

The Sweet Savor of Grace

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:14, 16).

Every part of the humanity of Christ was saturated with grace and doctrine. And of that fulness, in its totality, we have received grace for grace.

First, grace is what God has done for us, apart from us.

Second, grace is totally detached from any human merit.

Third, the gift of grace depends upon the character of God and not the character of man.

Fourth, grace is freely given as a gift to those who will receive it and believe on Christ.

Fifth, for this reason, the Lord Jesus does not and will not work with any single person out-

side of His provision, which is grace.

This booklet will give us a description of the many sides of grace, mercy that endures, and love that cannot fail because it is the essence of God.

Chapter One

**CALLED TO BE A
SWEET-SMELLING SAVOUR**

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are a savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life...” (2 Corinthians 2:15-16a).

God has called us to be a sweet savour of His knowledge in every place. Have you ever wondered what this means? Unto those that are in death, we are savour unto death. Unto those that are saved, we are a savour unto life. Therefore, the Word of God says, we do not corrupt the Word of God in His sight, but we speak in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:17).

What is a sweet-smelling savor? In isagogics,

(a study of the historical frame of reference of the text), the sweet-smelling savor derives its essence from three different kinds of flowers.

One certain flower, a wildflower, had a most wonderful scent. A very beautiful flower to look at, they called it the “flower of mercy.”

Another flower was called the “grace flower.” When trampled on, that flower produced a sweet aroma.

The third flower made an amazing combination with the other two. When it bloomed, it gave off a tremendous fragrance without being trampled. Even the secular world called it the “love flower.”

The Ultimate Expression of Grace

We have a Savior who came to the earth with one thing in mind: to make His grace visible to sinners. This grace is multifaceted (*poikilos* in the Greek), meaning “grace on every side” (1 Peter 4:10).

Abundant grace (Romans 5:15) speaks of an overwhelming influence. Exceeding grace (2 Corinthians 9:14) means it is above everything known to man. “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). Transcendent, it goes beyond everything.

Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20), and that speaks of ever-increasing grace. This means that when a person fails, grace increases. Can you grasp that? “Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

A person fails, and grace increases. Imagine it! In the Old Testament, the correlating verse is Proverbs 24:16, “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief”—and he stays down. Yet, the sinner who is justified by God through salvation responds to truth and practices rebound every time he falls.

That We May Know Him

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:15-16).

This speaks of a grace that spreads forth its scent further and further because it comes out of

our hearts as a sweet-smelling savor. The knowledge of it has a sweet aroma—knowledge that goes way beyond academia. This knowledge has a sweetness.

Remember, *mercy* is a wildflower that has a beautiful fragrance. *Grace* is a flower that had to be trampled on to bring out the aroma. But *love* was the one that would give a sweet smell without effort, because love releases the righteousness and justice of God.

When the righteousness of God condemned Jesus Christ because of our sin, the justice of God had to condemn Him. After Christ paid for our sins on the Cross, the love of God could bring in forgiveness and His imputed righteousness to everyone who would believe.

What is going to be the most spectacular sight in all eternity? The sight that will be so overwhelming is when we see the Lord with His fresh wounds—wounds that revealed His great mercy, grace, and love that will be evident throughout eternity.

Chapter Two

THE MANY SIDES OF GRACE

“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who hath blessed us* with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:2-7).

Here is Abraham. He would not speak to God for thirteen years; yet, in Genesis 17:1, God

initiated to Abraham, making him the father of our faith. Despite the problem with Hagar and Ishmael, we will see Abraham in heaven. When we do, we will have one thought—and this is where the fresh wounds come in. Abraham will be there to the praise of the glory of those wounds.

And here is Jacob. He had that wrestling match with the Lord Himself, in Genesis 32:24-32, and his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. “For as a prince, hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” The place was called Peniel, because there Jacob saw the grace of God face to face. Jacob was left with a halt in his walk as a permanent reminder; his thigh was put out of joint by the Lord. As the head of the twelve tribes of Israel, he had two wives and twelve sons, and we will see Jacob in heaven.

