 says your speech should be with grace, seasoned with salt, “that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” That means gracious speech is wise speech. It is not random. It is not impulsive. It is not merely reactive. It knows how to answer. That implies discernment. Proverbs 25:11 says, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Not just a true word, but a fitly spoken word. Timing matters. Tone matters. Aim matters. Context matters. A true word spoken the wrong way at the wrong time for the wrong reason can still do damage even if the content was technically correct.

Jesus Christ Himself showed this constantly. He did not answer every person the same way. Nicodemus received one kind of answer in John 3. The Samaritan woman received another in John 4. The Pharisees received another in Matthew 23. Pilate received another in John 19. Why? Because grace and truth are not mechanical. The Lord knew what each situation required. He was never dishonest, but He was always wise. A believer speaking with grace should want that same kind of governed wisdom. Not sentimental weakness, not fleshly bluntness, but discernment under the control of truth.

This is why believers need to be slower than they often are. Proverbs 18:13 says, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Some of the ugliest speech in Christian circles comes from people who answer before they understand, react before they pray, and pronounce before they listen. That is not grace. That is impatience. Grace slows a man down enough to hear, think, pray, and answer in a way that actually fits the case. Sometimes the most gracious thing you can do is wait long enough to say the right thing instead of the first thing that comes naturally to your flesh.

7. The Goal Is to Minister Grace to the Hearers

Ephesians 4:29 says the right kind of speech is that “which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” That is one of the highest callings for the Christian mouth. Your words should be channels through which grace reaches the hearer. That means the hearer should receive something from your words that helps him toward God. It may be comfort. It may be conviction. It may be warning. It may be clarity. It may be correction. But whatever it is, the result should be grace ministered, not flesh vented. That changes everything. It means I am not talking merely to express myself. I am talking as a steward.

This is why Paul says in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly... teaching and admonishing one another.” Notice again that admonishing is included. Grace does not eliminate admonition. It governs it. And the whole thing is under the word of Christ dwelling richly. That is the secret. A man full of talk-radio rage, internet pride,

denominational rivalry, and personal irritation is not likely to minister grace. A man with the word of Christ dwelling in him richly has a chance of doing so, because the content and spirit of his speech are being shaped by something holier than his moods.

And let us be plain here. A believer does not minister grace by flattering sin, dodging truth, or talking in syrupy clichés. Grace is not plastic sweetness. Grace is Christ-governed speech. Sometimes that means a strong answer that wakes a man up. Sometimes it means a gentle answer that steadies a bruised reed. Sometimes it means silence until your heart is right. Sometimes it means confession because your last words were fleshly and corrupt. But in all of it, the goal remains the same. Your mouth should not be a sewer. It should be a means through which grace reaches other people.

Conclusion

So speaking with grace is not a little side lesson in Christian manners. It is one of the practical tests of whether grace is really governing the believer's life. A man may define grace correctly in a doctrinal statement and still deny it with his speech. The Bible says your speech is to be always with grace, seasoned with salt. The Bible says no corrupt communication should proceed out of your mouth. The Bible says your words should edify and minister grace to the hearers. That means your mouth belongs under the rule of grace just as much as your theology does.

That also means gracious speech is not cowardly speech and it is not carnal harshness. It is not soft compromise that refuses to tell the truth, and it is not bitter sharpness pretending to be zeal. Grace and truth go together. Salt and grace go together. A believer can rebuke, warn, correct, and answer plainly without speaking like a proud fool or an angry tyrant. In fact, if he cannot, he has not yet learned to let grace govern his tongue. The strongest men in Scripture were not the fleshliest talkers. The holiest men were the most governed.

And finally, this whole matter goes back to the heart. If grace has really humbled you before God, reminded you what you have been forgiven, and taught you how Christ has dealt with you, then over time it ought to alter the way you deal with others. Not making you weak, but making you governed. Not making you silent, but making you wise. Not making you soft on sin, but making you careful not to let personal poison corrupt holy truth. That is speaking with grace. And a church full of people who talk that way would be a mighty rare thing in this generation - and a mighty useful one.

13 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Growing in Grace

Introduction

A lot of Christians talk about grace the way a child talks about a doorway. He knows it got him into the house, but he does not yet understand the rooms, the structure, the furniture, the warmth, the protection, and the life lived inside of it. That is how many believers handle grace. They know grace saved them. They know grace is better than works. They know grace belongs in the gospel. They can quote, “For by grace are ye saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8), and thank God they can. But then something strange happens. They start acting like grace was first-grade doctrine, a simple truth for the beginning of the Christian life, and now they have moved on to “deeper things.” The Bible says the opposite. Second Peter 3:18 does not say graduate from grace. It says, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). That means grace is not the kiddie pool you splash around in until you are ready for the deep end. Grace is the ocean itself.

That verse is one of the most neglected commands in the New Testament because growing in grace is harder than merely talking about grace. Anybody can learn the vocabulary. Anybody can pick up the slogans. Anybody can throw the word grace into a testimony, an argument, a Bible study, or a theological debate. But growing in grace means something deeper is happening. It means your understanding of Christ is becoming larger, your understanding of your own unworthiness is becoming clearer, and your dependence on God is becoming more real instead of more theoretical. It means grace is not just a doctrine you can explain, but a realm you are learning to live in. And when that starts happening, it affects humility, patience, confidence, endurance, and spiritual stability in ways that shallow religion cannot imitate.

That is why this essay matters. There is an entire strain of shallow Christianity that has learned how to say grace without growing in it. It talks about grace while remaining proud, impatient, unstable, unthankful, self-dependent, easily offended, and spiritually childish. It has slogans but no stature. It has language but little likeness to Christ. It has enough grace doctrine to argue online and not enough grace life to endure a hard season with a godly spirit. So this essay is going to get right into 2 Peter 3:18 and show that growing in grace is not optional for the saint. It is part of maturing in Christ. You do not move past grace. You move deeper into it. And the deeper you go, the more stable, humble, thankful, and Christ-centered you become.

1. Grace Is Not Just the Door, It Is the Path

Second Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Notice that Peter does not present grace as something static. He presents it

as something in which growth is possible and necessary. That means grace is not only a one-time event at conversion. Grace is not merely the moment God saved you. Grace is the sphere in which the believer continues to live, learn, and deepen. Romans 5:2 says, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.” We stand in grace. That means grace is not only the door. It is the ground under our feet. If a man stands in grace, then growth in grace means learning to live more fully in the reality of where God has already placed him in Christ.

This is where many believers go wrong. They think grace got them justified, and now the serious Christian life runs on something else, usually some mixture of discipline, law-mindedness, fear, and religious pressure. But the New Testament never talks that way. Paul says believers are “not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Peter says grow in grace. The whole drift of the New Testament is that grace remains central all the way through. It changes from being the truth that first saves the sinner to being the truth that continues to shape the saint. The man who thinks he has moved beyond grace has not moved forward. He has moved sideways into confusion.

That means the Christian life does not begin with grace and then continue on self-effort. It begins in grace, stands in grace, and grows in grace. Of course discipline matters. Of course obedience matters. Of course holiness matters. But all of those things are meant to unfold under grace, not as replacements for grace. The deeper a man grows in grace, the more he sees that every step forward in the Christian life still depends on the same divine favor, power, and mercy that saved him in the first place. He has not become more independent. He has become more aware of how dependent he always was.

