



# THE GRACE OF GOD

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## PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

One of the meanings ascribed to *charis*, the Greek word for "grace," is "that which bestows or occasions pleasure, delight, or causes favorable regard." It is applied, for example, in classical Greek to bodily beauty (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 65), beautiful words (Homer, *Odyssey* VIII.175), the charm of song (Pindar, *Olympia* I.17-19), the sweetness of slumber (Euripides, *Orestes* 159), and the sweetness of life (*Ibid.*, 159).

Examples of the foregoing meaning in the New Testament are found in the following passages: "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give *grace* to them that hear" (Ephesians 4:29); "Let your speech be always with *grace*, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6). The idea expressed in these passages is that the speech of Christians should be so gracious and winsome, the opposite of corrupt speech, that it will cause favorable regard on the part of those who hear it. Instead of being degrading in its influence like corrupt speech, it is edifying and uplifting. See Proverbs 15:1; 25:11. When Christians speak with grace, to edify their hearers, they are following the example of their divine Master, whose speech is described in Luke 4:22 as "the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth."

*Charis* also means "the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, loving-kindness, good will generally." Examples of this meaning in classical Greek are found in Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* III.95, and Sophocles, *Ajax* 808. This meaning is also found in the papyri, where *charis* is rendered as "favor"; for example, "for I shall be most pleased to accept your commands as favors," "before some one compels them, and there is no longer favor extended to them."

The foregoing meaning is also found in the New Testament. Luke 1:30 refers to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as having "found favor with God." Luke 2:52 refers to Jesus as having "favor with God and men." Essentially the same idea concerning Jesus is found in Luke 2:40, "And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him" (R.S.V.). In Acts 7:46 David is referred to as one "who found favor in the sight of God."

Another use of *charis* pertains to the gratitude one feels for favors received. This meaning is illustrated in the following quotations from the papyri: "therefore ought we all to give thanks to all the gods," "if you are well, it would be as I wish, and much gratitude would be due to the gods," "thank heaven, there is no preconceived principle on your part," "then I too was faulty, but, thanks to God, not now." In a Christian document of the fourth century, a servant writes to his master

regarding the illness of his mistress, in which *charis* is used twice, translated as “thanks” and “gracious”: “May it be granted us to continue for ever to acknowledge our *thanks* to Him because He was *gracious* to us by preserving our mistress.”

Note the following New Testament passages in which *charis* is used in expressions of gratitude or thanks to Deity: “But *thanks* be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:17,18); “If I partake of *thankfulness*, why am I evil spoken of for that which I gave *thanks*?” (1 Corinthians 10:30); “But *thanks* be to God, who putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus” (2 Corinthians 8:16); “I *thank* him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord” (1 Timothy 1:12). How true indeed it is that when any faithful Christian, such as the apostle Paul, contemplates the wonderful grace of God given him through Jesus Christ, his heart will overflow with gratitude toward his divine Benefactor.

### ***The Highest Use of Grace***

The highest use that is made of *charis*, grace, in the Bible is in reference to the unmerited, undeserved favor that God bestows on man in saving and redeeming him from the guilt and bondage of sin, in conforming him to the likeness of His own Son, and in placing him in a state of eternal glory. The entire work of redemption, including all that God has done, all that He is doing, and all that He will do for the true believer, is one continuous act of grace. This thesis we shall elaborate upon and develop in the series of lessons before us. As someone has appropriately described the significance of divine grace in the New Testament: “Throughout the New Testament grace is the first thought and last—the atmosphere in which Christians live and move. Their message to the world is one of grace, and missionaries setting out to preach are recommended to the grace of God. When believers pray, it is at the throne of grace, and as they survey the past or anticipate the glorious end, everywhere they see grace preparing, executing, and pervading all.”

The entire teaching of the New Testament on the subject of grace focuses on Him who is the ultimate source of “every good gift and every perfect gift” (James 1:17), who is designated as the “God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10). Indeed, all the grace spoken of in the New Testament has its ultimate source in the Creator of all mankind, in whom “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). God is not just gracious in His tendency, or simply gracious by His nature; but He Himself is the reservoir, the home, the source, the supply, of grace, in all its manifestations.

### ***Exalting Grace***

It is high time that all who compose the Lord’s church give to the

wondrous, sovereign grace of their Creator and God the attention, emphasis, and praise that it justly deserves. Too often in our zeal to tell the world who we are and what we have done in submission to the will of God, we barely, if at all, mention the grace of God. But divine grace should never be a matter of secondary importance to those who have not only received the physical benefits of God's grace, but, above all, its spiritual benefits. When we fail to exalt divine grace, we tacitly fail to exalt both the bestower of that grace and the love that has prompted it. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and His grace bestowed on men is that love in action. Those redeemed souls who are continually aware of the love that God has for them, who realize that God has accepted them as His own without any merit at all on their part, will ever resound the exalted praises of His grace. In deep humility they will apply the words of Paul to themselves: "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). They can reverently offer the prayer, "By thy grace, O God, in the past, I have been what I have been; and by thy grace I desire in the future to be what thou wilt have me to be. Glorify thyself, and I shall be satisfied."

*From the time they were first saved, through all the changes of life in their submission to the will of God, to their final redemption in heaven, every faithful child of God will glorify and praise the unsearchable riches of God's wondrous grace.*

### ***The Gospel of Grace***

In truth, so significant is the grace of God as displayed in the New Testament that it is considered as being virtually synonymous with the gospel, the message of glad tidings in Jesus Christ the Saviour. Evidently, Paul had this in mind when he said to the elders of the church at Ephesus: "But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify *the gospel of the grace of God*" (Acts 20:24). That which so forcibly struck the apostle was that the gospel is a message of grace, the good news of God's unmerited favor in the Saviour Jesus Christ. And it is also noteworthy that in this same message of the apostle to the Ephesian elders, the gospel is designated as "the word of his grace" (verse 32). See Acts 14:3.

Concerning "the gospel of the grace of God," C. H. Spurgeon observed, "In these days that word 'grace' is not often heard; we hear of moral duties, and scientific adjustments, and human progress. But grace is the essence of the gospel, the one hope of this fallen world, the sole comfort of saints looking forward to glory. The gospel is the good news of grace."

Since the gospel and divine grace are virtually synonymous, it is evident that to bear testimony to the gospel, to preach the divine word, is to proclaim the grace of God. Preaching and teaching that fail to feature, stress, emphasize, and exalt God's grace are not *gospel* preach-

ing and teaching. Members of the body of Christ, the church, have been quick to call down God's anathema on false teachers who fail to tell sinners the scriptural response they are to make to the gospel, but what about the divine condemnation that rests upon those who fail to stress in their teaching the very sum and substance of the gospel message, the grace of God? Those who boast of loyally proclaiming the truth, the word of God, the gospel, but whose preaching has little or nothing to say about divine grace, are not *gospel* preachers. Theirs is a perverted gospel, not the gospel of the grace of God. They would do well to consider the warning Paul gives those who would "pervert the gospel of Christ": "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1:7-9).

It is significant that in the context of this warning given to those who would pervert the gospel, Paul refers to Christians as being "called in the grace of Christ" (verse 6). The fact, then, of Christians being called by God through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14) is due to the divine grace bestowed on them. How, then, can they possibly understand the gospel and faithfully proclaim it without giving due emphasis to the divine grace that is its sum and substance?

Further reference to the gospel as being the message of God's grace is given in Colossians 1:5,6, ". . . the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth." Notice that those who heard and knew "the grace of God in truth" had heard "the truth of the gospel," which had come unto them. This means that those who preached to them had been faithful in proclaiming God's grace as the very essence of the message of glad tidings, the gospel.

### ***Grace in the Old Testament***

Although the ostensible purpose of this series of lessons is to study the display of grace as revealed in the New Testament, we must recognize that divine grace is also displayed in the Old Testament. Answering to the Greek *charis* of the New Testament is the Hebrew *chen* of the Old Testament. Cf. the parallel passages James 4:6 and Proverbs 3:34, where grace in the former is from *charis* and in the latter from *chen*. Rendered both as "favor" and "grace," *chen* is used approximately fifty-five times in the Old Testament. It is sometimes used in regards to the favor which men granted to each other. But in its highest use it designates the grace which God granted to men: Two examples of its use are found in the following passages: "But Noah found *favor* in the eyes of Jehovah" (Genesis 6:8); "For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield: Jehovah will give *grace* and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that

walk uprightly. O Jehovah of hosts, Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Psalms 84:11,12).

Throughout the entire Old Testament we see the display of God's favor or grace extended to those who trusted in Him, but never to the extent of complete and full salvation. This latter display of divine grace can only be found in the New Testament, set forth in the gospel of Christ. However, the Old Testament does speak prophetically of the gospel of the grace of God: "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the *grace* that should come unto you: searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the *gospel* unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12). See Isaiah 53:1-6; John 5:39.

The prophecies concerning "the grace that should come unto you," of which Peter speaks, have indeed been fulfilled in the gospel of Christ, which is the gospel of grace, the great theme of the New Testament.

In the lessons to follow, space permitting, let us delve into the depths and beauties of the grace of God that saves men from their sins, that keeps, sustains, and strengthens them as they live for Christ, and that finally gives them the glories of their heavenly home. Such a study, reverently and seriously entered into, is calculated to deepen and enhance our appreciation of God's sovereign grace, thus to draw us closer to Him who is our Creator and Father.

### Questions

1. Discuss the use of *charis* in reference to the speech of Christians.
2. What is the meaning of *charis* in such passages as Luke 1:30; 2:52; etc.?
3. Discuss the use of *charis* in the New Testament to denote expressions of gratitude or thanks to Deity.
4. What is the highest use made of *charis* in the New Testament?
5. Why should Christians give to God's grace the attention, emphasis, and praise that it justly deserves?
6. Why is the message of glad tidings in Christ called "the gospel of the grace of God"?
7. Discuss the anathema resting on those claiming to be gospel preachers who fail to proclaim the grace of God, which is the sum and substance of the gospel.
8. Discuss the display of grace in the Old Testament, especially noting Peter's reference to the prophetic utterances concerning the gospel of God's grace.



### THE NEED OF GRACE

The grace of God is predicated on man's need of salvation, which need in turn is predicated on his lost condition in sin. Indeed, the whole scheme of redemption, the entirety of the gospel of grace, has as its basic assumption the sinful condition of man. Were it not for his sins, he would have no need of God's unmerited favor or grace, but would stand approved of God on his own merits. The opposite of unmerited favor is merited reward; but, as we shall further discuss in this series of lessons, man can never merit salvation. He must depend entirely on the unmerited favor of God. Thus such passages as Romans 3:23,24 display grace against the background of sin: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The word "freely" here is from the Greek *dorean*, meaning "gratis, gratuitously." The sinner, who can never merit salvation, receives justification from the gracious God *gratuitously*—nothing to pay for it.

This display of grace against the background of sin is also portrayed in the antithetical statement of Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Greek word for "free gift" is *charisma*, a form of the word rendered as grace, literally meaning "grace-gift or unmerited gift." It is obvious that accountable souls have only two choices to make: either the just deserts of sin, death, or the grace-gift of God, eternal life. If anyone, then, seeks for eternal life other than by God's grace, he is doomed to absolute failure.

It is only as we view the tragedy of man's lost condition in sin that we can recognize the majesty of God's grace and the sinner's need of that grace in deliverance from the guilt and bondage of sin. The grace of God is meaningless to anyone who fails to see both the fact and the enormity of man's sins. Let us, then, give due emphasis to the significance of sin so that we can recognize how dire the sinner's need is of the grace that delivers from sin.

#### *The Nature of Sin*

The principal Greek word translated as sin in the New Testament is *hamartia*, defined as "a missing of the mark," which is precisely what sin is.

Sin is missing the mark in regard to the law of God: "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4).

Sin is missing the mark in regard to righteousness: "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17).

Sin is missing the mark in regard to the glory of God, who is altogether

righteous: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Sin is essentially the setting aside of God and His will, to live in dependence on oneself. It is essentially self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness. The first human couple, Adam and Eve, sinned because of their independence of God, with their desire to do as they pleased rather than as God pleased. And this dependence on self rather than on God is to refuse to honor and glorify Him as God. That is the import of Paul's indictment of sinful mankind in Romans 1:20-22, 28-32: "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools . . . And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them."

