

A Journey into 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

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The journey of grace begins the moment a person first receives God’s free gift of grace for salvation, accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ’s blood as the atonement for his sin. Now, along with every other believer, we share the privilege of glorifying God by walking in His grace and radiating that grace to others. In fact, this is the very reason God created us.

Grace—God’s favor and high esteem for us—is not based on anything we have done to earn it, but upon His eternal, omnipotent, omniscient love for us. God’s mercy is what saves us from the pit of hell and keeps us from getting

what we deserve because of sin. God's grace, however, gives us what we do not deserve: the opportunity to be quickened by His Word with eternal life and to glorify God in this life.

The journey of grace is learning how to continually receive God's grace for every area of our lives. If we keep that in mind, we won't be concerned with how far we have yet to travel. With each step, we will be filled with awe at the goodness of the Savior, who said, "I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world."

Chapter One

WALKING IN GOD'S PROVISION

God will do what He says He will do in His Word. In Jeremiah 28:7, God says, “Nevertheless *hear thou this word that I speak in thine ears*, and in the ears of all the people.” Then He says in Ezekiel 12:25, “For I am the LORD: I will speak, and *the word that I shall speak shall come to pass*; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will *I say the word, and will perform it*, saith the Lord God.” God is saying that what He speaks will happen just as He says. It *shall* come to pass.

A major difference between Christians in every church service is that some believe God's Word when they hear it and are changed, while others come and listen, yet they remain in Adam (the old sin nature). They do not receive their place at Calvary, and they will not accept their death with Jesus Christ as a finished work (Galatians 2:20). Oh, they do accept Christ's death for

them, but they do not accept *their* death with Christ.

According to Jeremiah 30:12, those who choose to live in Adam cannot be cured. Their wounds and bruises are incurable. Adam will never be healed. As a result, these Christians will leave a church service condemning themselves and running down themselves. They foolishly forsake God's program of grace in the Bible.

The psalmist said in his despair, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word" (Psalm 119:25). Do you ever wonder why you are so miserable when you live in Adam? The answer is found when we look at God's Word—the Manual that outlines every detail of who we are and how we operate. Because He made us, only God knows the answers to the internal and external problems we face.

Let God Quicken You

Consider Isaiah 57:15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive [quicken] the heart of the contrite

ones.” According to this verse, Christians who are humble and contrite will be just as quickened—filled with spiritual life—now on earth as God is in heaven.

Every person born into this world lives, speaks, and moves in this world. Ultimately everyone will die. And unless their human spirit has been quickened by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, they will die without Christ (see Ephesians 2:1, 5). No one will be quickened unless he is first made contrite (broken) and humble. That is God’s plan. When we refuse His declared provision, we limit the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41).

Consider Your Options

If you choose to walk in the Spirit, you can have everything that you desire with God while you live in this world. But if you want to live in misery, you also have that option. The Christian who refuses to walk in the Spirit can choose to become morbidly depressed. It’s an option. He can choose to live with the effects of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That’s an option. The barroom, for those who want it to be, is an option. But some Christians have ruled out those options. They refuse to consider them because

they are not options for the Spirit-filled believer.

We have an option to *live* today! We have an option for joy, for power, for love, for thanksgiving, for hope, and for understanding. We have the option to make this the very best day of our lives because God made it. By God's grace we will only accept *His* options. And according to Ezekiel 12:25*b*, we let Him perform it; God does the work in us.

Accept the Gift of Grace

As Christians in the Church Age, we have a greater provision, a greater privilege, and a greater responsibility than believers in any other time. Acts 2:23 speaks of the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (the meeting of the Trinity in eternity past to discuss the eternal purpose and plan for the human race). Because they had foreknowledge of all human decisions, the Trinity decided to treat man only according to grace. Grace was to be revealed by the supernatural, unconditional love that sent Jesus Christ to the cross. He would bear our sins in His own body (1 Peter 2:24) and pay for our iniquities.

According to this plan, whoever believes upon Christ with all of his heart will have the record of his sins erased forever. But if a person

continues to sin after believing upon Jesus Christ, God will chastise him in love in order to restore fellowship. The chastisement is first mental and then emotional. If there is still no response, God intensifies the emotional chastisement and brings it into the physical realm through the central nervous system.