2. Growing in Grace Means Growing in the Knowledge of Christ

Peter does not say merely “grow in grace.” He says, “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Those two things belong together. Grace is not an abstract force floating around disconnected from a person. Grace is tied to Jesus Christ. The more a believer truly grows in the knowledge of Christ, the more he grows in grace. John 1:17 says, “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Christ is the fountain of grace. So to grow in grace is to grow in a more personal, deeper, richer understanding of who Christ is, what He has done, what He means to the believer, and how utterly sufficient He is.

This is one reason shallow Christianity remains shallow. It often talks about grace in the abstract while remaining thin in its knowledge of Christ. It knows grace as a term, but not Christ as a living, present Lord. It can say, “saved by grace,” but it does not increasingly know the One who is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Peter ties the two together because

the deeper you know Christ, the less grace becomes a slogan and the more it becomes a living reality. The saint begins to see the patience of Christ, the sufficiency of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the gentleness of Christ, the authority of Christ, the intercession of Christ, and the fullness of Christ in ways he had not seen earlier.

And the reverse is also true. The more you grow in grace, the more precious Christ becomes. A man under legal thinking often becomes more self-conscious, more performance-driven, and more occupied with himself. A man growing in grace becomes more Christ-conscious. He looks away from himself more and toward the Lord more. He still examines himself where the Bible commands it, but he is not living with his eyes glued to his own performance as though that were the center of the Christian life. Christ becomes larger. Christ becomes dearer. Christ becomes more necessary and more beloved. That is growth in grace tied to the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

3. Growing in Grace Deepens Humility

One of the first marks of growing in grace is that it humbles a man. Not false humility, not pious talk, not the humblebrag of religious flesh, but real lowliness before God. James says, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). Peter quotes the same principle in 1 Peter 5:5. That means there is something about humility that receives grace, and something about pride that resists it. So if a believer is actually growing in grace, he is not becoming more self-impressed. He is becoming more aware of how much he owes the Lord. He sees more clearly that every step of his Christian life has been upheld by mercy.

Paul is a perfect example. The more grace worked in him, the lower he became in his own eyes. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 he says he is “the least of the apostles.” In Ephesians 3:8 he says he is “less than the least of all saints.” In 1 Timothy 1:15 he says he is chief of sinners. That is not contradiction. That is deepening grace-awareness. The more he saw Christ, the more clearly he saw himself apart from Christ. The more he understood grace, the less room he had for boasting. A man growing in grace does not become a spiritual peacock. He becomes a grateful debtor to mercy.

This is one of the tragedies of shallow grace talk. Some people learn enough grace language to become proud of being theologically freer than other people. They look down on legalists, look down on weaker brethren, look down on Christians who do not understand certain distinctions yet, and they become arrogant in the very doctrine that should have made them lowly. That is not growth in grace. That is corruption of grace by pride. Real growth in grace produces gentleness, patience, and humility because the saint

never gets over the fact that if grace had not intervened, he would still be what he once was.

4. Growing in Grace Produces Stability

Peter gives this command in a context of warning against instability. Just before verse 18, he says, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:17). Then he says, “But grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:18). That means growth in grace is one of God’s answers to spiritual instability. The believer who grows in grace becomes more settled. He is less easily swept away by false teaching, less easily shaken by every new voice, less easily pulled off center by emotional swings and doctrinal novelties. Why? Because grace roots him more deeply in Christ.

This fits with what Hebrews says: “it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” (Hebrews 13:9). Established with grace. Not established with meats, not established with external religious systems, not established with novelty, but with grace. That means grace has a stabilizing effect on the heart. A man who understands grace biblically becomes less frantic, less erratic, and less vulnerable to spiritual fads. He is anchored. He knows salvation is in Christ. He knows his standing is in Christ. He knows his acceptance is in Christ. And that stability begins to show up in the rest of life.

This is where shallow Christianity often reveals itself. It talks about grace, but it is still chronically unstable. It jumps from one trend to another, from one teacher to another, from one emotional high to another, from one crisis to another. It is easily flattered and easily offended. It can be manipulated by fear, guilt, novelty, and pressure because it is not deeply established. But a believer growing in grace becomes harder to knock over. He is not stiff in the flesh. He is settled in Christ. He is less vulnerable to spiritual whiplash because grace has been doing its anchoring work.

5. Growing in Grace Increases Patience with Others

A man who grows in grace usually becomes more patient with other people. Not soft on sin, not weak on truth, but patient. Why? Because he becomes increasingly aware of how patient God has been with him. Paul tells the Ephesians to walk “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). Then he roots that kind of conduct in God’s grace and forgiveness later in the chapter: “forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). Grace received begins to shape grace given.

That does not mean a believer growing in grace loses discernment. It means he becomes less amazed at the weakness of others because he has had a front-row seat to the

weakness of his own flesh. He understands more deeply that sanctification is a process, that believers are often unlearning old patterns, that some people are ignorant more than rebellious, and that God does not deal with His children merely by smashing them flat. The believer growing in grace can still rebuke, correct, and draw lines, but he increasingly does it with a spirit tempered by mercy instead of inflated by personal superiority.

This is desperately needed because some people learn grace doctrinally and remain impatient relationally. They have no room for weakness in others, no tenderness toward bruised reeds, no measured spirit in dealing with confused saints. They act as though everybody should mature at their pace and grasp things at their speed. But a man growing in grace becomes slower to explode and quicker to remember how much grace has carried him. He knows that truth must still be spoken, but he also knows that the God of all grace has not dealt with him according to his folly every single time. That tends to soften the edges of pride without weakening conviction.

6. Growing in Grace Strengthens Confidence in God

Another mark of growing in grace is a growing confidence in God that is different from confidence in self. Legalism produces either arrogance or insecurity because everything feels tied to performance. Grace produces confidence in the Lord because the believer learns more deeply that his standing, access, and help are rooted in Christ. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." That is not the confidence of a man who thinks he deserves access. It is the confidence of a man who knows grace has opened the way. The more a saint grows in grace, the less strange it becomes to him that he can come boldly to God through Christ.

That kind of confidence matters in prayer, trial, warfare, and daily weakness. A believer growing in grace does not become more casual about God. He becomes more settled in approaching Him. He knows he comes not because he has had a perfect week, but because Christ is his righteousness. He knows he asks not as a bargain-maker, but as a child helped by grace. He knows he stands not on his fluctuating emotional condition, but on what God has done in Christ. So grace, rightly understood, does not make a man timid and uncertain before God. It gives him a reverent confidence.

This is one of the areas where many saints need to grow. They say they believe grace, but they still live as though every failure has put them back at the front gate waiting to see whether God will receive them. Growth in grace does not make a Christian careless about sin, but it does make him more rooted in the truth that his acceptance with God is not a revolving door. Christ has settled it. So instead of living in spiritual whiplash, he learns to

come again and again to the throne of grace, confessing, receiving help, and depending on the same mercy that saved him at the beginning.

7. Growing in Grace Produces Thankful, Christ-Centered Maturity

As grace matures a believer, it produces a settled thankfulness and Christ-centeredness that shallow religion cannot imitate. Colossians 2:6 and 7 says, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him... abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Notice the movement. Received Him, now walk in Him. Rooted in Him. Built up in Him. Thanksgiving overflowing. That is growth language. And a grace-governed Christian life always becomes more thankful because the man keeps seeing more of what Christ has done and more of what he would be without Him.