In refusing to honor and glorify God, sinful man has glorified himself and his own works. This spirit of self-glorification is exemplified by Nebuchadnezzar. Walking through his palace one day, he exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).

What is known as the new morality is in reality the old immorality, the attitude that denies allegiance to any will and person other than one's own will and person. This so-called new morality dethrones God and enthrones self. Its slogan "doing one's own thing" simply means doing as one pleases, not as God pleases. Thus such a philosophy is entirely foreign to the Biblical concept of sin.

When we realize how widespread this false philosophy is, we can well understand the basic reason for the chaotic condition of modern society, which has generally rejected God and His supreme right to rule in the lives of men. Contemporary society, on the brink of ruin, reminds us of an especially chaotic period in Jewish history when it was said that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). History has certainly repeated itself time and time again in man's glorification of himself rather than of God. Contemporary society is sowing the wind in its rejection of God and His will, and if it continues on its present downward course it will eventually reap the whirlwind in its own destruction.

Summing up the matter, the sinner is one who by his acts of lawlessness or unrighteousness has missed the true mark of life: the glory, righteousness, and approbation of his Creator. This unhappy, tragic condition can only be rectified by the grace of God.

### ***The Universality of Sin***

The word of God plainly reckons every accountable person as a sinner—as having missed the true mark of life, as guilty before the throne of divine justice: “. . . for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one . . . for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:9, 10,22,23); “But the scripture shut up all things under sin” (Galatians 3:22). No rational person can rightfully plead not guilty before God. Whether he has sinned little or much, whatever may be the nature of his transgressions of God’s law, he is a *sinner*, one who has missed the true mark of life. See James 2:11. As David Brown observed, “Though men differ greatly in the *nature* and *extent* of their sinfulness, there is absolutely no difference between the best and worst of men, in the *fact* that ‘all have sinned,’ and so underlie the wrath of God.” Cf. 1 John 1:8,10.

*When we recognize the sinful condition of the whole creation, we can readily understand the need that the whole creation has of the gospel of God’s grace (Mark 16:15).*

### ***The Consequences of Sin***

The wonderful grace of God can only assume the majesty it deserves when we contrast it with the awful consequences of sin. Men have always reaped as they have sown in regard to their sins (Galatians 6:7,8). Sin has always “received a just recompense of reward” (Hebrews 2:2). It is always eventually followed by some form of retribution. Whatever pleasure it brings can only be “for a season” (Hebrews 11:25). That it must be suffered for is recognized by all observant, fair-minded individuals. We see the painful physical consequences of sin everywhere: in wars, in crime, in poverty and hunger, in diseased, maimed, and broken bodies. But, above all, the worst suffering that is the consequence of sin is “the wrath of God . . . revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18). This is the death that Paul designates as “the wages of sin.” See 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 21:8.

We need to recognize how great indeed is the tragedy of being lost in sin, which must result in the eventual consequence of eternal death unless forgiveness is effected through the grace of God. See Luke 15:4; 19:10; 2 Corinthians 4:3. Men are lost in sin because they have gone astray, being separated from God: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6); “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have

hid his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

In their lost condition, men are portrayed by Jesus as "distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). The Greek word here for "distressed" literally means "flayed, torn, and mangled." Sin does indeed leave its victims full of wounds and bruises and festering sores. And sinners are not only lacerated, flayed, and torn, but they are also "scattered." And again the word "scattered" does not do full justice to the Greek. The word literally means "thrown down, prostrate." And that is how Jesus also sees sinners: trampled down, prostrate, unable to rise—"sick and helpless, and ready to die." For sin not only tears and mangles its victims, but it also tramples on them. It reduces them to helplessness and despair. It robs them of the power to rise. It means disablement as well as disfigurement. And this tragic condition is bound to end in eternal death unless rescue comes through the grace of God.

In their lost condition, men are in spiritual darkness (Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9), in spiritual bondage (Romans 6:6), and in spiritual sickness (Mark 2:17). But through divine grace they can be returned to God, to be delivered out of their spiritual darkness, bondage, and sickness. That is the wonderful message of hope held out to every sinner by the gospel of the grace of God, which we shall elaborate upon in this series of lessons. For as powerful as sin is in the lives of men, God's grace is more powerful—even as God Himself is more powerful than Satan.

Paul declared, "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20,21). The reference here is expressly to sin abounding under the economy of the law of Moses, but sin does indeed abound also today in the lives of sinners everywhere. The course of every sinner's life is downward and worse, not upward and better. But however deeply any sinner may sink into the quagmire of sin, no matter how dire the consequences of sin may be in his life, the grace of God has all power to deliver him from the guilt and influence of sin and to direct his steps in the way of life everlasting. That is the significance of the phrase "abound more exceedingly," which is translated from a single Greek word, *hyperperisseuo*, literally meaning "to be overabundant." It is used in only one other New Testament passage, 2 Corinthians 7:4, where the inspired writer says, "I *overflow* with joy in all our affliction." The grace of God is so overabundant, so overflowing, that sin must go down to defeat when that grace is received by any sinner. The advent of the gospel was indeed the advent of good news because it signified the defeat of sin in the lives of all who would accept this glorious message of God's grace.

### **Conviction of Sin**

No man can possibly be desirous of receiving the grace of God that

grants deliverance from sin who is not convicted of the grave reality of sin in his life, who does not recognize the tragic consequences of sin culminating in the eternal death of the fiery lake. Thus any discussion dealing with the grace of God must be calculated to bring to sinful men an acute awareness of their need of divine grace borne out of their dire predicament in sin. Such a discussion must therefore coincide with the ministry of the Holy Spirit to sinners: "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin . . ." (John 16:8). This convicting power of the Spirit can only be found in the revelation that He has inspired, the word of God. See Acts 2:36,37. It is obvious, then, that preaching and teaching which does not stress the sinner's need of God's grace because of the fact and enormity of sin in his life, is not true to the Spirit-inspired word of God, the gospel. Such preaching and teaching is not true to the gospel because the gospel is predicated on the sinner's need of divine grace due to his lost condition in sin. He who would truly and faithfully proclaim the gospel must declare in no uncertain terms to accountable souls the deep tragedy of their sinful condition, with the loving plea that in God's grace they can find all the power they need for deliverance from their sins.

We must recognize, however, that the convicting power of the Holy Spirit through the divine word is not irresistible. The sinner can continue to live the self-life, to choose his own way, in spite of all the pleadings of the divine word to the contrary. The Holy Spirit does not force sinners to see the error of their ways and the hell-bound direction of their lives. But when any person accepts what the Bible has to say about the nature, universality, and consequences of sin, to humbly and contritely make the necessary application to himself, he will then, and only then, realize his urgent need of the saving grace of God.

T. G. Selby said, "The conviction of sin is the groundwork of all religious belief, and there can be no genuine consciousness of divine things which does not begin here. Remember in what an awful state the man is who lacks this new sense of sin. If the natural senses were blotted out, a man would walk into some death-trap or other in less than twenty-four hours. And when a man lacks these spiritual senses, is the peril less tragic, think you? The highest thing that the love of God or man can seek for you is that you may have this sense of sin. Has it been born within you? Do you possess this sign of a dawning spiritual life?"

### Questions

1. Why is the whole scheme of redemption, the entirety of the gospel of grace, based on the assumption of man's sinful condition?
2. Why is sin appropriately designated by the word *harmartia*, meaning "missing the mark"?
3. Discuss sin as the glorification of self rather than of God.

4. Discuss the universality of sin.
5. What are some of the temporal consequences of sin? What is the eternal consequence of sin?
6. Discuss sinners as "distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd," in spiritual darkness, in spiritual bondage, and in spiritual sickness.
7. Why must sin go down in defeat when God's grace is accepted by any sinner?
8. Before any sinner can possibly receive, let alone desire, God's grace, why is it necessary that he be convicted of his sins?

## THE MEANS OF GRACE (1)

The gospel reveals the great thesis that Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, is the means or channel of the grace through which men are delivered from the guilt, bondage, and death of sin. See Ephesians 2:7; 1 Timothy 1:15; Mark 16:15. Hebrews 2:9 declares, ". . . Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man." As we previously noted, the divine word declares that all men are sinners, under divine condemnation. But now we see that the divine word also declares that the gift of God's grace, Jesus Christ, who died for all men, is calculated to be as universal in His life-giving power as sin is in its death-giving power. No sinner is excluded from the grace-gift Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of the entire world. Black men, white men, red men, yellow men, brown men—men of every race—are included in the scope of Christ's saving mission of grace to this lost world. "For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be borne in its own times" (1 Timothy 2:5); ". . . Jesus Christ, the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1,2).

We are not to conclude, however, from the foregoing passages that because the crucified Saviour is the means of God's grace for all men, it necessarily follows that all will be saved. The doctrine of universal salvation is neither remotely taught in these passages nor anywhere else in the Bible. Christ did indeed taste of death for every man by the super-abundant grace of God, but that does not mean that every man accepts Him as his sin-offering. The fact that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11), does not mean that all men will receive this salvation. As James Hastings observed, "The word which Paul employs—for it is *one* in the original which is rendered in the Authorized Version by the three 'that bringeth salvation,'—describes not an actuality, but a potentiality and a possibility. The aim and purpose, not the realized effect, is what is pointed out in this great word of the text . . . If the medicine stands on the shelf, in the bottle with the stopper in, the sick man will not be cured. That is not the fault of the medicine; it is a panacea, but no remedy can work where it is not applied. Thus the universality of the gift, the universal potency of the gift, is not the slightest degree affected by the fact that, where it is not taken, its benefits are not realized."

Looking again at Hebrews 2:9, we note that the very fact that the gift of God's Son is by His grace means that this most important and significant of all gifts is a favor offered to men that is entirely unmerited by them. It was not by any claim that mankind had on God that caused

Him to send His Son to die upon the cross, but it was entirely by His special, sovereign grace. Thus we must see that not only is salvation given by God's unmerited favor, but also the means of that salvation. Both the fact and the means of our salvation are wholly and entirely owing to the grace of God in Christ, not to any of our deserving. No man can even remotely deserve the death of Christ on his behalf, nor the salvation to be received through that death.

### ***Motivation for Grace***

In the giving of His blessed Son to taste of death for every man, God has expressed the basic motivation for His grace: the love He has for all mankind. That "grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6) is but the expression of the infinite love He has for us: "But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8); "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9,10).

In perhaps the most familiar text of the Bible, we read of the infinite magnitude of God's love for all mankind: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him" (John 3:16,17). This declaration does not simply say that God gave His Son because He loves us, but because He *so* loves us. The heart of this magnificent statement is the *measure* that it supplies of the eternal love that motivates the saving grace of God. In the giving of His beloved Son, God made the supreme sacrifice in that He really gave all that He had to give, Himself: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). If God so loved this guilty world that He would sacrifice of Himself to send His Son to die on the cross, then what an unfathomable depth of grace it has motivated. For the object of His love is a world laid low by sin, a world gone astray from Him and His righteousness. Great love always expresses itself in unmerited favor bestowed on its objects. When even we weak, fallible human beings love someone deeply, we desire to bestow gifts on him that are entirely gratuitous.

Paul declares that the salvation to be received by grace, which is given through the gift of God's Son, is also motivated by God's great love: "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved) . . ." (Ephesians 2:4,5). In the context of this passage, the apostle states that "in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (verse 7). Notice that God's *great* love is



expressed in the *exceeding riches* of His grace. The grace that can “save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him [Christ]” (Hebrews 7:25) is the natural, inevitable expression of the love that knows no bounds in its concern for the spiritual welfare of all men. The merciful God of all kindness who *so* loved the world in giving it a Saviour desires, above all else, man’s deliverance from sin, which desire is fulfilled in His sovereign grace. “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3,4). Cf. 2 Peter 3:9.

### ***The Grace of Christ***

So important is Jesus Christ as the means of God’s saving grace that we will do well to consider at some length the following pertinent passages which directly associate grace with Him:

*“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me. For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:14-17).*

First, John associates grace with Christ as the One “full of grace and truth.” He who is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), in whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9), contains the fulness of divine grace, plenteous grace to save the world. As the One who perfectly reflects the glory of the Father, every attribute of the Father is also characteristic of Him. God’s love prompted Him to send His Son to the world, and the Son’s love prompted Him to willingly undertake this redeeming mission (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2). It is God’s grace that expresses His love in delivering men from sin, and it is Christ’s grace that expresses His love in effecting this grand deliverance.