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. *There is a sin unto death*: I do not say he shall pray for it” (1 John 5:16). If necessary, God brings chastisement into domestic relationships, and eventually, the believer’s refusal to get right may culminate in scourging with the sin unto physical death. God takes the believer home to heaven early when they continue year after year without repentance or accepting pure grace.

Grace depends upon the character of God never upon the character of a man, and the whole purpose of chastisement is never to condemn a Christian, because the price for our sin was paid in full at Calvary; it is a finished work. Now, God’s purpose is to draw us with cords of love back to Himself. But the consequence of a decision to continue in sin results in a loss of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.*

It Is Finished

Romans 11:6 says, “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.” We can do *nothing* to merit God’s favor. Why do we struggle so much on this point?

In 1 Peter 5:10, God is described as the God of all grace. Jesus Christ finished the work when He paid for the sins of the world on Calvary. John 1:16 tells us that when we were saved, we all received of His fullness, “...and grace for grace.”

The word “fullness” in the Greek is *pleroma*. It means that Jesus Christ has done everything that He could ever do for us by shedding His precious blood, and there is nothing more He can do to add to it. God said in Isaiah 5:4a, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?”

“And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:16-17). Whenever we hear the name of Jesus Christ, we should remember that He is constantly revealing His mind about grace

and all He has done for us forever through the Finished Work.

Can you grasp this? Without even understanding it, using it, or revealing it, *we have already received the fullness of grace*. The problem is that we just don't understand how to apply it for deliverance, salvation, or healing, whether physical or emotional. That is why we need messages like this, that we would know Him.

**Read the first booklet in this series, A Judgment of Grace, by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998, and The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Two

UPHELD BY THE POWER
OF GRACE

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Grace has supreme authority because the Lord Jesus Christ is grace. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” That “all power” (omnipotence) is released in grace. God will never release His power to anyone except through grace.

When a person’s faith responds to grace, faith and grace are “married.” In this union, they have communion through the Word of God and love is manifested. The manifestation of this love goes deep inside a person no matter what condition they are in, regardless of whether they are neurotic, psychotic, born with a genetic defect, or suffer from a chemical imbalance. When the power of this love is internalized, it does a miraculous work because of the nature of grace

that is demonstrated by love and experienced through faith, while God's mercy rejoices against judgment.

Let me illustrate this principle. Recently, our church put on a play entitled, *Heaven or Hell: The Final Destiny*. One person who came to the play was an eighteen-year-old drug addict from the inner city who had been using cocaine and heroin for five years. During a scene about the White Throne Judgment showing the unsaved being cast into hell, the young man began to weep. At the end when the invitation for salvation was given, he raised his hand to receive Christ. Several days later, he sent me a letter saying, "I'm free. I am so *free*!"

Two couples who had been involved in sexual perversions came to the play on another night. I asked the person who was playing the role of the pastor in the play that night to address adultery, homosexuality, and lesbianism—which he did. All four people got saved.

Another man who attended the play was thirty-eight years old and had been drinking hard liquor since he was twelve or thirteen. When he heard about the grace of God and saw the scene with the angels at the Bema Seat, he said, "I don't want the alcohol any more. It

doesn't do a thing for me." He came forward weeping and was gloriously saved and delivered.

Grace is the most marvelous thing in all the world. There's nothing like it under heaven. It is unfathomable, incomprehensible, and overwhelming to the human mind. Grace is God's nature—it is who He is. It is God acting through Christ, on behalf of all sinners, at Calvary. That's where we find grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is how grace functions: through child-like faith.

Quickened by God's Grace

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:1-3).

This passage is saying that though we have been quickened, we, like all people, have wicked

old sin natures. In times past, we were spiritually dead, walking according to the course of the world system and Satan. Our conversation, or manner of living, was not right. By nature, we were just like Satan, who recreates his personality through people in the form of self-defense mechanisms.