This is one of the surest marks of genuine maturity. Not merely the ability to discuss doctrine, but a thankful, steady, Christ-centered life. Shallow Christians often have flashes of excitement and long stretches of complaint. They love novelty, controversy, and emotional peaks, but they are not deeply thankful. A believer growing in grace becomes more quietly grateful. He is not bored with Christ. He is not looking for something beyond Christ. He is not treating grace as old news. He is increasingly amazed by the old story because he keeps seeing new depth in it. His life begins orbiting around the Lord more than around himself.

And that kind of maturity stands out because it is rare. The world produces proud experts, restless consumers, and self-advertising personalities. Grace produces thankful saints. The world loves noise, novelty, and self-expression. Grace produces steadiness, reverence, gratitude, and Christwardness. A man growing in grace may not always look flashy, but he becomes deep. He becomes harder to move off center. He becomes more content in Christ, more patient with others, more dependent on God, and less obsessed with himself. That is maturity. That is grace doing its long work.

Conclusion

So what does it mean to grow in grace? It means you do not leave grace behind after conversion. You go deeper into it. You begin to see more clearly who Christ is, more clearly what He has done, more clearly how unworthy you are in yourself, and more clearly how dependent you remain on Him for every part of the Christian life. Grace is not the ABCs you outgrow. Grace is the whole atmosphere of the Christian life, the ground in which you stand, and the ocean into which you keep moving farther. That is why Peter does not say graduate from grace. He says grow in it.

And when that growth is real, it shows. It humbles a man. It stabilizes him. It makes him more patient, more thankful, more confident in God, and more rooted in Christ. It does not

make him sloppy. It does not make him weak. It does not make him shallow. It makes him mature. A believer growing in grace is less impressed with himself and more impressed with the Lord. He is less likely to be blown around by every wind and more likely to remain steady under pressure. He talks less like a spiritual salesman and more like a man who has learned that every good thing in his life traces back to grace.

So let shallow Christianity have its slogans if it wants them. Let it talk about grace while remaining childish, unstable, proud, and self-centered. The Bible calls us higher than that. “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). That is not a minor suggestion. That is a call to maturity. And the saint who answers that call will not become less doctrinal. He will become more deeply grounded, more Christ-centered, and more genuinely spiritual. He will not merely know that grace saved him once. He will increasingly discover that grace is still carrying him every day.

14 of 15: Grace Uncovered - The Riches of His Grace

Introduction

Most Christians talk about grace like a man talking about a cup of water when the Bible talks about an ocean. They speak of grace as if it were just enough to keep them from going to hell and maybe help them limp through a bad day or two. They treat it like a thin trickle from heaven, barely enough to get a sinner over the line and into the kingdom, after which the whole thing gets handed back over to the flesh to manage the rest. That is not how the Holy Ghost talks about grace. The Holy Ghost talks about “the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7), “the exceeding riches of his grace” (Ephesians 2:7), and a grace that “did much more abound” where sin abounded (Romans 5:20). That is not stingy language. That is not small language. That is not God scraping the bottom of the barrel to salvage one or two pitiful sinners if they can just hold on tight enough. That is abundance. That is overflow. That is divine plenty. That is grace spoken of as treasure.

And that matters because a shallow view of grace usually leads to a shallow Christian life. If a man thinks grace is merely a little legal adjustment in heaven, he will live like a pauper with a title deed to a kingdom and never cash it in. He will keep crawling around in fear, insecurity, guilt, spiritual poverty, and self-conscious religion, all while the New Testament is shouting that he has redemption through Christ’s blood “according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7). He will live as though grace were a reluctant sigh from God instead of a vast treasury opened in Jesus Christ. He will think the Lord barely tolerates him instead

of understanding that he has been “made... accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). A poor grasp of grace always shrinks God and cripples the saint.

So this essay is meant to pull the subject up out of the usual shallow treatments and let it stand where the Book puts it: majestic, inexhaustible, and tied to the eternal purpose of God in Christ. We are going to look at the riches of grace in Ephesians 1 and 2 especially, but also in the larger New Testament witness, and show that grace is not merely enough. It is more than enough. It is not barely sufficient in a weak sense. It is overflowing in a God-sized sense. Grace is the kind of thing only God can give because only God possesses such treasure. And if a sinner really sees that, it will not make him lazy. It will make him worship. It will make him marvel. It will make him realize that salvation in Christ is not a cramped arrangement but an immeasurable inheritance rooted in the eternal counsel of God.

1. Grace Is Spoken of as Riches, Not Scraps

The first thing that ought to stop a Bible believer in his tracks is the wording of Ephesians 1:7: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Notice the word riches. The Holy Ghost did not say according to the leftovers of His grace. He did not say according to the minimum required amount of grace. He said according to the riches of His grace. That means grace in God is not a reluctant release of mercy under pressure. It is a treasure. It is wealth. It is abundance. It is fullness. It is a storehouse in Christ that matches the greatness of the Giver. Men often give out of scarcity and calculate every cost. God gives according to riches.

Now look at how that works in the verse. Redemption through His blood and forgiveness of sins are not according to your repentance, your resolve, your track record, or your spiritual potential. They are according to the riches of His grace. That means the measure of what God gives in salvation is not determined by the size of the sinner but by the wealth of God. That is one of the great shocks of grace. A poor sinner comes empty, but he does not receive according to the poverty of his condition. He receives according to the riches of God’s grace in Christ. That turns the whole thing upside down. The flesh is always trying to bring something. God says the whole transaction is governed by what I am and what I have in My Son.

This is why a saint should stop speaking about grace like a man talking about crumbs under the table. The Bible speaks of riches. If a king forgives a beggar according to his riches, the beggar is not just allowed to crawl away alive. He is overwhelmed by generosity far beyond anything in himself. So it is with grace. God does not merely permit the believer to squeak into heaven by the skin of his teeth while the whole universe wonders if there was enough mercy left for him. He saves according to riches. That means the scale of grace is set by

God's wealth, not man's misery. And while man's misery is very real, it is still not greater than God's treasury in Christ.

2. Accepted in the Beloved Is Wealth Beyond Measure

Ephesians 1:6 says, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." That verse is so rich that most Christians walk past it like a blind man crossing a diamond field. Accepted in the beloved. Think about that. Not barely tolerated. Not conditionally admitted on probation. Not put into a corner where God agrees not to look at you too closely if you behave. Accepted in the beloved. That beloved is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son in whom the Father is eternally well pleased. And the believer has been accepted in Him. That is not a minor blessing. That is one of the great riches of grace.

Now the flesh does not understand acceptance on that level. Flesh always thinks in terms of performance, comparison, and mood. So when the believer fails, stumbles, gets chastened, grows weary, or passes through dark waters, the flesh whispers that he has fallen out of favor, fallen out of nearness, or fallen out of the Lord's real acceptance. But Ephesians 1:6 does not say the believer is accepted in himself. It says he is accepted in the beloved. That means the ground of acceptance is Christ, not your fluctuating condition. Of course fellowship can be hindered. Of course chastening is real. Of course sin grieves the Spirit. But acceptance in the beloved is one of the riches of grace, and that acceptance stands on Christ's worthiness, not yours.

This is where wonder ought to enter the Christian life. God did not merely forgive a sinner and tell him to stay on the back porch. He placed him in Christ and made him accepted in the beloved. That means the same Christ who is beloved of the Father becomes the sphere in which the believer stands before God. That is scale. That is glory. That is wealth. A man who sees this rightly will stop talking about grace like a legal technicality and start seeing it as a vast act of divine generosity rooted in eternal love. The saint is not merely spared. He is brought in. He is not merely excused. He is accepted. And that acceptance is part of "the glory of his grace" (Ephesians 1:6), not some minor footnote to salvation.