Samuel Summes observed, “*Jesus Christ, the fountain of grace*:—The glory of the Mediator consisted not in His wisdom, by whom He knew what was in man—nor in His power, to which a material universe rendered homage—but in His grace, in the kindness of His heart, in the complete and perfect benevolence of His character. In this respect, He was ‘the brightness of His Father’s glory.’ His heart was an overflowing fountain of love, a plenary spring of goodness, which perpetually sent forth streams of grace, to bless a barren and desert world. . . . His benevolent mind contemplated a world lost and ruined by sin; a whole race of creatures who were in rebellion against God, and exposed to the penalties of a just and righteous law. . . . So strong was His kindness, so intense His love, so determined His compassion, that He submitted to the agonizing, the ignominious death of the cross, to accomplish the salvation of sinners.”

The Old Testament phrase that answers to “grace and truth” is “mercy and truth,” denoting the entire fruit of God’s love toward sinners, which existed only in promise before Christ’s advent, but in Christ found its fulfillment. See Isaiah 55:3; Acts 13:34. “In His person all that Grace and Truth which has been floating so long in shadowy forms, and darting into the souls of the poor and needy in broken beams, took everlasting possession of human flesh and filled it full” (David Brown).

Second, John associates “his fulness we all received” with “grace for grace.” Many interpretations of this latter phrase have been proposed. The meaning probably stresses the abundance of grace that men receive from Him who is full of grace, in whom are all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). John thus tacitly affirms that in Christ we receive blessing upon blessing through His grace, superior to all the blessings that had been under the law (cf. “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”) and superior to all the blessings that unregenerate men enjoy in this world. These blessings through Christ’s grace consist of salvation, redemption, justification, protection, peace, hope, love, the heavenly inheritance, etc. And it is certainly true that those who have been saved by grace will find increasingly greater blessings through that grace as they “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6.

*“But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they” (Acts 15:11).*

This utterance of the apostle Peter at the Council of Jerusalem affirms that salvation for both “we,” the Jews, and “they,” the Gentiles, is by the unmerited favor of Jesus Christ, not by keeping any of the ceremonies of the law of Moses. Again we see the emphasis made in the New Testament concerning the salvation which has been decreed by the grace of God as being wrought through the grace of His only begotten Son, who is our only Saviour from sin and through whom alone we finally can be saved in heaven (Acts 4:12; John 14:1-6).

*“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).*

In the context of this passage, Paul is urging the Corinthians saints to give liberally of their material means for the poor saints in Judaea. As an incitement to such liberality, the apostle refers to the great generosity of the Saviour, who gave up the riches of heaven to make possible the enrichment of sinners through His earthly, redeeming ministry. Paul affirms that this voluntary impoverishment of the Lord is His *grace*; that is, His perfect, unmerited favor which expresses His perfect love.

The complete unselfishness and generosity of Christ’s saving mission of grace to the world is portrayed in Philippians 2:5-8, “. . . Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking

the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." Such untold, wondrous grace is beyond our finite minds to completely understand. Yet we cannot even remotely grasp the meaning of God's plan to deliver men from the guilt and death of sin unless we recognize the magnitude of Christ's grace in divesting Himself of all His heavenly prerogatives and glory, to come to this world and live among men as a man Himself, and to die the ignominious death of the cross. And all this was done "for your sakes," for the sake of undeserving sinners who have no just claim at all on divine favor. When we contemplate our own unworthiness in contrast to the love and grace of Christ shown in His earthly condescension and poverty, we cannot fail to appreciate what Christ truly means to us.

"'For your sakes' the Son of God took into union with Himself our nature, without which He could not have suffered and died. 'He became poor.' The poverty of man is reckoned in proportion to the position of affluence from which he has come down. When the Christ of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, was forsaken by His Father, deserted by His friends, and let alone to suffer 'for your sakes,' that was the direst poverty that was ever known. See your Lord beneath the olives of Gethsemane. Then see Him before Herod, Pilate, and Caiaphas. Behold Him, as they lift Him up to suffer the death of the Cross! All this Christ suffered 'for your sakes.' What love and gratitude ought to fill your heart as you think of all Jesus bore on your behalf!" (C. H. Spurgeon).

### Questions

1. Discuss Jesus Christ as the channel of God's grace for *all* men.
2. Why do we know that universal salvation is not taught in such passages as 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1,2; Titus 2:11?
3. Discuss God's favor in the giving of His Son as being entirely *unmerited*.
4. Discuss the love of God as the motivation for both the gift of His Son and the salvation received through that gift.
5. Discuss Jesus Christ as being "full of grace and truth," through whose fulness we receive "grace for grace."
6. What is meant by the phrase "saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus"?
7. Discuss the grace of Christ in leaving the riches of heaven to come to this world in order to give men the riches of His salvation.

### THE MEANS OF GRACE (2)

In this lesson and the one to follow, we shall delve into the meaning of the grace that delivers men from sin by means of the sin-offering Jesus Christ. In so doing, we shall consider the key words in the New Testament that pertain to this phase of our study.

#### *Salvation*

In previous lessons we have made several references to the fact of salvation as being involved in the work of divine grace on the sinner's behalf. However, so significant is the teaching of the New Testament concerning the relationship of grace to salvation that it deserves our special consideration and attention.

The New Testament passages that directly associate salvation with grace are the following: "But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they" (Acts 15:11); "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Ephesians 2:4-9); ". . . God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal" (2 Timothy 1:8,9); "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11); "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (1 Peter 1:10).

In these passages we find references both to the grace that saves from sin and the grace that saves eternally in heaven. The reader is requested to carefully study each of these references in its context.

Now let us note the meaning of the word "salvation," translated in the New Testament from the Greek *soteria*, meaning "deliverance, preservation, a safe return, salvation." The word best describing the antithesis of salvation, *soteria*, is "lost." Thus we can understand why the mission of Jesus to the world is described as "to seek and to *save* that which was *lost*" (Luke 19:10). In the lost state of sin, man has forfeited all rights of acceptance to God. But God's unmerited favor grants salvation, deliverance, a safe return, from this tragic condition through the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ, man's only Saviour. See Matthew 1:21; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 1:15. When anyone thus accepts Christ as his Saviour, he enjoys the same acceptance to God that he had

before he went astray in sin. And this acceptance to God, unless forfeited by unfaithfulness to Him, will have its final fruition in the preservation, salvation, of heaven.

### **Calling**

The New Testament also refers to the work of divine grace on the sinner's behalf, which is wrought through Christ, as a *calling*. There are four passages in the New Testament that expressly deal with this concept, which we shall briefly comment upon.

*"I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel"* (Galatians 1:6). The Greek word for "called" in this passage, as well as in the other passages under consideration, is *kaleo*, meaning "to call, invite." Its principal use in the New Testament pertains to the divine call or invitation to partake of the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus. In this passage the grace of Christ is considered as the element in which, or the instrument by which, God calls us to salvation. "The grace of Christ' is Christ's gratuitously purchased and bestowed justification, reconciliation and eternal life" (A. R. Fausset).

*"But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles . . ."* (Galatians 1:15,16). In this passage Paul refers to the personal call he received from God through His grace. He who had been a persecutor of the church, only deserving eternal condemnation at the hands of a just God, rejoiced that he had received the divine call or invitation through God's unmerited favor to know Christ Jesus as his Saviour, consequently to proclaim Him to the Gentile world as the only means of receiving God's saving grace.

In 1 Timothy 1:12-15 the apostle declared, "I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service; though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to have sinners; of whom I am chief: howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy . . ." See Mark 2:17.

*" . . . God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling . . . according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal"* (2 Timothy 1:8,9). In this particular passage, which we previously quoted in connection with our discussion of salvation, a distinction is made between our salvation and our calling, both of which are through God's grace by means of Jesus Christ. The calling in this case, which in its own nature is holy, is to a life of holiness, which, as we shall later emphasize in this series of lessons, is to

be the result of our salvation. Thus we can see that God's unmerited favor not only calls us *out* of sin but also *into* righteousness or holiness. It is His *unmerited* favor because we neither deserve to be delivered from the guilt and curse of sin nor to enjoy the blessings involved in a life of holiness, of partaking of the divine nature.

"*And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ . . .*" (1 Peter 5:10). When men are called out of sin, they are not only called or invited to a life of holiness but also to the eternal glory of heaven. As they neither deserve their calling from sin, neither do they deserve their calling to eternal glory. From the beginning to the end, it is all of God's grace and none of man's merits. And as Christ is the means of God's grace in calling us out of sin into a life of holiness, so also He is the means of God's grace that calls or invites us to our heavenly destiny. Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

### **Election**

A scriptural concept associated with our salvation and calling by God's grace is that of election. Note Romans 11:5, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." This reference is to the saved Jews, who were separated from their unbelieving compatriots. But the principle expressed in the concept denoted by the phrase "according to the election of grace" applies to all who come to Christ, Gentiles as well as Jews. The word for election in the Greek is *ekloge*, denoting "a picking out, selection, then, that which is chosen" (W. E. Vine). When any sinner answers the gospel call to come to Christ, he is then said to be elected by grace; that is, chosen, picked out, selected by God's unmerited favor to be saved from his sins, to live a life of holiness, and to inherit eternal life in heaven. And as our salvation and calling are in Christ, so also is our election in Him. Cf. Ephesians 1:4, where in the phrase "chosen in him" the word "chosen" is from the Greek *eklektos*, a form of the word rendered as election.

### **Justification**

The two New Testament passages that expressly relate justification to grace are the following: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24); "That, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). Whatever the meaning of justification may be, Paul affirms that we get it "freely"—without charge, nothing to pay—and that it is by God's unmerited favor, received entirely separate from any human merit.

The word "justified" in these passages is from the Greek *dikaioo*, meaning "to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such he ought to be . . . to declare guiltless one accused or who may be accused, acquit of a charge or reproach . . . to judge, declare, pronounce righteous,

and therefore acceptable. . . . Especially it is so used, in the technical phraseology of Paul, respecting God who judges and declares such men as put faith in Christ to be righteous and acceptable to him, and accordingly fit to receive pardon for their sins and eternal life" (J. H. Thayer).

Because of their sins men are not righteous in themselves, but when they are justified by God's grace they are declared to be righteous. Indeed, the word "righteousness" in the New Testament, which pertains to the state of the justified person, comes from the same Greek root as justification: *dikaioisune*.

This righteousness one enjoys when he is justified by divine grace is the very righteousness of God Himself. Remember, God's righteousness is the perfect standard that man has deviated from in his sins. As Herman Cremer expressed it, "Righteousness in the biblical sense is a condition of rightness the standard of which is God, which is estimated according to the divine standard, which shows itself in behavior conformable to God, and has to do above all things with its relation to God, and with Him." Thus the sinner—who has not shown behavior conformable to God, who has not walked with Him, whose life is not estimated according to the divine standard—is justified when all the guilt of sin has been removed from him so that he stands innocent and uncondemned, with God bestowing upon him a positive righteousness that is conformable to His righteousness.

We can see that justification in its New Testament sense is a legal concept. The altogether righteous God is the Judge. In Romans 3:26 He is referred to as "just [righteous], and the justifier of him that hath faith in Christ." See Romans 8:33. Sinful man is the defendant, the guilty party. God's righteousness as expressed in His holy law has been broken by sinful man. Being righteous, God cannot simply overlook man's sins. The just demands of His holy law must be perfectly satisfied. But God is not only just, He is also merciful (Ephesians 2:4). He loves man and desires his salvation. So through the grace-gift Christ, He has provided the means by which the sinner can be justified, declared righteous, absolved of all guilt: "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Truly in Christ sinners are cleared of every charge because of God's mercy; and in Him also God's justice is thoroughly vindicated, the just demands of His law being perfectly satisfied.