“*But God*, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us...”—this applies to *everyone* including homosexuals, alcoholics, drug addicts, liars, and thieves—“...even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

“And hath raised us up together, and made us 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 2:4-7).

But God—! The first moment that we believe, God does these things for us, justifying us while we are yet ungodly (see Romans 4:5). Before our condition has changed one iota, grace has done it all.

Grace is a Free Gift

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:7-9, “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. 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; And *to make all men see* what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

The “fellowship of the mystery” in this passage refers to grace in me, grace in you, living, loving, and transcending every imperfection. Paul said that the “gift of the grace of God” was “given” to him. The verb “given” in the original is an aorist passive indicative, which means that the subject—Paul, as well as all believers—receives the action of grace dogmatically.

The phrase “to make all men see” (what is the fellowship of the mystery) is an aorist active infinitive in the Greek, pointing to God’s purpose in giving grace: to bring to light the fellowship of the mystery of grace.

Revealing Grace

Ephesians 3:10-12 continues, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places *might be known* by the church

the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”

The phrase, “might be known” is an aorist passive subjunctive. This means that the subject—the church—chooses to receive the action of God’s manifold wisdom. We *choose* to see what grace is in a man or woman by choosing to do more than just receive grace—we choose to absorb it, comprehend it, and live in it by faith. Then we become instruments of manifesting grace to a world that doesn’t know God. We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ to reveal grace and love to sinners in the world.

Grace is the authority of our victory, the badge of overcoming, and the transforming power to be continually renewed. The old things like lust, pride, and arrogance pass away, and grace comes inside to stabilize our faculties, making us brand new—edifying, creative, constructive, happy, and joyous—as God shares His life with sinners who have become saints.

Chapter Three

WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO GRACE

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (I Corinthians 3:9-17).

If a Christian is building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, he will receive gold, silver, and precious stones. If he lives as a carnal Christian, his work will be wood, hay, and stubble. “Gold” speaks of the divine word of Deity; “silver” speaks of the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit; and “precious stones” speaks of being a member in particular in the temple, the Body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:17; 1 Peter 2:5). “Wood” speaks of human works, a Christian working things out in his flesh; “hay” represents emotionalism; and “stubble” is hearing doctrine and knowing it intellectually but never experiencing it.

The Bema Seat Judgment is a result of the journey of God’s grace on earth trying the Body of Christ in heaven with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Everything about this judgment comes under the government, authority, and power of grace. And remember: God cannot deal with man apart from grace.

The Purpose for Grace

In the final analysis, we will be accountable to God for what we have done with the grace He has given us. God wants us to "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). He gave us grace so that we could grow. Grace has been given to us so that when we suffer, His strength will be made perfect in our weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9).

God gave us grace so that we could "...come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). He gave us grace so we could become great intercessors, praying through grace, weeping through grace, asking through grace, praising Him through grace, and loving Him through His perfect grace.

We have grace to suffer, so that if there is a problem in our family or friendships, we treat each one in grace. We must always deal with everything in the power of grace.

Paul said to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). God desires for us to become strong in the power of His grace.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am...” (1 Corinthians 15:10). God will look to see if we labored in His grace; to see if our marriage was established in grace. Was our conversation in grace?

“Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28). At the Bema Seat, God will ask, “Did you serve Me totally in grace? Were you obedient to grace? My grace saved you, but did it control you? Did it transform you? Did you manifest grace to others through the Holy Spirit?”

The Word of God says in 1 Peter 4:10, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” The word “manifold” means “on every side.” The purpose of God’s grace is for us to receive it and then just keep on giving it.

The Bema Seat is a grace judgment, not a sin judgment. It is based on what we did with the grace we received. The question will be, did grace become effective, working in us, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live quietly in doctrine in this present evil world? Did grace give us the mind of Christ and

produce God's value system in us?

God's Justice

Many Christians live in pettiness, moodiness, and negativity. Even those who have been saved for years need to have their emotions pampered because they have never grown in grace. They need approval because of a poor self-image and poor self-esteem. If they are not clean inside, they do not draw near to God to receive grace, but instead they withdraw. They need to get to know the God of all grace.

The Bible says in Isaiah 59:14-16 that "*judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. And the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.*

"And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor...."