3. Redemption Through His Blood Is According to Riches

Ephesians 1:7 puts three immense truths together in one line: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Redemption, blood, forgiveness, riches of grace. That is the gospel in royal language. Redemption means a price has been paid to secure release. The blood points to the cross, the atonement, the substitutionary death of Christ. Forgiveness of sins means the guilt is dealt with, the record is answered, the debt is not merely postponed but addressed at the

root. And all of it is “according to the riches of his grace.” That means the cross was not some reluctant emergency measure by which God did the bare minimum to save a few. The cross itself stands as the richest display of grace in action.

Now do not misunderstand the point. The cross was costly beyond measure. Grace is free to the sinner, but it was not cheap to God. The blood is in the verse precisely so no fool will turn grace into sentimentality. Yet even there, the Holy Ghost says redemption through His blood is according to the riches of His grace. So the costliness of Calvary does not shrink grace. It magnifies it. It shows the scale of what divine grace was willing to spend in order to save. The blood of Christ is the receipt, as it were, proving that grace is no flimsy feeling. It is holy, just, costly, righteous generosity flowing through sacrifice.

And if redemption through His blood is according to the riches of His grace, then the believer ought to stop measuring grace by his feelings on a bad day. The measure is not your mood. The measure is the cross. The riches of grace are not guessed at by how warm your devotional life felt this morning. They are declared in the blood of the Son of God. That is why even the weakest saint has more reason for wonder than he usually realizes. His redemption is not according to his hold on God. It is according to the riches of God’s grace in Christ. That is not thin. That is bottomless.

4. Grace Abounds Beyond Sin, Not Merely Around It

Romans 5:20 says, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” That verse belongs in this discussion because it shows the scale of grace against the darkest possible background. Notice the wording. Paul does not say grace barely kept up with sin. He says grace “did much more abound.” That means grace is not merely enough to neutralize the problem in a mechanical sense. Grace overflows beyond the reach of sin. Sin abounded. Grace did much more abound. That does not make sin small. It makes grace astonishing. The darker the guilt, the brighter the mercy. The deeper the ruin, the greater the overflow of divine favor in Christ.

This is important because many believers secretly think their sin, failure, weakness, or history must have put them near the edge of what grace can cover. They imagine grace as a reservoir that might run dry if their case proved too ugly or too complicated. But Paul says where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That means God’s answer in Christ is larger than the sinner’s ruin. Not because sin is harmless, but because Christ is greater. Not because judgment was unnecessary, but because Christ bore judgment sufficiently. Grace is not intimidated by the scale of human corruption. It addresses it through a Saviour whose worth outruns the whole mess.

And that kind of abundance should make a saint both humble and bold. Humble, because he knows sin was terrible enough to require grace that abundant. Bold, because he knows grace in Christ is greater than what condemned him. That is why Romans 5 moves into reigning language. Grace is not presented as a weak stream trickling behind the stronger powers of sin and death. Paul says grace might “reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21). Reign. That is kingly language. Grace in Scripture is not a beggar’s doctrine. It is royal abundance purchased by blood and seated in Christ.

5. The Exceeding Riches of His Grace Belong to the Ages to Come

Ephesians 2:7 takes the subject higher still: “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” There are some phrases in the Bible that ought to leave a man silent for a little while. “The exceeding riches of his grace” is one of them. Riches was already enough to humble us. Exceeding riches goes further. It means surpassing wealth. Overflowing abundance beyond the ordinary language of treasure. And the verse says God intends to show those exceeding riches “in the ages to come.” That means grace is not merely the opening transaction of salvation. Grace is part of the eternal display God intends to set before the universe in Christ.

Think about that. God saved believers now in such a way that future ages will be a theater in which He keeps showing the exceeding riches of His grace. That means grace is not exhausted in conversion. It is not even exhausted in this life. God intends the saints themselves to become exhibits, as it were, of what His grace can do through Christ. The church, saved sinners seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6), will stand as an eternal testimony to divine kindness. That lifts grace above all the tiny talk that often surrounds it. Grace is bound up with eternity. Grace is part of God’s purpose to glorify Himself through redeemed people forever.

This should correct the small scale on which many Christians think. They act as though grace was mostly about getting out of hell and then scraping through life until glory. Ephesians says no. Grace is part of an eternal display. The ages to come are going to keep revealing what God did in Christ. That means the believer’s salvation is not a rushed emergency measure in the corner of history. It is tied to the eternal purpose of God to magnify the riches of His grace in kindness. If that does not enlarge a man’s view of grace, nothing will. Grace is not simply a rescue rope thrown to drowning men. It is part of a cosmic revelation of divine glory.

6. Grace Is Tied to the Eternal Purpose of God in Christ

Once you start reading Ephesians carefully, you realize grace is not an afterthought in God's plan. It is tied to His eternal purpose. Ephesians 1 speaks of being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself (Ephesians 1:5), accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6), redeemed through His blood (Ephesians 1:7), and gathered together in one all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). Grace is woven right into that whole fabric. This is not God improvising because Adam messed things up. This is God executing eternal purpose in Christ, and grace is one of the great means by which that purpose is made known.

That is why Ephesians 3 speaks of "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11). Grace is not random generosity. It is purposeful generosity. It serves the glory of God in Christ. It reveals the kindness of God, the wisdom of God, the righteousness of God, and the power of God all at once. It exalts Christ as the beloved, the Redeemer, the Head, the One in whom all things are gathered, and the One through whom the saints are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3). Grace, then, is not merely about man's need. It is about God's glory in meeting man's need through His Son.

This is one reason wonder belongs in the subject. A sinner saved by grace is not simply a rescued statistic. He is caught up into something tied to God's eternal purpose in Christ. That does not make the sinner bigger. It makes the grace of God larger. It shows that grace is not only abundant. It is majestic. It carries the weight of eternal counsel. It is rooted in Christ before time, displayed in Christ in time, and still being shown in Christ in the ages to come. A saint who sees that will stop treating grace like a church catchword and begin bowing under its grandeur.

7. Grace Is Inexhaustible Because Christ Is Inexhaustible

At the bottom of all this is the simple truth that grace is inexhaustible because Christ is inexhaustible. Colossians 2:9 says, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." John 1:16 says, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." That means grace does not flow from a limited created reservoir. It flows from the fulness of Christ. And if Christ is the eternal Son, the beloved, the Redeemer, the Head, the One in whom all fulness dwells, then the grace found in Him is not shallow, temporary, or easily drained. The believer is not living off a pond that dries up every August. He is drawing from the fulness of Christ.

This is why believers can keep finding more in grace as the years go on. They do not outgrow it because they have not reached the bottom of Christ. They do not move beyond it because there is no beyond Christ. Grace remains rich because Christ remains full. Grace

remains sufficient because Christ remains sufficient. Grace remains fresh because Christ does not stale. A saint may become dull to grace, but grace itself does not grow dull. The treasury stays full because the treasury is in the Son. That is why the New Testament keeps bringing believers back to Christ whenever it wants to deepen their understanding of grace.

And that is where wonder and assurance meet. If grace depended on the size of the sinner's grip, the thing would be terrifyingly unstable. But if grace is tied to the fulness of Christ, then it has a stability and scale the sinner could never supply. That does not make holiness optional. It does not make sin harmless. It does not make chastening unreal. But it does mean that the source of all this treasure is outside you and in Christ. That is why grace can keep flowing to the believer across the whole span of the Christian life and beyond it into the ages to come. Christ is not running out, and neither are the riches found in Him.