The saving ministry of Jesus Christ as the means of God's grace to justify sinners is set forth in Romans 5:15-21, which the reader is requested to carefully study: "But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of

the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The justification made possible through God's grace is by the blood which was shed in the Saviour's death: "But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him" (Romans 5:8,9). When the blood of Christ takes away one's sins (Matthew 26:28), he is then justified, declared innocent and righteous by the divine Judge. Thus to be forgiven of one's sins by the cleansing power of the Saviour's blood is equivalent to being justified—to be as the righteous God: holy, without sin. Cf. Hebrews 9:14.

The importance of the Lord's resurrection in the plan of God's grace to justify sinners is expressed in Romans 4:24,25, ". . . Jesus our Lord . . . who was delivered for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification." Even though our justification depends on the death of Christ, in which His blood was shed to take away our sins, His death is inefficacious without His resurrection. It was necessary that He conquer death in His resurrection so that He could return to heaven and there put His blood on the heavenly mercy seat as the divinely acceptable means of justifying sinners. That, in substance, is the affirmation of Hebrews 9:22-26, ". . . apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." See Hebrews 9:11-14.

### Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word "salvation," from the Greek *soteria*? Discuss the meaning of divine grace as it saves men from their lost state in sin through the sin-offering Christ.



2. What is the principal use made of the word *kaleo*, to call, in the New Testament?
3. Discuss the personal call that Paul received from Christ, which he refers to in Galatians 1:15,16.
4. Discuss the call that men receive through grace by means of the Saviour as being not only out of sin, but also into righteousness and eternal glory.
5. What is the meaning of the word *ekloge*, election? Discuss the principle expressed in the phrase "election of grace."
6. What is meant by justification through grace being received freely?
7. What is the meaning of the word "justification," from the Greek *dikaioo*, as it is used in the New Testament?
8. Discuss the New Testament relationship of *dikaioo*, justification, and *dikaiosune*, righteousness.
9. Discuss justification in its New Testament sense as a legal concept.
10. What is the significance of Christ's blood and resurrection in regard to justification?

## THE MEANS OF GRACE (3)

Another key word associated with the grace that delivers men from sin by means of the sin-offering Christ is "reconciliation." Carefully note the use of this word in the context of 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; 6:1, "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

The word "reconcile" in this passage is translated from the Greek *katallasso*, which "properly denotes to change, exchange (especially of money); hence, of persons, to change from enmity to friendship, to reconcile. With regard to this relationship between God and man, the use of this and connected words shows that primarily reconciliation is what God accomplishes, exercising His grace towards sinful man on the ground of the death of Christ in propitiatory sacrifice under the judgment due to sin, 2 Cor. 5:19, where both the verb and the noun are used. By reason of this men in their sinful condition and alienation from God are invited to be reconciled to Him; that is to say, to change their attitude and accept the provision God has made, whereby their sins can be remitted and they themselves justified in His sight in Christ" (W. E. Vine).

Expressly portrayed in Colossians 1:21,22 is this picture of sinful man, at enmity with God, being reconciled to Him: "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death. . ." The Greek word here for "reconciled" is *apokatallatto*, a stronger form than *katallasso*, emphasizing the completeness of the change from a state of sin to that of justification or righteousness through the death of Christ.

Romans 5:10 portrays the picture in another way: "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." The word "enemies" here not only expresses the hostility of sinners toward God, but it also implies that they are under condemnation. This tragic condition is rectified by the death of God's Son. Thus those who come to Christ "receive the reconciliation." The Authorized Version's rendering here of "atonement" is incorrect. Strictly speaking, atonement is the

offering of Christ Himself under divine judgment upon sin. Men do not receive atonement, but what they do receive is the result of atonement; namely, *reconciliation*.

The picture of man's reconciliation to God when he is justified by divine grace through Christ is quite plain, to sum up the matter. Before he sins, in the state of infancy, man is in God's favor. But the sins he eventually commits will separate, alienate, him from God, putting him under divine condemnation. However, by God's grace through Christ, he has the means of being delivered from his sins so that he no longer will be reckoned as sinful but as righteous. He will thus be reconciled to God, to be in the divine favor just as he was before he wandered away into sin.

### **Redemption**

Paul affirms that the meritorious or procuring cause of the sinner's justification by God's unmerited favor is the redemption wrought through the Saviour. Immediately following his declaration that "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God," he states, "being justified freely by his grace through the *redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:23, 24). The apostle is saying in effect that as every accountable person has sinned, so every accountable person who would be justified by God's grace must be redeemed by Christ.

The word "redemption" is from the Greek *apolutrosis*, defined by J. H. Thayer as "a releasing effected by payment of a ransom; redemption, deliverance, liberation, procured by the payment of a ransom . . . everywhere in the N. T. metaphorically, viz. deliverance effected through the death of Christ from the retributive wrath of the holy God and the merited penalty of sin."

The display of grace in the redemptive work of Christ can be seen as the paying of the debt incurred because of sin. The sinner is described as "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). But in the offering of Himself on the cross, Jesus has paid this debt that satisfies the demands of divine justice against sin. He who "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6), who "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:14), has effected a release not only from the guilt of sin, but also from the merited penalty of sin, death. Again we see the beautiful display of grace against the background of sin as revealed in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The sinner has earned death, but Christ has earned for him salvation. So when any sinner accepts Christ as His Redeemer, he receives what he does not deserve, but what is entirely gratuitous.

The specific price of our redemption is the blood of Christ: "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the

blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18,19). See Revelation 1:5. There are some things that can be redeemed by silver and gold; but only the blood of Christ, of infinitely more value than all earthly treasures, can redeem us from the bondage and death of sin. When we consider the untold price of our redemption, of more worth than any and all material things, we can only be awe-struck at the greatness of the divine grace that has made this price possible.

The magnitude of redemptive grace through the blood of Christ is also portrayed in Ephesians 1:6,7, ". . . the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." The inspired writer further declares, "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us to Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).

He who is "*rich* in mercy, for his *great* love wherewith he loved us" has redeemed and saved us through the blood of Christ by an unmerited favor that is more than ordinarily rich but that is designated as "*the exceeding riches of his grace.*" Such a grace is rich beyond all the riches of the material world, just as "*the glory of his grace*" is beyond all the glories of the world. Thanks be to Him who has shown "*the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus!*"

### **Propitiation**

The justification by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ is effected by Christ being set forth as a *propitiation*. Carefully note the use of this word in the context of Romans 3:22-25, ". . . for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God." The Greek word for "propitiation" in this passage is *hilasterion*. This word is used in the Septuagint of Leviticus 16:14 to designate the golden cover of the Ark of the Covenant upon which was sprinkled the atoning blood. In Hebrews 9:5 it is translated as "mercy-seat," or, as the footnote of the American Standard Version renders it, "the propitiatory."

Concerning the use of this word in its reference to Christ, W. E. Vine makes the following observation: "Christ, through His expiatory death, is the Personal means by whom God shows the mercy of His justifying grace . . . His 'blood' stands for the voluntary giving of His life, by

the shedding of His blood in expiatory sacrifice, under Divine judgment righteously due sinners. . .”

The propitiatory work of Jesus is also portrayed in the following passages: “And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2); “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). The Greek word for “propitiation” in these passages is from *hilasmos*, signifying “the means of appeasing, a propitiation” (J. H. Thayer). It expressly designates in its reference to Christ the means whereby sin is covered and remitted so that the wrath of God can be appeased.

Indeed, the wrath of God is definitely implied in regard to both *hilasterion* and *hilasmos* as these words are used to describe the sacrifice of Christ. Any concept of God that excludes his wrath in reference to sinners patently false. Unless sin is forgiven through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, divine justice demands that it receive its just recompense of reward in eternal death.

Note the following passages: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18); “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5); “Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath? (I speak after the manner of men.) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?” (Romans 3:5,6); “Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 5:6).

However, in considering the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ as the means of appeasing God’s wrath upon sinners, it is most important that we distinguish between “wrath” and “hostility.” Lightfoot appropriately states that the writers of the New Testament make it clear that “the hostility is represented not on the part of God, but of man.” The enmity alone is on the part of the sinner, as we previously noted in our discussion of reconciliation (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21,22). Not once is God said to be brought back into man’s favor; but the scriptures insist that man, because of his enmity toward God, needs to be brought back into God’s favor. And it is the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, which divine grace has provided, that makes possible the sinner’s acceptance to God.

We must unquestionably recognize that God’s wrath in no way means that He hates the sinner. Men can show anger toward others because of hate. But God’s wrath is entirely righteous indignation, without any element at all of rancor in it toward those who have become his enemies because of their sins. The loving nature of God never changes. Not for a moment has He ever stopped loving sinful men. Note again John 3:16; Romans 5:8. Indeed, the reference of 1 John 4:10 to Christ as the propitiation for our sins is expressly made in connection with the

love that God has for us. And it is because of His love for us that he extends His unmerited favor to us in the propitiatory sacrifice of His Son so that the just demands of the divine law we have broken can be satisfied.

In Romans 3:25 the phrase "to show forth his righteousness" explicitly affirms that the propitiatory work of Christ is meant to manifest and vindicate the justice of God. The New English Bible renders this phrase: "God meant by this to demonstrate his justice." Goodspeed renders it: "This was to vindicate his own justice."

"To propitiate is to turn away wrath. Propitiation implies wrath. Words occur all through the Scripture which indicate more than Divine sorrow, even Divine displeasure, Divine wrath. So there is Divine wrath to be turned away; while that wrath remains God cannot receive man, and man cannot go to God. And Divine forgiveness must be legal. God is not only Father, He is Sovereign; sin is the rejection of His law, rebellion against His majesty, and its forgiveness must be in harmony with law, and the inviolable claims of His throne. Before God can receive back the sinner there is wrath to be averted in some way by which righteousness shall be equally honored with mercy . . . This is a propitiation provided and made by God Himself. *This propitiation is the substitutionary offering of God the Son.* This propitiation is sufficient for the sins of the world" (Charles New).

In the foregoing phrase "the substitutionary offering of God the Son" is the key to understanding the work of divine grace in saving, calling, electing, justifying, reconciling, and redeeming sinners through the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Because of our sins we deserve to die, which is the just penalty for sin. But God sent His Son to die in our stead, who, though without sin Himself, vicariously substituted Himself for us in taking upon Himself the just penalty for sin. That is the obvious implication of the affirmation in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Every sinner who accepts Christ's substitutionary work on his behalf is cleared of every charge of sin, is accepted as God's beloved child, a joint-heir with Christ, and has the living hope of eternal life in heaven. See 1 Peter 3:18.

### Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word *katallasso*, reconcile?
2. Why do sinners need to be reconciled to God?
3. Discuss the work of divine grace in reconciling sinners to God through the sin-offering Christ.
4. What is the meaning of the word *apolutrosis*, redemption?
5. Discuss the display of divine grace in redeeming men from their sins through the sin-offering Christ.

6. Discuss the blood of Christ as the specific price of our redemption.
7. Discuss the propitiatory work of Christ in appeasing the wrath of God.
8. What is meant by the phrase "the substitutionary offering of God the Son"?

## THE ACCESS TO GRACE (1)

We now come to the great question: What is the sinner's access to the grace of God that saves him from his sins through the sin-offering Christ? The answer is forthrightly given in the following passages: "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1,2); "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Ephesians 2:8,9). What is the meaning of this faith that Paul designates as being the access to God's saving, justifying grace?

### *Belief in God*

Primarily, such faith assumes belief in God. Surely, no sinner will seek the grace that saves unless he first believes in its divine source. Cf. Hebrews 11:6; Romans 4:24. How can anyone possibly believe that Jesus is the sin-offering, the means of saving grace, if he does not first believe in the God who loved him so much that He sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for his sins? See 1 John 4:9,10.

### *Belief in Christ*

Since Jesus Christ is the means through which divine grace saves, it is absolutely necessary that those who would be saved believe in Him as well as in God. Jesus said, ". . . believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). The New Testament is replete with emphasis on the necessity of sinners believing on the sin-offering Christ in order to be saved. As Jesus declared, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins . . . I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 8:24; 11:25).

The apostle John, in summing up the gospel account which he had written, declared, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). See 1 John 5:1.

To a Jewish audience in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul exclaimed, "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39).



On inquiring what he must do to be saved, the Philippian jailor was commanded, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

The gospel, the message of glad tidings which is the source of all knowledge concerning God's saving grace in Christ, is depicted in Romans 1:16 as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." See Romans 10:17.