There was no human merit in Abraham. There was no human merit in Jacob. It is not that they were great men of God, but they received greater grace (James 4:6). It was ever increasing. It was transcendent. It was overabundant, always abounding. And that is the reason that anyone is in heaven today.

The Vilest Offender Receives Grace

After escaping from Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot, in Genesis 19:32, had sex with his daughters. The girls decided to get him drunk and went in with him to preserve their family line. As a result, they produced the Amorites and the Moabites—bitter enemies against Israel.

How could Lot ever be called righteous (2 Peter 2:7) when there was hardly a good thing about him? The one good thing was that his daughters were virgins until he offered them up to the men that came to his door. (God didn't allow them to have the girls, because the angels were there.)

But notice it: Lot is in heaven as a righteous man, to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

Oh, if we could realize the power in this: "to the praise of the glory of His grace." It doesn't even matter if it is Paul on the road to Damascus, responsible for the murders of many Christians. Paul said, "Whereof I 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).

Chapter Three

GOD'S PURPOSE: A FRAGRANCE THAT FLOWS OUT

Paul said, "I am less than the least of all the saints, and this grace was given so I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, that all men might see the mystery of the fellowship, which was hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ" (see Ephesians 3:8-9).

And then he said, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11).

God's eternal purpose is to show sinners the character of mercy, the character of grace, and the character of love. It is the scent of mercy—a wildflower that smells good, even though it's wild. It is the character of grace that brings forth a fresh fragrance of compassion and forgiveness when trampled upon. It is the character of love that flows out to each one, to the entire world.

The combination of these three brings us into an understanding of eternity.

God's eternal purpose is to give men who are less than the least an understanding that they can be used by God.

Therefore, in 1 Peter 1:2 and 2 Peter 1:2, God says, "Grace and peace be multiplied through our Lord Jesus Christ." God begins to multiply His grace again and again. And why? He multiplies it to reveal unconditional love. He multiplies it to reveal the heart of His compassion. He multiplies it to show us that where sin does abound, grace does much more abound—it is ever increasing!—and His mercy endures forever.

Very few people in the world today truly understand grace beyond the premise of a definition. There will not be a single person who will be in heaven and reign with Christ *except* for the praise of the glory of His grace.

"Glory" is the reflection of God's nature. The praise of the glory of His grace means that we will praise the nature of God's love that brings His nature to us through grace.

That is why Ephesians 2:7 says that "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness" will be toward us throughout all eternity.

Can't Carry a Tune? Just Wait!

In heaven, when Jesus Christ takes the title deed to the world back from Satan and places it into the hands of the Father, multitudes will be up there singing. With one voice, we will sing a new song about the Lamb and the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 5:9). Why?

When we see those nail-scarred hands, we will shout with joy. We will have peace in our hearts and a song to glorify our Savior. It will be a song that has never been sung. With voices that are so heavenly, we will sing a brand-new song in a spontaneous way—a song about the Lamb and the blood of the Lamb.

Have fervent charity one for another, because charity is an attribute of God. Grace is not an attribute of God's nature since He created a perfect world. There was no need for grace until Adam and Eve sinned. Grace is a gift.

God's righteousness made a decision to save us, justice fulfilled it at Calvary, and love reveals the Finished Work by the Holy Spirit in us. But love reveals it through the totality of God's grace, giving us every single thing that we never deserved.

I don't deserve being able to preach the

Gospel, let alone being able to talk to God, and neither does any other man or woman. But of His fullness have we received grace for grace.

We are standing in that grace (Romans 5:2), and we are growing in that grace (2 Peter 3:18). When we fail, we truly rebound and get something we don't deserve—*grace*.

Have fervent charity, one toward one another. Have hospitality without grudging. And as you have received the gift, so minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:8-10).

So, we begin to manifest this grace that others may know Him.

Spend Some Time in the Garden

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits” (Song of Solomon 4:16).

Now come the spices of God through knowledge. Knowledge turns into these magnificent spices. It turns into the scent of God's nature “by us in every place.” We begin to realize that our part on earth is to be a revelation of God's grace, the most amazing gift that man could have.