What is judgment? The Lord's judgment is found in Isaiah 42:2-4: He did not lift up His voice—He didn't cry out nor cause His voice to be heard on the street. A bruised reed He would not break. A smoking flax He would not quench. He brought forth truth unto judgment. *He did*

not fail, neither did He get discouraged. And according to Isaiah 3:13, the Lord stands up and pleads for His people, and *He* judges His people.

God Pleads to Give Us Grace

In Proverbs 23:11, the Lord is a mighty Redeemer, and He pleads for the cause of His people; but what is He pleading?

Watch the progression: “Judgment is turned away backward....” There we see mercy rejoicing against judgment (James 2:13).

“...Justice stands afar off....” God desires to give us something that goes beyond justice.

“...Truth...” that is fallen in the street refers to grace in the Person of Jesus Christ, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14*b*), despised by the men He came to save.

“...Equity...”—God’s provision of mercy and grace for growing—“...cannot enter.”

“Yea, truth faileth....” But why does truth fail? Because people will not mix faith with what they hear. They will not realize what a miraculous story this is! This revelation can take a weary man who has had no sleep and fill him with power. It will fill a man with joy when he knows that he is justified by faith in Christ. He will have peace with God through Jesus Christ

—and by this faith we all stand.

This is what God is pleading. Because of grace, we can have access to the glory of God right now and rejoice for the future glory that is ours in heaven. But like any gift, it must be received.

Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain

“We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye *receive not the grace of God in vain*. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses...” (2 Corinthians 6:1-4).

Once again, *everything* about the Bema Seat judgment and the gain or loss of rewards is directly related to grace. We cannot stress this enough. Listen to what the apostle Paul goes on to say to the Corinthians in verses 11-12:

“Our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.” Paul was say-

ing, “Your emotions are damaged, not by me but because you would not receive grace.”

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). When a Christian fails the grace of God and doesn’t rebound, he will be troubled by a root of bitterness and his negative confession will begin to defile those around him.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Christ did not die on the cross alone. I died with Him, I was buried with Him and I was raised up with Him; and so were you. By the grace of God, I now live by His faith in me. “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21).

What can we do in response to this marvelous grace? We can only say, *Thank You*. This is why we give thanks in everything and for everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20). The praises that will go forth throughout all of eternity are the endless expressions of gratitude

from all the saints for this gift of grace.

Our Stewardship of Grace Exposed

At the Bema Seat, God is not going to expose a Christian's sins or iniquities. The Lord Jesus Christ will reveal the fact that He did everything for us and gave us the fullness of His grace, and He will expose where it was received in vain. God will expose whether we, as Christ's ambassadors in Satan's world, revealed the stewardship of grace or frustrated it. If we frustrated grace consistently, we will experience shame at the Bema Seat (see 1 John 2:28).

Christ will show each one of us the scars in His hands, His side, and His feet, and He will say, "I did it all for you; I paid for all of your sins. You know that is true, because the pastor I sent to you taught you these things. But you received My grace in vain. When the message I sent to deliver you in a certain area was preached, you became negative instead of letting Me turn you."

We need to take our minds off ourselves. God couldn't accept us in Adam, so He crucified us. The old sin nature is incurable, so death is the only remedy. And now we need to put our minds on Jesus Christ and grow. As we venture

forth together on this journey into grace, *know* that no man can take away what has been given to us by God.

CONCLUSION

Grace is a teacher. Grace never condemns, but it commends us through love and through our faith. Whether you are living in adultery, passivity, drug addition, or alcoholism—whatever the sin, come to God and let Him turn you and give you the gift of repentance to forsake your sins and never go back to them again.

Come out and be free today because God loves you. He is for you and He wants to use you as an instrument of grace to manifest His precious life. While we're on earth, on the journey of grace, God wants us to show His life by ministering grace to every person we can.

Father, in these days when everyone seems to be looking out for himself, teach us to be able ministers of Your grace. We cannot perform it in our flesh and our failure has left us so broken. Thank You for always coming again with a fresh revelation of Your perfect plan and provision through Your amazing grace. Amen.