When we properly understand the role of faith or belief in Christ as the access to God's saving grace, we will realize that there is absolutely nothing about it that is arbitrary. God requires faith in His Son, the sin-offering, because in the very nature of faith that is the only way Christ's saving power can possibly be appropriated. As we previously noted, the fact that Christ died for all men does not mean that all men are saved by Him. He can only save any person as that person receives Him as his Saviour, appropriating the saving power of divine grace through Him. And the only way that this can possibly be done, as we shall carefully consider, is by faith in Him.

However faith in Christ operates to save the sinner, the central idea is that it looks to, depends on, Him as the only means of God's saving grace. This is illustrated by Jesus in His comparison of the brazen serpent with Himself: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-16). When the children of Israel were bitten by the fiery serpents that Jehovah had sent as punishment for their murmuring against Him, Moses was commanded to build a brazen serpent and set it upon a standard, lifting it up before the people. The record states, ". . . it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived" (Numbers 21:9). This brazen serpent was the only means of saving those who had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, and only those who looked unto it could enjoy the salvation that God offered through it. In like manner, Jesus has been lifted up in His crucifixion as the only means of saving men from the poison of sin (John 12:32,33), and only those who look unto or believe on Him will be saved.

David Brown has appropriately written, "In both cases the remedy is *conspicuously* displayed; in the one case on a pole, in the other on the cross, to 'draw all men unto him' (ch 12:32). In both cases it is by *directing the eye to the uplifted Remedy* that the cure is effected; in the one case the bodily eye, in the other the gaze of the soul by believing in Him, as in that glorious proclamation—'*Look* unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth,' etc. (Isaiah 45:22). Both methods are stumbling to human reason. What, to any thinking Israelite, could seem more unlikely than that of a deadly poison should be dried up in his body by simply looking on a reptile of brass. Such a stumbling-block

to the Jews and to the Greeks foolishness was faith in the crucified Nazarene as a way of deliverance from eternal perdition. As the serpent was God's *ordinance* for the cure of every bitten Israelite, so is Christ for the salvation of every perishing sinner."

### ***Mental Assent***

In noting how faith operates in looking to Jesus Christ as the only means of God's grace in saving men from sin, we must recognize that it primarily involves giving mental assent to the *fact* that He, the only begotten Son of God, is the crucified, resurrected Saviour of the world. An example of this basic phase of saving faith is found in Acts 11:21, "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord." Here belief and turning to the Lord are considered as two different procedures, the latter being the result of the former. Obviously, those described in this passage first believed in the *fact* of Jesus as the Saviour; and then, on the basis of that belief, they turned to Him in order to receive His salvation.

The logic and need of faith in Christ in this basic, limited scene for one to be saved is plainly evident. No one could possibly look to Christ for salvation who does not believe in the fact of His saving power, any more than a physically ill person would seek help from someone whom he does not believe is able to cure him.

### ***Trust***

However necessary it is for sinners to primarily believe in the fact of Christ's saving power, such belief cannot appropriate His salvation by and of itself alone. One physically sick might believe in the *fact* of a particular physician's power to effect a cure for him and still continue to suffer from his sickness. It is only as he expresses his belief in the curative power of the physician by putting his *trust* in him, to *rely* or *depend* on him, that a cure will be effected. Then, too, one might believe in the fact that a certain plane has the power to take him to a particular destination without him ever reaching that destination. It is only as he *trusts* in the plane, to *rely* or *depend* on it by boarding it, that he will reach its destination.

Verily, Christ has all power to save every sinner from sin and to reconcile him to God, but that does not mean that all who give mental assent to this sublime truth are saved. It is only as sinners who believe in the fact of Christ's saving power *trust* in Him, to *depend* or *rely* on Him, that they become the recipients of His salvation.

### ***Repentance***

Trust in Christ for salvation not only implies belief in the fact of His saving power but also repentance of sins. Sinners are commanded to repent in the name of Christ (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38), which they cannot do unless they first believe that Christ, being the Son of God and

Saviour, has the divine authority to make this requirement of them. But this repentance, which follows faith in its primary, basic sense, is an absolute necessity for the trusting phase of saving faith. We can readily understand this as we see the meaning of the word "repentance," from the Greek *metanoia*, primarily meaning "a change of mind" (J. H. Thayer). In its use in such passages as Luke 24:47 and Acts 2:38, it designates a change of mind concerning the practice of sin, with the high resolve to turn from sin to the Saviour in order to receive His salvation, and consequently to live a life of holiness.

There is nothing arbitrary, then, about the Lord's requirement that those who would be saved repent of their sins. Impenitence in regard to sin and trust in Christ for salvation are completely opposite concepts. How can any person desire, much less appropriate, Christ's saving power from sin if his mind is still inclined toward the practice of sin? But when any sinner believes in the fact of the saving power of the crucified Saviour and seriously contemplates the tragic reality of sin in his life, he will feel godly sorrow for his sins. Such sorrow will inevitably produce repentance, a change of mind, regarding his sins, with the sincere resolve to forsake his evil ways, to seek salvation in Christ, and to follow Him the rest of his days. See Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10.

### **Baptism**

It is in the act of baptism that the believing, penitent sinner, who confesses his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), reaches out to receive the salvation that God's grace freely gives through Christ. Baptism can thus be appropriately designated as the trusting, relying, depending, surrendering, committing phase of saving faith. Note the following passages:

*"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38).* When one repents of his sins and is baptized, his sins are said to be remitted. The phrase "unto the remission of sins" is exactly the same as in Matthew 26:28 in reference to the blood of Christ. Baptism grants sinners the remission of sins because it reaches out in trust and reliance to the saving power of Christ's blood.

*"They then that received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41).* This passage pertains to those commanded in verse 38 to "repent, and be baptized." The word they received, which was preached by the apostle Peter, was the word of God, "the word of his grace" (Acts 14:3). Those, then, who received the word of God, the message of divine grace, were baptized in order to receive what that grace freely offered them: the remission of sins. It is obvious that any person who refuses to be baptized has rejected the word of God, thus refusing to accept the saving grace which that word offers.

*"Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through*

*baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin” (Romans 6:3-7).* In the act of baptism, the immersion of the penitent believer in water, the sinner turns to Christ and His salvation, identifying himself with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He thus dies to the old life of sin and walks with the Lord in the new life of justification, beginning his heavenly pilgrimage with God. See Romans 6:17,18; Colossians 2:12; 2 Timothy 2:10,11.

*“For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27).* Those who insist that baptism has no involvement in the faith that trusts in the Lord for salvation are prone to read the first verse of this passage and to overlook the latter. But the latter is a commentary on the former. It plainly affirms that justifying faith, such as puts men into Christ and thus makes them sons of God, includes baptism. Those who only give mental assent to Christ’s justifying, life-giving power, refusing to be baptized, have yet to truly repent of their sins and thus fail to trust in Christ for salvation. See Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20,21.

Since only those who are baptized into Christ become sons of God, thus to become His heirs, we can understand the necessity of baptism for all who would receive the heavenly inheritance. Read Galatians 3:26,27 in connection with the following passages: “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16,17); “Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).

As we conclude this lesson, let us emphasize and make it very clear that baptism is not the cause of salvation from sin. It is not an act in which the sinner deserves, earns, or achieves salvation. The efficacy of baptism is only in the efficacy of the sin-offering Christ. It is necessary for salvation because it embraces the principle of trust: reliance or dependence on God’s saving grace through the Saviour Jesus Christ.

### Questions

1. Why is belief in God necessary for salvation by His grace?
2. Discuss John 3:14-16; 12:32,33.
3. Why is it primarily necessary for sinners to give mental assent to the saving power of Christ in order to be saved?
4. Discuss the necessity of the sinner’s trust in Christ in order to be saved.

5. What is the meaning of repentance? Why does trust in Christ for salvation imply repentance?
6. Discuss baptism as the trusting, relying, depending, surrendering, committing phase of saving faith.

## THE ACCESS TO GRACE (2)

As we continue our discussion of saving faith, which involves not only giving mental assent to the saving power of God's grace through Christ but also repentance and baptism, we notice some further New Testament teaching on the subject.

First, compare the following two utterances of the apostle Peter: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38); "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). We observe that in the former passage the apostle affirms that those who repent and are baptized receive the remission of sins, but in the latter passage he only mentions belief as the prerequisite for the remission of sins. Is there any conflict between the two passages? Absolutely not. The belief mentioned in Acts 10:43 is obviously justifying faith, such as involves trust in Christ; it includes repentance and baptism, which are expressly mentioned in Acts 2:38.

Those of the Pentecostians who received Peter's message were baptized (Acts 2:41). But verse 44 says concerning them, "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common." Evidently, the term "believed" in verse 44 must be considered as saving faith, such as depended on Christ for salvation, to include obedience to the ordinance of baptism mentioned in verse 41.

"And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house . . ." (Acts 18:8). But 1 Corinthians 1:14 states that Crispus was baptized. Obviously, the word "believed" in Acts 18:8 means trusting, saving faith since it includes Crispus' obedience to the will of Christ in being baptized.

". . . and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Later Paul told these baptized believers, as he exhorted them to constancy in their faith, that they would be eternally saved, "except ye believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:2). The word "believed" here must also mean trusting, saving faith, to include the baptism mentioned in Acts 18:8.

Acts 16:33 states that the Philippian jailor was baptized: "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately." But verse 34 says, "And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God." It is plain that the jailor's belief in God was a trusting, saving belief, to include obedience to the Lord in baptism.

The fact that the New Testament quite often simply refers to saved persons as believers, without any express reference to their becoming

such through repentance and baptism, implies that belief or faith is the means of access to God's saving grace through Christ. See Acts 2:44; 10:45; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2:10; 1 Timothy 4:12. How appropriately, indeed, are Christians described as those that believe or believers. For believing in the fact of Christ's saving work on their behalf, they have trusted in that fact by repenting of their sins and reaching out in the act of baptism to receive the saving grace of God in Christ. They thus have truly *believed on Him* for salvation. It is not a misstatement of the matter, then, to define a Christian as a believer in Christ.

### ***Faith As the Result of Grace***

In discussing the meaning of saving faith in Christ, we must not overlook the fact that faith is not only the access to divine grace, but it is also the *result* of that grace: "And when he [Apollus] was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him: and when he was come, he helped them much that *had believed through grace*" (Acts 18:27). Some translators and commentators render this passage with the word "grace" connected with the work of Apollus; for example, Bengel and Meyer, "helped much through grace them who had believed." The meaning of this rendering would be that it was through the grace God had given Apollus that those who had believed were helped.

However, the rendering of the American Standard Version, which we have quoted, is substantially correct, the more obvious meaning being that it is divine grace that produces saving belief. Not only has God's grace given His Son for the sins of the world, but it also has recorded the facts concerning this Gift of gifts in the gospel of grace, the divine word, which is the means of producing faith in the Saviour (Romans 10:17). Thus the faith that has access to the saving grace of God in Christ is dependent on God's grace through the gospel revelation for its very existence. Sinners are not only dependent, then, on God's grace for salvation, but also for the access to that salvation.

### ***Not of Works***

Let us now consider the stress given in the New Testament concerning salvation as not being of works. As 2 Timothy 1:8,9 expresses it, ". . . God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." See again Ephesians 2:9.

The "works" principle is diametrically opposed to the 'grace' principle. If salvation is by grace, it cannot be of works. That is the plain, emphatic teaching of the holy scriptures. Note Romans 11:5,6, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." This passage simply affirms that divine election, being chosen for salvation, is not by any merit on man's part, but entirely

by the unmerited favor of God. Since salvation is the free gift of God (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8), there is nothing that man can do to achieve, merit, or earn it; otherwise it would not be the *unmerited* favor, the *grace*-gift, that God freely bestows on those who through faith accept His Son as their Saviour.