Grace starts to abound. It becomes more abundant. And then it becomes, according to Romans 5:17, superabundant. “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

To “reign” means to have this grace, to be an overwhelming fragrance, activated by the love of God so that our scent goes out to all men, wherever we go. Either the fragrance of life unto those who believe or an odor of death unto those that perish, it doesn’t miss a single one.

Lot received grace. Abraham received grace. Jacob and David received grace. Peter and John and Paul also received grace. Who gets the glory?

Jesus Christ receives all the glory (1 Corinthians 1:31). No flesh can stand in His presence. Worship Him and thank Him often.

It brings so much pain when someone preaches a gospel of “grace plus something.” Romans 11:6 and Galatians 1:6-12 say it is the grace of Christ alone, absent from works, that brings salvation to a lost soul.

Do you see why we must treat one another in tenderness as stewards and caretakers of

grace? Do you see where grace must be between us, motivated by love? We become children of grace because we are motivated by love.

All Things Are New

For Asa, grace brought a revival to a nation (2 Chronicles 15:8-9). For Hosea and Gomer, with her prostitution, grace brought a brand-new marriage (Hosea 2:19, 20; 3:3).

For the prodigal son (Luke 15:20), grace brought a brand-new family life.

For many of us, grace is a brand-new life. In Song of Solomon 7:12, it is brand-new fruit. For many, it is a new thing, where the former things have passed away. In Isaiah 43:19, God declared, “I will do a new thing”—and He tells us before it comes forth (Romans 6:4; Isaiah 42:9).

Grace brings so much to so many people. But when we experience grace in terms of isagogics (the historical frame of reference), that alone makes it powerful. Trampled upon and crushed, all the sweet odor comes out.

“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

“He will turn again, he will have compas-

sion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

“Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old” (Micah 7:18-20).

Chapter Four

THERE IS A BALM IN GILEAD!

A study of Jeremiah 8:20-22 with isagogics reveals a very different meaning than is commonly understood:

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

“For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.”

Then, in verse 22, comes the question: “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

This is *not* referring to physical illness. Furthermore, the balm Jeremiah was speaking of was not just the kind used for physical ailments. Given freely by physicians, this balm was used to take care of spiritual problems and spiritual sickness—a beautiful balm that was called “the love balm.”

The love balm! A physician would put it on someone who had been spiritually or mentally wounded and was going through emotional problems. He would rub it on the patient's forehead and around the neck. The ingredients were so powerful that the subject would begin to get better immediately. The physician would apply it freely, and that balm, once again, was called the love balm.

Can you see now what we can get out of isagogics by rightly dividing the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15)?

The Main Ingredients

The wildflower (representing mercy) gives out a tremendous fragrance without touching it, but it is wild. The flower called grace is crushed, and it gives forth a tremendous scent. Then love is represented by the flower that continually gives forth its fragrance abroad without effort. So we have the ingredients: mercy, grace, and love.

When Paul said in Galatians 1:16 that God did "reveal his Son in me," He revealed something about the flower that was crushed. That flower manifested the most precious, sweet incense. The flower looked good without being

crushed, yet it had to be crushed to manifest this fantastic incense.

For this reason, 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 says, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

“We are [pressed down] on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.

“Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” (That means we may be knocked down but not knocked out.)

But then, the Word of God continues, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest [through] our body.

“For we which live are alway[s] delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

“So then, death works in us, [so] life [can work] in you.”

In other words, the treasure can only come through the earthen vessel when the flower is crushed.

Mercy was the flower that was wild. God gives mercy to the wild man just as he is—and every single person in Adam is wild. God gives

the wild man what he does not deserve; that is called grace. Also, the wild man does not get what he does deserve; that is called mercy. What's more, God gives to every sinner sixty-eight things that we do not deserve, the moment we believe by faith and receive Christ as our Savior.* What does it? The Finished Work of Christ on the Cross.