Conclusion

So when the Bible speaks of "the riches of his grace" and "the exceeding riches of his grace," it is lifting the believer's mind above every small, cramped, beggarly treatment of the subject. Grace is not a thin trickle barely enough to salvage a sinner. Grace is a vast treasury in Christ. It is tied to acceptance in the beloved, redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins, heavenly standing, future kindness in the ages to come, and the eternal purpose of God in His Son. That is not a poorhouse gospel. That is royal wealth for ruined sinners brought into Christ by divine mercy.

And once a saint begins to see grace on that scale, it changes the way he thinks about God, Christ, salvation, and himself. He stops speaking of grace as though God reluctantly let him in. He starts seeing that God has acted according to riches. He stops acting like grace is one little doctrine among many and starts understanding that grace runs through the whole plan of redemption in Christ. He realizes that the blood, the forgiveness, the acceptance, the future inheritance, and the coming ages all stand under the banner of divine grace. That kind of vision does not produce arrogance. It produces worship.

So let the church stop treating grace like spare change from heaven. Let it stop talking about grace as though it were merely enough to rescue one sinner at a time with nothing left over. The Book speaks bigger than that because God is bigger than that. Grace is rich. Grace is exceeding rich. Grace abounds. Grace reigns. Grace reaches into the ages to come. And all of it is tied to the eternal worth of Jesus Christ. If a believer ever really sees that, he will not become casual about grace. He will become astonished by it. He will realize that he has not merely been saved from wrath. He has been brought into the wealth of God's kindness in Christ, and that wealth will never run dry.

15 of 15: Grace Uncovered - Grace at the End of All Things

Introduction

There are some words in the Bible that appear often enough to be noticed, and there are some words in the Bible that run so deeply through the Book that once a man really sees them, he can never read the Scriptures the same way again. Grace is one of those words. It is not a side note. It is not a decorative word hung like tinsel over a few New Testament passages to make the gospel sound warm and inviting. Grace is a golden thread running from the early pages of Scripture all the way to the final line of the Book. It appears in shadow, in favor, in prophecy, in promise, in the person of Jesus Christ, in the ministry of Paul, in the standing of the believer, in the strength of the weak saint, in the riches of God's eternal purpose, and then it stands at the very end of the Bible like the last note of heaven sounding out over the whole revelation: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21). That is not an accident. That is God putting His own signature at the close of the Book.

And that closing line matters because it tells you something about the whole scope of Scripture. The Bible does not end with man's effort. It does not end with law. It does not end with wrath. It does not end with a commandment. It does not end with a list of things for the flesh to fix. It ends with grace. Now that does not mean judgment is unreal. Revelation has thundered with judgment, plagues, wrath, Babylon falling, beasts rising, and heaven opening in power. But when the curtain closes, the final benediction is grace. That tells you something about the heart of God's dealing in Christ. Grace is not sentimental weakness. Grace is strong enough to stand at the end of all things, after history has run its course, after kingdoms have risen and fallen, after the cross, after the church age, after the tribulation, after the kingdom, after the last rebellion, after the great white throne, and after the new heaven and new earth begin to stand in view. Grace is still there.

So this final essay must pull the whole series together and let the subject rise to its full biblical height. We are going to trace grace from Noah finding grace in the eyes of the LORD in a judged world (Genesis 6:8) all the way to the final benediction in Revelation 22:21. We are going to look again at grace in promise, grace in Christ, grace in Paul, grace in salvation, grace in sanctification, grace in weakness, grace in riches, and grace at the end of all things. Because if this series has shown anything, it has shown that grace is not a beginner's doctrine you leave behind once you learn the basics. Grace is one of the great eternal testimonies to the kindness, holiness, wisdom, and power of God in Jesus Christ. And the farther you trace it through the Book, the more reverence it ought to produce in your soul.

1. Grace Appears in a World Marked for Judgment

The first mention of grace in Scripture is already enough to preach a month on. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8). Notice where grace first appears. Not in Eden before the fall. Not in some gentle scene of innocent beauty. It appears in a world ruined by sin, filled with violence, and marked for destruction. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Genesis 6:5), and then just a few verses later, Noah finds grace in the eyes of the LORD. That is no small thing. The first mention of grace comes against the backdrop of wrath. That tells you immediately that grace is not the denial of judgment. Grace is favor shown in the face of deserved judgment.

That sets the tone for the whole Bible. Grace does not mean sin is light. It means God shows favor where sin has made wrath just. Noah’s world was headed for the flood. God was not winking at corruption. He was going to drown the whole order under judgment except for those preserved in the ark. Yet Noah found grace. That means grace appears early as divine favor in the face of deserved destruction. The first mention alone should keep Christians from ever talking about grace as though it were softness toward evil. The flood proves judgment is real. Noah finding grace proves mercy is real. The two truths stand together from the very beginning.

And that is how grace will keep appearing through the whole Book. It shows up where ruin is present. It appears where need is desperate. It shines where judgment is deserved. Whether it is Lot speaking of finding grace in God’s sight (Genesis 19:19), Moses asking to find grace before the LORD (Exodus 33:13), Ruth marveling that she found grace in the eyes of Boaz as a stranger (Ruth 2:10), or Esther obtaining grace and favor before the king (Esther 2:17), the pattern is the same. Grace is God or a superior showing favor downward where there is no claim of merit upward. Right from the opening pages, grace is presented as something that belongs to God’s merciful dealing in a world that deserves something far worse.

2. Grace Grows Brighter Through the Old Testament

As the Old Testament unfolds, grace keeps appearing in forms that prepare the mind for its later doctrinal brilliance. Moses finds grace in God’s sight and ties it to God’s presence with His people (Exodus 33:12-17). Ruth the Moabitess finds grace in the eyes of Boaz and becomes a living picture of a stranger brought into blessing through a gracious redeemer (Ruth 2:10-13). David knows something of grace in the face of covenant mercy. The Psalms say, “the LORD will give grace and glory” (Psalm 84:11). Proverbs says, “he giveth grace unto the lowly” (Proverbs 3:34). Zechariah looks ahead to “the spirit of grace and of

supplications” being poured out on the house of David (Zechariah 12:10). The word keeps showing up because the reality keeps pressing forward through the revelation.

But the Old Testament also shows that while grace is present, its full doctrinal force is not yet unfolded in the way it later will be. Grace often appears as favor, mercy, covenant kindness, and providential acceptance shown in specific settings. It is real grace, but it is often presented in story, picture, or prophetic promise rather than in the fully opened doctrinal terms of justification by faith apart from works through the finished blood of Christ. That is not a weakness in the Old Testament. That is progressive revelation. The acorn is there before the oak. The shadow is there before the substance shines fully. Grace is in the Book early, but the floodlight has not yet been turned on to the same degree.

This matters because careless readers usually go wrong in one of two ways. One crowd says grace does not really appear until Paul, as if Noah, Moses, Ruth, and the prophets never read their own Scriptures. The other crowd flattens every mention of grace into the same doctrinal setting, as though Genesis 6:8 and Ephesians 2:8 are functioning in exactly the same revelatory way. Both are mistakes. The truth is that grace runs through the Old Testament like a growing stream, picking up force, widening in significance, and pointing forward to something greater that will come to full manifestation in Jesus Christ. That is why the Bible reads so magnificently when handled rightly. It does not contradict itself. It unfolds itself.