### *Works of Law*

The works which are designated as being opposed to grace are those which pertain to divine law. That is the plain import of Galatians 2:16, "Yet knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." True, Paul's use here of the definite article before the word "law," and as the context indicates, means that he has in mind the law of Moses, which was given by God to the Jews. In fact, the basic reason for the writing of the Galatian letter was to refute the false teaching of the Judaizers, who were teaching that justification came not only through Christ but also through keeping the law. But the principle Paul has in mind here applies not only to the law of Moses but to any other code of conduct, the violation of which is reckoned as sin. See 1 John 3:4; 5:17. Even the Gentiles, although never given the law of Moses, were not without law. And the transgressions of the law which they were under made them sinners, just as the transgressions of the law of Moses made the Jews sinners. See Romans 2:12-16.

That the principle Paul expresses in Galatians 2:16 applies to law in general, not only as it involved the Jews but also the Gentiles, is set forth in Romans 3:28-30, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcision on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcision because of their faith" (R.S.V.). The use of the word "law" here without the definite article is a valid rendering of the Greek, indicating, as also the context shows, that Paul has in mind law as it pertains both to Jew and Gentile.

The very nature of God's law, that which embodies His will and righteousness, is that it demands sinless perfection, complete obedience, with the consequent curse put on those who fail to so obey it. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them" (Galatians 3:10-12).

If any accountable person could live completely in harmony with God's law, he could demand God's approbation here and in the hereafter on



the basis of his own merits, what he would justly deserve, and not on the basis of God's unmerited favor. That is the import of Romans 4:4, "Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt." Since, however, all accountable men are sinners, unrighteous, because they are under God's law and have transgressed that law (Romans 3:9,10,23; 4:15; 1 John 3:4; 5:17), they are all under divine condemnation and need the righteousness that only Jesus Christ, the perfect law keeper and thus the perfect sacrifice for sins, can give them.

Those who admit that they are sinners, having transgressed God's law, but who believe that they can come into the favor of God by returning to His law to keep its righteous precepts, are doomed to utter failure because they would depend on their own righteousness rather than on the righteousness of Christ. Here is a man, let us say, who has come to his senses concerning his evil life, but who desires to get right before God on the basis of his own goodness. So he now begins to keep the law that he violated in becoming a sinner. If he has committed such sins as adultery, lying, stealing, drunkenness, etc.—all of which violate God's law—he no longer commits them. If he has failed to do what God's law requires of him in living a life of positive goodness, he now lives such a life. Will not his abstinence from evil and his doing of good rectify all the wrong he has done? Certainly not—even if he were to live completely without sin the rest of his life! The guilt of every sin he ever committed will still remain, and he will be eternally lost unless he receives the unmerited favor and mercy of God, which can only be realized through Christ.

"But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, *not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves*, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, *through Jesus Christ our Saviour*; that, *being justified by grace*, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

Not only has any sinner ever been able to find justification through his own moral goodness, but neither also through the keeping of any rituals of law. In regard to the sacrifices of the law of Moses, Hebrews 10:1 states, "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh." Only the blood of the unblemished sacrifice of the perfect law-keeper Christ, who was entirely without sin, can take away man's sins and make him righteous before God. See Hebrews 9:22; 10:1-10; Matthew 26:28.

If keeping divine law, the transgression of which is sin, could save or justify the sinner, then the grace of God is nullified and the sacrifice of Christ was in vain. That, in principle, is the significance of Galatians

2:21, "I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died in vain."

There is nothing that man can bring to God, no sacrifice that he can possibly make, no temptation he can resist or good he can do, that can merit, earn, or achieve salvation. The righteousness of God that sinners need for their salvation is solely found in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). He who seeks righteousness through *his own doing* rather than through *Christ's doing on his behalf* will never receive the righteousness of God that saves from sin.

### **No Room for Self-glorification**

Legalism, which seeks righteousness or justification through law keeping, quite naturally is the spirit of pride, of self-glorification. If one could be justified by his good works, rather than by God's grace through the merits of Christ, then he could well glory in himself. But since salvation can never be received on the basis of one's own merits, but only on the basis of God's unmerited favor through faith in the sin-offering Christ, then the saved person's boasting or glorying can only be in the Lord: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; *not of works, that no man should glory*" (Ephesians 2:8,9); "Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith" (Romans 3:27); "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30,31). Read these passages again—and again—and realize the sheer impossibility of any person glorying in himself for the righteousness he has received by God's unmerited favor, as a free gift, through his trust in the sole merits of Christ.

### **Abraham's Justification**

The fourth chapter of Romans clearly portrays the justification of Abraham as an illustration of the sinner's justification by faith and not by works. The reader is requested to carefully study the entire chapter, especially noting the following verses: "For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not toward God. For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin . . . And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness

of Sarah's womb; yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was reckoned unto him; but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (verses 2-8, 19-25).

In reading the foregoing verses in the context of the entire chapter, we note that Abraham's justification was based on his unwavering trust in God that "what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (verse 21). This promise was to make Abraham a father of many nations (verse 18). See Genesis 15:5,6. Abraham's faith or trust in God and His promise was thus reckoned unto him for righteousness or justification, which means that he did nothing to earn, deserve, or achieve this righteousness, but depended solely on the grace of God.

And so it is that sinners who have their iniquities forgiven, their sins covered, and to whom the Lord will not reckon sin, are those who trust in or believe on Him that raised Jesus from the dead, thus trusting also in Him who "was delivered for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (verse 25). There is nothing that they have done to achieve, earn, or deserve their freedom from sin; but their trust in God and Christ has been reckoned unto them for righteousness or justification since they have depended entirely on God's unmerited favor in Christ.

How can we reconcile Abraham's trust in God with the necessity of sinners repenting and being baptized for the remission of their sins? In following Paul's argument concerning Abraham's justification as 'being illustrative of the sinner's justification, we are led to the unequivocal conclusion that repentance and baptism do not embrace the principle of works but of faith.

True, when one repents and is baptized, he does something for his salvation; he obeys divine commands. For that matter, belief in Christ is something the sinner must *do* for his salvation; it is also a divine command to be obeyed (Acts 16:31). Indeed, it is plainly stated that obedience to the divine will is necessary for freedom from sin: "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17,18). In the context of this passage, baptism is designated as being involved in the form of teaching which has been obeyed from the heart by those who are made free from sin (verses 3-6).

As we previously noted, however, obedience to repentance and baptism are not works in the sense of law keeping as the means of seeking justification by one's own righteousness. There is no merit, no righteousness,

inherent in what the sinner does to be saved. But as he obeys the divine will, believing that Christ is the Saviour, repenting of his sins, and being baptized into Christ, he reaches out in trust to receive the righteousness or justification which is only by God's grace through the sole merits of Christ. Such faith or trust is thus designated as being reckoned unto him for righteousness.

### **Questions**

1. Discuss the passages in the first part of this lesson which prove that saving faith in Christ involves more than giving mental assent to his saving power.
2. Why is faith the result of grace?
3. Discuss the access to God's grace through Christ as not being of works.
4. Why cannot the sinner be justified by works of law?
5. Since man is saved by faith apart from works of law, why is there no room for self-glorification?
6. Discuss Abraham's justification by faith as an illustration of the sinner's justification.

## GRACE AND CHRISTIAN FREEDOM (1)

When one has been saved by God's grace through his faith in Christ, becoming a Christian, he enjoys glorious freedom. Truly knowing Him who is the truth, the spiritual-emancipator Jesus Christ, he is free indeed (John 8:32,36).

Paul tells us to treasure this freedom in Christ by insisting that we not depart from it: "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

This state of freedom in Christ is that of deliverance from the bondage of sin. Following his description of baptism into Christ and His death, Paul says, "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin" (Romans 6:6,7). See also Romans 6:17,18.

This state of freedom in Christ is also that of grace. It is not the case of God's grace being simply given to make us free, and then withdrawn from us. But divine grace, as we noted in the first lesson, is the warp and woof of the faithful Christian's entire relationship to God. It permeates the entire state of the glorious freedom he enjoys in Christ. No study of divine grace, then, can be complete without a careful consideration of its relationship to Christian freedom.

Since the freedom from the bondage of sin is meant to be a continual state by the grace of God, it is important that we note the principal blessings involved in it.

### *Peace*

In Romans 5:1-2, Paul refers to the wonderful peace with God that free men in Christ enjoy because of divine grace: "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The peace of God is primarily the result of the salvation from our past sins by divine grace, but the apostle also connects this peace with "this grace wherein we stand." As David Brown observed, "To that same faith which *first* gave us 'peace with God' we owe our introduction into that *permanent standing* in the favour of God which the justified enjoy. As it is difficult to distinguish this from the peace first mentioned, we regard it as merely an additional phase of the same rather than something new."

But what is the meaning of this peace with God that those who are free in Christ enjoy by divine grace? The word "peace" is from the Greek *eirene*, defined by J. H. Thayer as "a conception distinctly peculiar to Christianity, *the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through*

*Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatever sort that is."* From this definition we can conclude that when a person enjoys peace with God, he has confidence that he is in God's favor, having been reconciled to God. He can thus face life and eternity without anxiety or fear. This is the peace Jesus had in mind when He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27).

The call of divine grace to freedom in Christ is not to troubled and fearful hearts, but to peaceful and fearless hearts. And God's grace, which can perpetually maintain our freedom in Christ, has the power to keep our hearts always filled with His wonderful peace. *No one stands in the grace of God who does not have peace with God.* The realization of divine grace in one's life and the frustration caused by the bondage of sin are diametrically opposed to each other.

Those who consider themselves as Christians, but who do not have peace with God, will do well to examine their spiritual status. By so doing, they will recognize that they are not truly free in Christ, but are still under the oppressive bondage of sin. It may be that they were never really converted to Christ, never having tasted freedom in Him at all; or if they were converted to Him, they have departed from the freedom they once enjoyed to be entangled again in sin. See Galatians 5:1. But insist we must in the light of God's word and the experience of all who truly know the grace of God in Christian freedom, every faithful Christian enjoys genuine peace with God, with a heart virtually free from fear, anxiety, and frustration. And how is it with you?

This peace with God the faithful Christian enjoys is based on his knowledge of standing in the grace that continually keeps him free from the dominion of sin. Paul declared, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). The contrast here is between acceptance to God on the basis of perfect adherence to law, which no man has ever been able to do, and acceptance to God on the basis of His favor, which is entirely undeserved and unmerited. For the Christian, then, to be under grace is for him to live continually in the saving, forgiving effects of that "grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:21). The curse of law does not rest on him because he depends not on law as the means of his acceptance to God, but on the grace of God through the Saviour Jesus Christ.

Obedience to Christ is indeed significant in living the Christian life, as we shall later discuss; but the Christian's peace with God is basically due to the realization that whatever sins he commits, however short he comes of submission to the Lord's will, he continually dwells under the grace that cleanses him from all sin through Christ. That is the import of 1 John 1:7, which we shall later consider when we deal with the relationship of good works to the grace that gives eternal life. But

suffice it to say here, the Christian who depends on the grace of God through Christ will have the peace that comes from the assurance that he is continually free from the dominion and guilt of sin. Let us remember that as sin could not but have dominion over us when we were "under law," reckoned as sinners because of our transgressions of law, so that now as we remain "under grace," sin cannot but be subdued by us. If before, sin triumphed over our lives, grace will now be more than the conqueror of sin through Him that loves us. Cf. Romans 8:37.

So significant is peace as the fruit of grace that several of the New Testament epistles begin with a salutation to the readers wishing them "grace and peace"; for example, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:2); "Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour" (Titus 1:4). See also 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 3; 2 John 3; Revelation 1:4,5. In 2 Peter 1:2 the writer wishes his readers the grace that will bear fruit in an ever-growing abundance of peace: "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." This increasingly abundant peace that the Christian can enjoy is only possible as he follows the injunction of 2 Peter 3:18 to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

## *Hope*

One who has peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ because of the grace in which he stands, has also the hope of eternal life because of this same grace. As Paul expressed it in 2 Thessalonians 2:16, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace . . ." It is certainly comforting for one to know that when he is at peace with God because of his freedom from the power and guilt of sin, he has the hope or assurance that he is on the road to the eternal Zion. It is because the favor of God in which he stands is unmerited, undeserved, that he can face death and eternity with hope and not fear. His continual trust in the Saviour Jesus Christ, the means of grace, keeps him free from the feeling that because of the frailty of his flesh and the mistakes he makes along the way, he will "never make it." Eternal condemnation in hell holds no threat over him because he knows that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

What about those baptized believers who are trying by main strength and awkwardness to live in keeping with Christ's will, whose hearts are not saturated with divine peace and comfort, and who face eternity with the constant, gnawing fear of going to hell? It is obvious that they are trying to depend on their own merits rather than on the unmerited favor of God through Christ. No matter how hard they strive

to live as they should, they are continually and painfully aware of sin in their lives. And failing to truly stand in God's grace through trust in the Saviour, the guilt of their sins can only haunt them with the fear of final and irretrievable ruin. That is the folly and tragedy of legalism, of a religion that stresses obedience to law at the virtual exclusion of dependence on divine grace. Legalism spells out hopelessness; grace spells out hope. Why should any Christian choose the former when he can have the latter?