Grace flows from a believer who has allowed himself to be crushed. When God allows the crushing process—and most of us have been through it—He always comes through. We get your calls, your letters, and your e-mail with testimonies of God working miracles. Somebody has cancer, someone else is near death, and the wheels are set in motion. We send prayer requests by e-mail to believers throughout the world. With a phone call, the Body of Christ, through each member in particular, goes to work all over the world, praying for the needs of people.

God Delights in Giving Us Mercy

God delights in not giving people what they deserve. He *delights* in mercy. And that is what Micah 7:18 says.

According to Psalm 103:10, God has not

dealt with us according to our sins, and he has not rewarded us according to our iniquities. Just think of that:

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that [reverently] fear him.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our [sins] from us.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are [made of] dust” (Psalm 103:10-14).

In verse 17, His mercy is “from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.”

The Word of God says that His mercy is endless. His mercy outlasts everything in the world. Just as grace is supreme and transcendent, abounding beyond anything that man can do, because He is the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10), the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Here's the Catch

He that judges without mercy shall receive no mercy; for mercy rejoices against judgment

(see James 2:13). Mercy “boasts” against judgment (according to the Greek text) wherever there is meekness, humility, and a response to God’s love.

The most incredible thing in the world is to understand that God is plenteous in mercy (Psalm 86:5). “Plenteous in mercy” means that whatever you have been given, there is plenty more.

Forty-two times, the Word of God teaches that mercy endures forever. That means it outlives and outlasts everything that could ever come against us.

What brought us into the arena? Mercy met truth. Righteousness and peace kissed each other. Truth about God’s nature sprung up from the earth, and heaven looked down.

The Truth about the Nature of God Revealed

“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Psalm 85:10-11).

Just imagine that wildflower. God, in ancient times, had men label it the mercy flower. Mercy met with the truth about holiness. Righteousness

(the righteousness of God) and peace (the peace we have through the Cross, in Colossians 1:20) kissed each other.

The truth about the nature of God was revealed on the earth. God the Father looked down and saw that amazing marriage between grace and faith and what happens to the believer as he receives this eternal life package of forgiveness. Now, for the first time, God's children can have hope—at any stage in their life, in any state of being.

The Word of God says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Therefore, it is according to His abundant mercy when God's children realize the unchanging, immutable attitude of God toward us.

A woman called me and cried on the phone as she said, “I just found out that my son is a homosexual. He hid it from me for many years.”

I said something that she didn't expect to hear: “Give him so much love that he will want Jesus more than homosexuality. Give him so much love that he can't deny it. Mercy rejoices against judgment! Of course you hate the sin,

but you can love him out of it.”

Another man called in and said that his wife was having an affair, and he caught her in bed with another man.

I asked, “How many children do you have?”

He said, “Two.”

I said, “Do you want your marriage?”

And he said, “Yes.”

“Love her out of immorality,” I counseled him. “Love her right out of it. Give her so much love that she will hate her sin, because Christ will be manifested through you every time she looks at you.”

The crushed plant of grace, mercy that brings forgiveness, and love’s compassion without compromise: These are the ingredients that produce a sweet-smelling savor. In the measure that we let God work them in, their heavenly fragrance will be released through our souls to be initiated toward others.

**Read, What Happened When You Received Christ? by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is in the victory mode at all times. That means that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound (Romans 5:20). When we deserve judgment, mercy rejoices against it (James 2:13). And when we gaze upon Jesus Christ, we are changed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We have a God whom neither sin, iniquity, nor anything else can stop, as long as Jesus is allowed to be in the race.

Jesus said, "I didn't come to condemn but to save." He is in the saving business. And if anybody has a breath in this life, they still have the possibility of salvation, and that is why they are alive.

The Father of all mercy, the God of all grace, the One who loved us first, and the God that is love—He is the God of all forgiveness and the God who cannot change toward us, because that is impossible. He is immutable. He is now who

He is, and who He was, and who He will be forever.

Only believe, and believe only.

Father, we desire to take the time to use that mercy, that love, and that grace to pray for one another. We have so many needs, emotionally and physically. We want the transcending power of the Holy Spirit to go into each body, soul, and mind. Do a mighty work of healing for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.