3. Grace and Truth Came by Jesus Christ

Then the whole subject blazes into full view in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. John says, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Then he says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). That does not mean no grace existed before Christ, but it does mean grace and truth arrived in their fullest personal manifestation in Him. He did not merely talk about grace. He embodied it. He did not merely define truth. He was the truth. In Christ, grace was no longer merely favor described, requested, or pictured. Grace stood on earth in flesh and blood.

That is why the Gospels are filled with scenes of grace shining in holy form. Jesus touches the leper and says, “I will; be thou clean” (Mark 1:41). He receives publicans and sinners while the Pharisees murmur (Luke 15:1-2). He tells the Samaritan woman the truth about her sin without withholding living water (John 4:10-18). He tells the woman taken in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). He is never soft on sin, and yet He is full of grace and truth. That is what modern religion still cannot imitate. It

either wants truth without grace or grace without truth. Christ held both together perfectly because He was perfect.

And of course the grace manifested in His life reached its decisive act at the cross. Grace is not vague kindness floating around in heaven. Grace is the righteous outflow of Christ's blood atonement. Paul says men are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Redemption, blood, forgiveness, and grace come together because grace in Scripture is never detached from the cost of Calvary. God does not save by grace because He lowered His standard. He saves by grace because His Son met His standard. So when Christ appears in the fullness of grace and truth, the whole subject rises from favor and promise into blood-bought accomplishment.

4. Grace Shines with Full Doctrinal Clarity Through Paul

After Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, the Holy Ghost brings grace into doctrinal clarity through the apostle Paul. That is why Paul can speak of "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), "the dispensation of the grace of God" (Ephesians 3:2), and "the grace given unto me" (Romans 12:3; Romans 15:15; 1 Corinthians 3:10; Ephesians 3:7-8). Grace in Paul is not a passing theme. It is woven into his entire apostleship. He explains grace in relation to justification, the believer's standing, the body of Christ, the contrast between grace and works, the church age, and the believer's practical life in ways no earlier writer unfolds with such fullness.

This is not exalting Paul above Christ. It is recognizing the vessel Christ chose to unfold the doctrine. The Lord took a persecutor and made him the apostle of the Gentiles by grace. Paul says, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). He says his grace was not only personal forgiveness but commission, stewardship, and revelation. Through him, the Spirit opens up salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), justification freely by grace (Romans 3:24), access into grace wherein we stand (Romans 5:2), and the absolute impossibility of mixing grace and works as the ground of acceptance before God (Romans 11:6). That is doctrinal floodlight.

And because of Paul's teaching, the church is left without excuse if it confuses grace with human merit. Paul says, "if by grace, then is it no more of works" (Romans 11:6). He says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). He says believers are "not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). He says grace teaches the believer to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:11-12). So through Paul, grace is not diminished into softness. It is sharpened into doctrinal brilliance and practical power. Grace becomes unmistakably the governing principle of salvation and Christian living in the present age.

5. Grace Does Not End at Conversion

One of the most damaging mistakes a Christian can make is to treat grace as the way into the Christian life but not the way through it. The New Testament will not allow that. Romans 5:2 says believers stand in grace. Hebrews 4:16 tells them to come boldly to “the throne of grace” for help in time of need. Second Corinthians 12:9 records the Lord saying, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Titus 2:11-12 says grace teaches holy living. Second Peter 3:18 says, “grow in grace.” That means grace does not vanish once a sinner is justified. Grace remains the atmosphere, power, teacher, supply, and standing of the believer through the whole Christian life.

This is why grace keeps showing up in every major area of Christian living. Grace breaks sin’s dominion (Romans 6:14). Grace strengthens weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Grace governs speech (Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29). Grace produces labor and fruitfulness (1 Corinthians 15:10). Grace humbles the believer and deepens his dependence on God (James 4:6). Grace establishes the heart (Hebrews 13:9). Grace teaches holiness (Titus 2:11-12). So the saint who thinks grace is old news after conversion has not even begun to understand how central it remains. You do not graduate from grace into self-sufficiency. You grow deeper into grace as Christ becomes larger and you become smaller in your own eyes.

And that also means grace remains precious in seasons of pain and testing. When Paul’s thorn was not removed, grace was sufficient. When the believer is weary, grace strengthens. When the saint is confused, grace teaches. When he is weak, grace upholds. Grace is not merely the doctrine of a forgiven past. It is the living supply of the present Christian life. That is one reason the Bible can end with grace and not sound strange. Grace is not just for the beginning. It has been carrying saints all the way through the middle, and it will still be spoken of with reverence when everything else has run its course.

6. Grace Reaches into the Ages to Come

Ephesians 2 lifts the subject into its eternal scale. Paul says God raised believers up together and made them sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7). That verse alone proves that grace does not stop at conversion, and it does not disappear at the close of history. God intends to keep showing the exceeding riches of His grace in the ages to come. That means the whole redeemed church stands as an eternal exhibit of what divine grace has accomplished in Christ.

This takes grace out of the realm of small religious talk and places it in the center of God’s eternal purpose. Grace is not only what rescues sinners from wrath. Grace is part of what

God intends to put on display forever. The saints themselves, redeemed, accepted in the beloved, glorified in Christ, and conformed to His image, will stand as everlasting testimony to divine kindness. That is scale. That is wonder. That is why grace should never be spoken of in cramped terms. The Holy Ghost speaks of “the exceeding riches of his grace” (Ephesians 2:7), and He ties those riches to ages still to come. Grace is not an emergency patch on a broken universe. Grace is woven into God’s eternal display of His glory in Christ.

And once a believer sees that, he begins understanding why the Bible keeps speaking of grace with such magnitude. It is not because the biblical writers were emotional. It is because grace truly is vast. Grace is rich in Ephesians 1:7. It is exceeding rich in Ephesians 2:7. It abounds more than sin in Romans 5:20. It reigns through righteousness in Romans 5:21. It strengthens weakness in 2 Corinthians 12:9. It teaches godliness in Titus 2:11-12. It establishes the heart in Hebrews 13:9. And it will still be part of God’s display in the ages to come. That is not a side note in theology. That is one of the grand themes of the whole Bible.

7. The Bible Ends with Grace

Then you come to the final words of Scripture: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Revelation 22:21). It is hard to overstate how magnificent that is. The Book began with grace appearing in a judged world when Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. It ends with grace spoken as the final benediction over all. Between those two points lie the flood, the patriarchs, Sinai, the tabernacle, the kingdom, the prophets, the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the church age, the tribulation, the second coming, the kingdom, the last judgment, and the new creation. And after all of that, the Bible’s final note is grace. Not because nothing else mattered, but because grace has been running through the whole Book like a golden thread.

That does not mean Revelation is a soft book. It is a book of wrath, judgment, beasts, plagues, Babylon falling, the lake of fire, and heaven opening with the Rider on the white horse. But after the judgments, after the warnings, after the invitations, after “Surely I come quickly” (Revelation 22:20), the final line is still grace. That means grace is strong enough to stand at the close of all things. Grace is not timid. Grace is not fragile. Grace is not the opposite of holiness. It is one of the great revelations of holiness meeting mercy in Jesus Christ. The Bible does not end in moral uncertainty. It ends in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that should leave the believer in awe. The last word is not yours. The last word is not mine. The last word is not the church’s performance, man’s ability, law’s demand, or the

flesh's promise to do better next time. The last word is grace. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not generic kindness. Not abstract favor. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That centers the whole revelation exactly where it belongs, in the person of the Lord Himself. Grace began to blaze through the Book in promise and favor, shone in fullness in Christ, was unfolded in clarity through Paul, upheld saints through the whole age, and then stands in the last line of Scripture as if God would leave no doubt in the minds of His people where their hope, help, and final confidence rest.