### **Rejoicing**

A heart of rejoicing is the natural result of the realization the faithful Christian has that he stands in the grace of God through his trust in the Saviour. Gloom cannot pervade the heart of any Christian who is aware that God's grace through Christ continually keeps him free from the dominion of sin, who thus has hope or assurance of going to heaven. Immediately after Paul speaks of "this grace wherein we stand," he says, "And we *rejoice* in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2).

The grace of God does not call us out of misery into more misery, out of gloom into more gloom. If all the sinner has to look forward to in becoming a Christian is more misery and gloom, he might as well stay where he is. But the gospel is not a message of bad news but of good news. It holds out to every sinner who comes to Christ the promise of freedom from the gloom of sin, of a life of rejoicing in the grace of God. And as long as the Christian stands in the grace of God, trusting in Christ for freedom from the dominion and guilt of sin, he will always "rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 4:4).

How can anyone who claims to be a faithful Christian, yet who is frustrated, unhappy, and miserable, possibly have any real appreciation of the meaning of freedom in Christ, of a life under grace? Indeed, we would wonder if such a person who has never found peace, hope, and rejoicing through God's grace has ever really come to Christ at all. He may have been immersed in water, but did he really repent of his sins and trust in Christ for salvation? Although he considers himself a member of the body of Christ and goes through certain religious rituals, even trying in his own strength alone to live as he should, he still is in darkness. Those, however, who are truly converted to Christ have been by God's grace "delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Colossians 1:13). And as long as they continue to stand in the grace of God by trusting in Christ, they will continue to be separated from darkness and to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

### **Questions**

1. Discuss Christian freedom as the state of deliverance from the bondage of sin and of grace.
2. What is the meaning of the word "peace," from the Greek *eirene*?



3. Why is the realization of divine grace in one's life and the frustration of the bondage of sin diametrically opposed to each other?
4. Discuss Romans 6:14.
5. Why does the person who enjoys freedom in Christ, standing in divine grace, have the hope of eternal life?
6. Why does legalism spell out hopelessness?
7. Discuss rejoicing as the natural result of the realization the faithful Christian has that he stands in the grace of God through his trust in the Saviour.

## GRACE AND CHRISTIAN FREEDOM (2)

The freedom that is involved in divine grace does not mean license; it offers the Christian no excuse for persisting in sin. That is the emphatic teaching of God's holy word, which we shall now consider.

### *Dead to Sin*

*"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" (Romans 6:1,2).*

Paul anticipated in this passage the argument that some would make that since the grace of God takes away sins, then the more we sin the more grace will abound. According to this argument, then, the more we sin the more we actually exalt God's grace. And it is further argued that since the grace of God is free, the sins we commit cannot do us any harm because we continually have this free grace to take them away. From this diabolical perversion of free grace came antinomianism, the heinous doctrine that those under grace are not bound to keep the moral law of God. It is highly probable that Jude 4 is warning given concerning the false teachers who would afflict the church with such a doctrine: "For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Paul immediately castigated any idea that grace is meant to give license to sin by tersely stating, "God forbid." The Greek word here for "forbid" signifies, "Let it not be; by no means, far from it; let not such a thing be mentioned" (Adam Clarke). The apostle is plainly affirming here that far from God's grace giving license to and condoning sin, in its whole nature and power and manifestation it is against sin and in favor of righteousness. And so far from it being merely indifferent to sin, it signifies its death to it; so far from it being indifferent to righteousness, its end is righteousness.

Having thus established the fact that grace offers no excuse for sin, the apostle proceeds to explain his conclusion by referring to the converted sinner's death to sin. In his question regarding sin, "How shall we any longer live therein?", the apostle asks in effect, "How can it even remotely be possible that those who are dead to sin should be alive to it when death and life are completely opposite conditions?"

To see Paul's elaboration of his argument here, carefully read verses 3-13, noting that those who have been baptized into Christ and His death have crucified the old man of sin so that they walk in newness of life, being "dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." And thus being spiritually alive, they are not to live sinful lives but godly lives,

presenting their "members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

For anyone who has been justified by God's grace to continue in sin is entirely incompatible with the repentance which preceded his baptism into Christ. Such repentance, as we previously noted, is a change of mind concerning the practice of sin. This change of mind involves the solemn promise to live for Christ following the salvation to be received through Him. How, then, can any Christian persist in a course of sin without making mockery of his repentance, without going back on his promise to depart from the devil and sin and to live for Christ and righteousness?

### ***Servant of Righteousness***

*"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:14-18).*

In the foregoing passage, Paul anticipated the argument some might make that since the justified person is no longer under law in the sense of being justified by it, but is now under the grace of God, then he can persist in sin without incurring the displeasure of God. But again the apostle cries out, "God forbid." He then argues in favor of a life of righteousness on the basis of the justified person being a servant of righteousness. He insists that although one who is justified by God's grace is made free from the servitude of sin, he is bound to the servitude of righteousness. The freedom, then, that divine grace gives through Christ is not freedom to sin but freedom *from* sin, with the responsibility and privilege of living a life of righteousness, which is the only kind of life compatible with such freedom.

It is true, of course, that the Christian cannot be under law as a means of justification since he is under the justifying grace of God, but that does not mean that he is not under law in any sense. The very fact that he has become a servant of righteousness implies that he is bound to the law of Christ which reveals that righteousness. As Paul expressed it in 1 Corinthians 9:21, ". . . not being without law of God, but under law to Christ." See Galatians 6:2. This law the Christian is under is the system of rules and conduct laid down for him by Christ in the New Testament. It contains both things to do and things not to do, both positive and negative commands. In so obeying these commands of the Lord, the Christian follows the injunction of such passages as Titus 2:12, ". . . denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world." Cf. James 1:27.

## ***Grace and Good Works***

The Christian is to keep the law of Christ as a central part of salvation itself. Indeed, submission to the law of Christ, designated as "good works," is involved in the very purpose of the grace that has justified, saved, and redeemed him in Christ: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). Note that good works, the keeping of divine law, is not the cause of our salvation, which is by God's unmerited favor, but the result of it. In other words, we do not keep divine law in order to be saved but because we are saved. Or to express it even another way, we do not bear fruit in order to come into Christ, in whom is redemption by God's grace, but we bear fruit because we are in Christ. See John 15:1-5; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24. Truly, the basic purpose of our salvation in Christ is to live in submission to the divine law, to engage in good works, to be servants of righteousness.

## ***Good Works and Eternal Salvation***

We must not fail to recognize that good works, which are the result of our present salvation in Christ, are inseparably involved in eternal salvation, in our heavenly redemption. Note the following passages: "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:8,9); "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28,29). See 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Timothy 6:11,12; 2 Timothy 4:7,8; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Hebrews 4:11; Revelation 22:14.

## ***Judgment by Works***

That obedience to the law of Christ, in whatever sense it is involved in God's plan of redemption, is necessary for final salvation in heaven, is affirmed also by the fact that final judgment will be made on the basis of works: "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10); "And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear" (1 Peter 1:17); "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to

their works" (Revelation 20:12,13). See Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:5-9.

That Christians who essentially fail to keep the law of Christ, who thus persist in a course of sin, will fail to be eternally saved is forthrightly expressed in such passages as Ephesians 5:5,6, "For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolator, hath an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." See Colossians 3:5-10.

### *Free Gift of Eternal Life*

Whatever the significance is of law keeping on the part of the Christian in his heavenly journey, we must remember that his heavenly salvation, as well as his present salvation, is a free gift by God's unmerited favor. Whatever the harmony is between eternal salvation by grace and by good works, the Christian, however righteous he may become, can never earn or deserve this salvation. This conclusion is made plain in Romans 6:22,23, "But now being made free from sin and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The apostle here affirms that although the end of a life of Christian service, of sanctification or holiness, is eternal life, yet eternal life is a *free* gift of God. This means that the service the Christian renders God can by no means be reckoned as payment for the final salvation he will receive in heaven.

In 1 Peter 1:13-16 final salvation in the eternal Zion by divine grace is also presented against the background of the holy life the Christian is to live: "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance: but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." This grace to be brought to the loyal Christian at the revelation of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise the Lord made in John 14:2,3, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Since this grace is unmerited divine favor, we must recognize that the holy living of which Peter speaks cannot in any way earn or merit the Christian's heavenly inheritance.

So significant is the relationship of grace to eternal salvation that we shall devote special attention to it in the next lesson.

## Questions

1. What is meant by the question, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound"?
2. Discuss death to sin by God's grace as being entirely incompatible with a life of sin.
3. Discuss Paul's argument in Romans 6:14-18 against the Christian persisting in sin.
4. Discuss good works as involved in the purpose of saving grace.
5. What does the New Testament teach concerning the relationship of good works to eternal salvation?
6. What does the New Testament teach concerning judgment by works?
7. Discuss eternal salvation in heaven as the *free* gift of God.

## GRACE AND ETERNAL SALVATION

Having now given due attention to the fact that Christian freedom does not mean license to sin, but that the Christian who would go to heaven must be submissive to the law of Christ, how can we harmonize what seemingly are opposing concepts: eternal salvation being received by the Christian on the basis both of good works and of grace? The answer to this question is found in the relationship of good works to the Christian's faith in Christ. Since eternal salvation in heaven is only by the unmerited favor of God through Him who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), it is obvious that it is the Christian's dependence on Christ that makes this salvation possible. This simply means that the Christian who will reach heaven is one who continues to believe in, trust in, or depend on Him who alone can bring him into the eternal presence of the Father. That is the ultimate significance to the Christian of the golden text of the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Note the contrast here between *perishing*, the condemnation of hell, and *eternal life*, the salvation of heaven. If the Christian would escape the one and gain the other, he must depend solely on the grace of God through the merits of the Saviour Jesus Christ. See John 11:25.

The significance of faith in Christ as the access to eternal salvation is beautifully portrayed in 1 Peter 1:3-9, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: *receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*"

Concerning his life as a Christian, as one who stood in the grace of God, Paul declared, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). The Christian life points to the final expression of God's unmerited favor,

salvation in heaven, because it is a life of faith in, dependence on, or trust in Him who alone can eternally save.

Unquestionably, one cannot abide in Christ, who is the power of eternal life (Hebrews 7:16), unless he engages in good works, striving to obey the divine commandments (1 John 3:24). But whatever significance good works have in pointing the Christian to heaven, they are involved in the Christian's faith in or commitment to Christ. *And the crux of the matter is that where there are no good works there is no genuine, living, trusting, depending, submissive faith in Christ.* In fact, where there are no good works, fruit bearing to the glory of God, it is because there is no dependence on Him who is the power for such fruit bearing (John 15:1-5). The Christian who essentially fails to obey the will of the Lord, who thus essentially fails to live a godly life, will never receive the eternal inheritance for the simple reason that he has turned away the Saviour. His faith is dead, and he has thus rejected the only sacrifice for sins. See Hebrews 10:26,27. He cannot come into the eternal presence of God in heaven because he has rejected Him who is man's only access to that glorious presence.

### ***Faith Without Works***

The limitation of space prohibits us from dealing with the entirety of the discussion concerning faith and works in James 2:14-26, but there are some points we need to understand in light of the matter now being considered. The context of this passage indicates that James is dealing with a problem similar to what Paul has in mind in Romans 6:1,15: the doctrine that obedience to divine law is not necessary on the part of those who are true believers. James refutes this heretical doctrine by asking the rhetorical question, "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?" The answer to this question is obvious: *absolutely not!* How can any child of God whose faith is dead, who thus fails to engage in good works, possibly trust in the Lord for continual salvation from sin?