Conclusion

So when you step back and look at the whole Bible, grace is not a passing theme. It is one of the great unifying glories of Scripture. It appears in the first mention with Noah in a judged world. It shines in favor shown through the Old Testament. It comes in living fullness by Jesus Christ, who is full of grace and truth. It is doctrinally unfolded in majestic clarity through Paul, who preaches the gospel of the grace of God. It saves, strengthens, teaches, humbles, stabilizes, enriches, and upholds. It reaches into the ages to come as part of God's eternal display of kindness in Christ. And when the Book finally closes, it closes with grace.

That means grace is not something the believer should ever treat casually. Grace is not soft sentiment. Grace is not a loophole for sin. Grace is not a beginner's doctrine left behind once a man becomes "deep." Grace is one of the deepest realities in all of revelation because it tells you how a holy God has dealt kindly, righteously, powerfully, and eternally with ruined sinners through His Son. Grace does not make holiness smaller. Grace magnifies holiness by showing what it took for mercy to flow. Grace does not erase truth. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Grace does not weaken the saint. Grace strengthens him in weakness. Grace does not stop at the cross. Grace carries the whole redeemed purpose of God into the ages to come.

So let this final word stand where the Bible leaves it. The God of Scripture is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10). The Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Believers are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8), stand in grace (Romans 5:2), grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18), are strengthened by grace (2 Corinthians 12:9), and will forever be trophies of the exceeding riches of His grace (Ephesians 2:7). That is why the Book ends the way it does: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21). After everything is said, after all the doctrine, all the warning, all the history, all the judgment, and all the promise, that is the final note God leaves sounding in the ears of His people. Grace. And if a man really hears that note the way the Bible intends it, he will not leave this series merely informed. He will leave reverent before the God whose grace is greater than he ever imagined.

Series Conclusion

What we should understand now, after finishing this series, is that grace is not a little church word sitting on the edge of Christian doctrine. Grace is one of the great pillars holding up the whole structure of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. We have seen grace in its first appearances, where men found grace in the sight of God and others. We have seen grace arrive in fullness through Jesus Christ, who was full of grace and truth. We have seen grace opened doctrinally through the apostle Paul as the very heart of the gospel, the very opposite of works, the standing of the believer, the strength of the weak saint, and the operating principle of this present age. We have seen that grace is not weakness in God, not softness toward sin, not permission for carnality, and not a religious decoration on the surface of the Bible. Grace is God dealing righteously, powerfully, kindly, and eternally with guilty sinners through the finished work of His Son. If we have learned this series rightly, then the word grace should now feel heavier, brighter, richer, and far more sacred than it did when we began.

We should also understand now that grace is not something a believer leaves behind after salvation. Grace saves, but grace also teaches. Grace forgives, but grace also transforms. Grace breaks sin's dominion, strengthens the weary, steadies the weak, shapes the tongue, deepens humility, establishes the heart, and teaches the believer how to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. We have seen that grace does not produce spiritual laziness. It produces fruitfulness. It does not produce compromise. It produces holiness. It does not produce pride. It produces lowliness and gratitude. It does not make the cross less necessary. It makes the cross more precious. So if these lessons have done their work, we should no longer be content with simply saying we believe in grace while living as though our strength, our speech, our endurance, our usefulness, or our acceptance before God still depend on us. Grace should now be understood not only as the way into Christ, but as the daily supply of life in Christ.

And now the question becomes, what do we do with this knowledge? First, we hold fast the true gospel and refuse every counterfeit that adds works, sacraments, rituals, law, or human merit to salvation. We should now be more equipped to recognize false religion even when it uses Christian language. Second, we should let grace humble us, because if grace is really what the Bible says it is, then none of us has any room left to boast except in the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, we should let grace govern our lives. That means our speech should be with grace, our conduct should reflect grace, our patience with others should be shaped by grace, and our strength in suffering should lean on grace. Fourth, we should keep growing in grace, because none of us has reached the bottom of this subject, and none of us ever will on this side of glory. And finally, we should worship the God of all grace

with deeper reverence than before, because after all these lessons, one thing ought to be plain: we are not standing in our own goodness, we are not being carried by our own strength, and we are not headed toward glory by our own merit. We are standing, living, enduring, and hoping by grace. And if the last word of the Bible is still “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen,” then that is the note we ought to leave this series with as well - amazed, thankful, steadied, and more deeply anchored in the Lord Jesus Christ than when we began.



GRACE:
The Heart of God
The Power of the Gospel
The Life of the Believer

GRACE UNCOVERED

A 15-PART BIBLE STUDY SERIES FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

"And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." — JOHN 1:16 (KJV)

From Beginning to End...
Grace Reigns in Christ.

#	STUDY TITLE	FOCUS & SUMMARY	KEY SCRIPTURES (KJV)	KEY DOCTRINES	WHAT GRACE IS	WHAT GRACE IS NOT	APPLICATION
1	Grace Uncovered: What Grace Really Is	Defining grace biblically, not sentimentally. What grace is and what grace is not.	Eph. 2:8-9 • Tit. 2:11 Rom. 5:15-17 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves..." — Eph. 2:8	Unmerited favor Free, not earned God's gift through Christ	✓ God's unmerited favor ✓ A gift, not a reward ✓ According to His good pleasure ✓ Through faith in Christ	✗ Not earned or deserved ✗ Not based on foreseen good ✗ Not partial or unfair ✗ Not a license to sin	Rest in God's favor Stop striving Trust the Giver
2	Grace Uncovered: Grace Before the Cross	Grace in the Old Testament and before Paul's ministry. It appears early and grows brighter.	Gen. 6:8 • Ex. 33:19 • Ruth 2:12 Ps. 103:8 • Prov. 3:34 "Thou hast found grace in my sight." — Gen. 6:8	Grace precedes the cross Revelation unfolds Consistent heart of God	✓ Active throughout Scripture ✓ God's mercy in action ✓ Shown in covenants ✓ Seen in deliverance & mercy	✗ Not a New Testament invention ✗ Not only for Paul's time ✗ Not absent from Israel	See God's heart Trust His faithfulness Learn from Scripture
3	Grace Uncovered: Grace and Truth Came by Jesus Christ	John 1 reveals grace reaching its fullest manifestation in the person of Jesus.	John 1:14, 16-17 John 14:6 • Luke 2:40 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory...)" — John 1:14	Grace & truth united Christ is the source Fullness in Him alone	✓ Revealed in Jesus ✓ Made visible in the flesh ✓ Not separate from truth ✓ Fullness dwells in Him	✗ Not found in anyone else ✗ Not opposed to truth ✗ Not partial or limited	Look to Jesus Believe in His name Walk in His truth
4	Grace Uncovered: Paul and the Gospel of Grace	Why Paul is the central apostle to explain grace doctrinally in the NT.	Rom. 1:5 • Eph. 3:1-8 2 Tim. 1:11 • Gal. 2:7-9 "According to the grace of God given unto me..." — Eph. 3:7	Paul's unique commission Mystery of grace revealed Called to preach it	✓ Revealed to Paul by God ✓ A mystery now made known ✓ For Jews & Gentiles ✓ Preached by divine calling	✗ Not man's philosophy ✗ Not self-appointed ✗ Not the same as other gospels	Respect Scripture order Study rightly divided Honor Paul's ministry
5	Grace Uncovered: Saved by Grace Through Faith	Grace as the ground of salvation. Not earned, purchased, or maintained by works.	Eph. 2:8-9 • Titus 3:5 Rom. 4:4-5 • Gal. 2:16 "Not of works, lest any man should boast..." — Eph. 2:9	Salvation is by grace Through faith alone Not of works	✓ The sole ground of salvation ✓ A gift received by faith ✓ Not contributed to ✓ God's workmanship	✗ Not by works ✗ Not by merit ✗ Not maintained by effort	Believe and rejoice Stop striving Trust His promise
6	Grace Uncovered: Grace or Works	A doctrinal contrast showing grace and works cannot function together in justification.	Rom. 11:6 • Gal. 5:4 Romans 4:4-5 "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." — Rom. 4:4	Two systems opposed Works reject grace Can't mix them	✓ Receives, does not earn ✓ Rests, does not strive ✓ Justifies the ungodly	✗ Not mixed with works ✗ Not improved by effort ✗ Not a reward system	Choose grace Abandon self-righteousness Rest in Christ
7	Grace Uncovered: Under Grace, Not Under Law	What Paul means when he says believers are not under the law but under grace.	Rom. 6:14-15 Gal. 5:18, 4:21, 4:31 "We are not under the law, but under grace." — Rom. 6:14	Law reveals sin Grace provides power Grace governs believers	✓ Freedom from law's condemning ✓ Power to walk in Spirit ✓ Guided by grace, not code	✗ Not lawlessness ✗ Not license to sin ✗ Not careless living	Walk in the Spirit Enjoy freedom Obey from love
8	Grace Uncovered: Shall We Continue in Sin?	Confronting the abuse of grace. Real grace teaches holiness, not looseness.	Rom. 6:1-2, 15-18 Titus 2:11-12 • Jude 1:4 "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" — Rom. 6:2	Grace trains us Dead to sin Alive to righteousness	✓ Teaches holiness ✓ Produces obedience ✓ Transforms the heart	✗ Not an excuse to sin ✗ Not a cover for rebellion ✗ Not cheap or careless	Pursue holiness Flee sin Walk in newness of life
9	Grace Uncovered: The Grace Given Unto Me	Paul's repeated language about grace given to him: commission, office, revelation, ministry.	1 Cor. 15:10 • Eph. 3:7-8 Col. 1:25 • 2 Tim. 1:9 "By the grace of God I am what I am." — 1 Cor. 15:10	Grace given = calling Ministry by grace Revelation by grace	✓ Empowers service ✓ Entrusted to the called ✓ Not earned, but given	✗ Not self-attained ✗ Not based on talent ✗ Not for personal glory	Be faithful Use what God gave Give God the glory
10	Grace Uncovered: Grace for Strength in Weakness	Grace sustains in suffering, weakness, and spiritual warfare.	2 Corinthians 12:9 Phil. 4:13 • Isa. 40:29-31 "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." — 2 Cor. 12:9	Sufficient grace Perfect in weakness Power in our weakness	✓ Sustains in trials ✓ Gives supernatural strength ✓ Perfected in weakness	✗ Not the absence of trials ✗ Not comfort only ✗ Not reserved for the strong	Depend daily Boast in weakness Trust His strength
11	Grace Uncovered: By the Grace of God I Am What I Am	Personal transformation. Grace not only forgives the past but remakes and empowers.	1 Cor. 15:10 • Rom. 5:20 2 Cor. 3:18 • Phil. 1:6 "By the grace of God I am what I am..." — 1 Cor. 15:10	Transforms, not just forgives Perfected in weakness Energizes faithful labor	✓ Changes the heart ✓ Produces growth ✓ Completes the good work	✗ Not a one-time excuse ✗ Not a license to sin ✗ Not unchanged living	Grow daily Serve fruitfully Give thanks
12	Grace Uncovered: Speaking with Grace	Grace should govern speech, attitude, and conduct toward others.	Col. 4:6 • Eph. 4:29 Prov. 15:1 • Titus 4:11 "Let your speech be always with grace..." — Col. 4:6	Grace in speech Builds up Reflects Christ	✓ Kind, edifying, pure ✓ Seasoned with salt ✓ Honors God & others	✗ Not harsh or rude ✗ Not careless words ✗ Not offensive or bitter	Speak life Encourage others Reflect Christ
13	Grace Uncovered: Growing in Grace	Spiritual maturity. Grace is not something we graduate from. We grow deeper in it.	2 Pet. 3:18 • Col. 2:6-7 Heb. 5:12-14 • Phil. 1:9-10 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord..." — 2 Pet. 3:18	Grace grows Maturity in grace Depth over time	✓ Daily growth ✓ Not static ✓ Stronger fruit	✗ Not static ✗ Not shallow living ✗ Not instant perfection	Grow intentionally Study & obey Press forward
14	Grace Uncovered: The Riches of His Grace	The abundance and majesty of grace—vast, rich, and overflowing in Christ.	Eph. 1:7-8 • Eph. 2:4-7 Rom. 5:20 • 1 Tim. 1:14 "Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved..." — Eph. 1:6	Grace is rich Overflowing In Christ we're accepted	✓ Abundant ✓ Majestic ✓ Beyond measure	✗ Not scarce ✗ Not earned ✗ Not for the proud	Marvel at grace Praise His riches Live in gratitude
15	Grace Uncovered: Grace at the End of All Things	Tracing grace from its early appearance to the final benediction of the Bible.	Rev. 22:21 • Jude 1:24-25 2 Cor. 13:14 • Rom. 16:20 "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." — Rev. 22:21	Grace frames Scripture Grace closes Scripture Grace throughout ages	✓ Beginning to end ✓ Eternal ✓ Unchanging	✗ Not temporary ✗ Not age-dependent ✗ Not limited in scope	Live in the ending Await His return Grace be with you

THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF GRACE
Grace is God's unmerited favor through Jesus Christ. It saves, sustains, empowers, transforms, and will finally bring us home to glory.
— Titus 2:4-7
"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..."

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE (1 COR. 15:1-4)
1. Christ died for our sins.
2. He was buried.
3. He rose again the third day.
4. According to the Scriptures.
Believe it. Receive it. Rest in it. Live in it.

THE POWER OF GRACE
SAVES • SANCIFIES • STRENGTHENS • TRANSFORMS • GLORIFIES
(Eph. 2:8-9) (Thim. 2:11-14) (2 Cor. 12:9) (2 Cor. 3:18) (Rom. 8:30)

All by Grace. All for His Glory.

WARNINGS AGAINST ABUSING GRACE
1. Grace is not a license to sin. (Rom. 6:1-2)
2. Grace does not cancel responsibility. (Gal. 6:7)
3. Grace does not remove consequences. (Gal. 6:7)
4. Grace should lead to holiness. (Thim. 2:11-12)
5. Grace exalts Christ, not self. (1 Cor. 15:10)

FINAL WORD
From Genesis to Revelation, one theme shines brightest: **GRACE.**
Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.
— 2 Cor. 9:15 (KJV)

CONCLUSION: Grace is the heart of the Gospel. It is the power of the Gospel. It is the life of the believer. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the grace that saves, sustains, empowers, transforms, and will finally bring us home to glory. It is the grace that is the power of the Gospel. It is the grace that is the life of the believer. It is the grace that is the power of the Gospel. It is the grace that is the life of the believer.

PERDUANT MEMBERS