In the development of his argument, James says, "Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself . . . But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren . . . Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith . . . For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead." James, of course, does not affirm the absurdity that faith cannot be alive until it works. Obviously, unless faith is first alive it would be impossible for it to do anything. But James does insist that where there are no works on the part of Christians it is plainly evident that their faith is barren or dead. As Julius Hare observed, "When faith does not show forth its life by good works, we may reasonably conclude that it is dead. Not that works constitute the life of faith . . . any more than motion constitutes the life of the body." A barren or dead faith cannot justify, of course, because



in rejecting the law of Christ it rejects the divine law giver Himself, who alone can eternally save in heaven.

That James has in mind the Christian's relationship to God when he speaks of justification by a living, thus working, faith is indicated by the appeal he previously made to his brethren in Christ for a practicing, working faith: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing . . . Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (1:22-25,27). When we compare this reference to obedience to the perfect law of liberty with the reference to justification by a working faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the latter reference is a development of and commentary on the theme established in the former reference.

Also substantiating the conclusion that James refers to the faith of the Christian when he speaks of justification by a working faith is a comparison of James 2:21-23 with Romans 4:1-10, to which the reader is asked to give careful attention. Paul refers to Abraham's justification before he was circumcised, when without any law keeping on his part he was justified on the basis of his unwavering trust in God that He would keep His promise to make him a father of many nations. See Genesis 15:5,6. As we pointed out in lesson seven, this reference to Abraham's justification by faith without works is illustrative of one's initial justification through his trust in Christ, when he accepts Christ as his Saviour. But James refers to Abraham's justification after his circumcision, when he offered up his son Isaac, which happened several years after the justification to which Paul refers. See Genesis 17:10, 11; 22:1-10.

To affirm that Abraham was in no way justified before God until after his circumcision, when he offered up Isaac, is to make Paul a liar, who insists that he was justified before his circumcision. Such an affirmation would inadvertently make Paul and James contradict each other. But the only conclusion that makes for harmony between the two inspired writers is that since Paul's reference to Abraham's justification is illustrative of the sinner's justification, it logically follows that James' reference to Abraham's justification is illustrative of the Christian's justification, when his living faith will naturally bear fruit to the glory of God by the power of Him who is the object of that faith.

### **Love**

The faith of the Christian who continues to trust in Christ for his

heavenly salvation by divine grace can only be alive in love. For all practical purposes, the faith of any Christian is dead without love, thus unavailing for good works and for the grace of God that gives salvation in heaven. Paul declared, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). The apostle also said, "Peace be with the brethren, and *love with faith*, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. *Grace* be with them that *love* our Lord Jesus Christ with a *love* incorruptible" (Ephesians 6:23,24). James 1:12 declares, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, *he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him.*"

The grace of God that gives salvation and freedom in Christ is not only purposeful in regard to good works (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:7,8), but also in regard to love: "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Galatians 5:13,14); "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22); "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death" (1 John 3:14).

Freedom in Christ involves not only the love the Christian has for others but also for the Father and His blessed Son. See 1 John 4:19-21; 5:1,2. And the very nature of this love produces obedience to the will of Christ. The Lord did not say, "If a man love me, he *must* keep my word," but rather, "If a man love me, he *will* keep my word" (John 14:23). Obedience to the Lord's word follows love as naturally as night follows day. "And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected" (1 John 2:3-5). "But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

The Christian's love for the Lord and his fellow men, which naturally results in good works, can only exist where there is the remembrance of the grace that saved him from his sins. After presenting the Christian graces, those traits of character involved in the Christian's sanctification, the apostle Peter says, "For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). It is obvious that those who have forgotten the cleansing from their old sins have also forgotten the divine grace, unmerited favor, that made this possible. And in forgetting the perfect love that prompted

that grace, they cannot possibly have any real love for the Lord; thus they are without motivation for a life of sanctification. But any Christian who keeps fresh in his memory the loving grace that gave him the free gift of salvation in Christ will be motivated by love to live submissively to the divine will.

Instead, then, of the realization of the grace which made us spiritually free being an excuse for sin, it becomes the basic reason for not sinning, for a life of true godliness. But one who persists in sin after being cleansed from his old sins actually cheapens grace rather than exalts it. Such a person virtually considers "the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing" (Hebrews 10:29). How can anyone possibly forget the cleansing from his old sins who truly appreciates the so great a grace that made this possible through the blood of Christ?

Grace is always exalted by the works of faith done through love by the Christian, who gratefully remembers the cleansing from his old sins. Such a Christian realizes what grace involves in the infinite price paid for his redemption, the giving of God's only begotten Son to shed His blood on the cross. He recognizes that although the redemption he has received through Christ is entirely free, without any merit or achievement on his part, his response to that grace is the dedication of his entire being to Christ (Romans 6:13; 12:1; Luke 14:33; Colossians 3:3). He can reverently say to his Lord and Master, "Jesus, you gave your life for me, and I have given my life to you—by grace the great exchange is made."

When the grace that has saved us from our old sins is truly understood and appreciated, the love that responds to it will motivate us to obey God not because we *have* to but because we *want* to. And thus when divine grace finds a response in love for God and men, it will produce far more good works than could ever be accomplished out of a sense of cold duty. For it is axiomatic that a person always does more when he wants to than when he has to. In fact, a "have to" motivation never produces genuine holiness or sanctification. See 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

The spirit of legalism is that of obedience to divine law solely by a "have to" motive. The legalist forms an inordinate attachment to rules for the sake of rules, which inevitably leads to a minimum of obedience to the law of Christ. Being law centered rather than grace and Christ centered, the legalist can never know the joy and peace that come from serving through love, a "want to" motive.

### ***Continual Cleansing from Sin***

In lesson eight we made reference to the continual cleansing from sin, with its resultant peace and joy, that the faithful Christian has through the grace of God. We now note the connection between this cleansing power of God's grace through the blood of Christ and a living, working faith: "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk

in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6,7). The cleansing promised here, according to the grammatical construction of the word in the original Greek, is not something that happens spasmodically, now and then, but continuously. This means that the Christian who "walks in the light, as he is in the light," who obeys the divine will, has the assurance that at every moment of his life he stands approved of God, cleansed and justified by God's grace through Christ's blood. Thus he does not have to live in constant fear that if he inadvertently commits a sin along the way and suddenly dies, he will be eternally lost. He does not have to feel that part of the time he is on the way to heaven and part of the time he is on the way to hell. His acceptance to God is perpetually assured by the blood that continually keeps him free from the guilt of sin. Thus he cannot possibly fail to reach his heavenly goal by God's grace should he die at any time (Revelation 21:27).

But what is meant by the condition laid down for this continual cleansing from sin: to "walk in the light, as he is in the light"? Would it not seem that if one walks in the light, as God is in the light, he would be entirely sinless and thus have no need of Christ's cleansing blood? What John obviously means is that the Christian is *essentially*, not perfectly, to walk in the divine light, for the apostle clearly affirms the fact that all Christians commit sin: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (verse 8). But he also insists that when the Christian essentially lives a godly life, he has the divine power through Christ's blood to constantly keep him free from the *guilt* of sin. And thus the Christian whose faith works through love, imperfect though that faith and love may be, who continues to trust in and depend on God's grace through the sin-offering Christ, is free from the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14). This means that even though he does stumble along the way (James 3:2), the sins he commits are made powerless by God's cleansing grace through the blood of Christ.

## Questions

1. How can we harmonize what seemingly are opposing concepts: eternal salvation being received by the Christian on the basis both of good works and of grace? In your answer, give special attention to John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 7:16; 1 John 3:24; John 15:1-5.
2. What does James mean when he designates faith as being dead without works?
3. Why do we know that James has in mind the Christian's relationship to God when he speaks of justification by a living, thus working, faith?

4. Discuss the distinction between the references of Paul and James to Abraham's justification, noting what each reference illustrates.
5. Discuss the relationship of love to the living faith of the Christian and to his heavenly salvation.
6. Discuss the continual cleansing from sin that the faithful Christian enjoys through the blood of Christ.

## FALLING FROM GRACE

As we previously noted and emphasized, the Christian who continues to trust in the Saviour, whose living faith works through love, stands firm in the grace of God and will be saved eternally. Indeed, it is impossible for such a one to fall from grace. But it is also the plain teaching of God's word that the Christian who turns away from the Saviour, no longer to trust in and obey Him, falls from grace and forfeits eternal life. Any Christian therefore who would maintain his faith alive in Christ must be alert to the responsibilities of that faith in loving obedience to the Lord's will. That is the import of such passages as 2 Peter 1:10,11, "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

In the passages to be considered in the remainder of this lesson, we shall note the following: the possibility of falling from grace, the need of diligence and alertness to keep this possibility from becoming a reality, and the hope held out to all backsliders who still have the capacity for repentance.

### **Pertinent Exhortations**

*"And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord. And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord"* (Acts 11:21-23). The believers designated here who turned unto the Lord to receive the grace of God in salvation from their sins, were exhorted to cleave, hold fast, to the Saviour. If it had been impossible for them to quit cleaving unto Him, then this exhortation was entirely needless. But the plain implication of such an exhortation is that Christians can depart from God and thus forfeit God's saving grace. Thus it is important that they maintain the necessary purpose of heart if they would continue to stay with Him who alone can save eternally.

*"Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God"* (Acts 13:43). If it is impossible for any Christian to depart from the grace of God, then this exhortation to "continue in the grace of God" is also needless. But such an exhortation must be heeded by all Christians who would continue to keep themselves in God's saving grace.

*"And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the*

grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). The possibility of falling from grace is definitely implied in this statement. The Christian who fails to maintain a living faith in Christ, such a faith as works through love, has received in vain the grace of God since there will be no heavenly benefit of that grace for him. Carefully read 2 Peter 2:20-22.

### **Fallen Away From Grace**

*"Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4).* No affirmation of the possibility of falling from grace can be plainer than this. The Galatian Christians, who sought justification by the law of Moses, were "severed from Christ . . . fallen away from grace." In so denying that justification is solely in Christ, they were removing themselves from Christ and were holding to a perverted gospel, a gospel that could not save: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6,7).

What about those Christians today who seek justification by their own merits in their legalistic approach to the law of Christ? When any Christian obeys any part of the law of Christ with a sense of pride in his own doing, not out of trust in and love for Christ, with the expectation of achieving, earning, or deserving eternal salvation, has he not perverted the gospel of Christ and denied the saving power of Christ alone by God's unmerited favor? Has he not also fallen away from grace, severing himself from God and Christ?

### **Complete Apostasy**

*"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or more witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:26-31).*

In considering this description of complete apostasy, note the following pertinent points:

1. *Received the knowledge of the truth.* One might conclude that this is merely academic knowledge of the truth were it not for the further description the inspired writer gives of these apostates, undeniably portraying them as children of God. The fact is that they received the knowledge

of the truth because without it they could not have been delivered from sin. See John 8:32.

2. *Sanctified by the blood of the covenant.* This is definitely a description of children of God, Christians, for they have been sanctified by the power of Christ's blood. The word "sanctify" is from the Greek *hagiazō*. Part of the definition J. H. Thayer gives to this word is "to purify by expiation, free from guilt of sin: 1 Cor. VI.II; Eph. V.26; Heb. X.10, 14,29." Can anyone become free from the guilt of sin and not be a child of God, a Christian?

Now let us consider what those who have been sanctified, made free from the guilt of sin, can do.

1. *They can sin wilfully.* The meaning of the phrase "sin wilfully" is that of complete apostasy; that is, the child of God so sinning as to cut himself off deliberately and determinedly from all further part in the sacrifice of Christ, rejecting this sacrifice as futile.

2. *They can tread under foot the Son of God.* Those who sin wilfully even express contempt and enmity toward Christ.

3. *They can count Christ's blood an unholy thing.* The precious blood of Christ is considered by such apostates as a common thing without any atoning power.

4. *They can do despite unto the Spirit of grace.* It is plainly said of the Spirit in the holy scriptures that He can be grieved and vexed so that He will depart from the hearts of God's children who determinedly disobey the divine commandments. See Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19. The phrase "hath done despite" in the text denotes rejection with injury and insult.

The inspired writer graphically portrays the consequences of apostasy: "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fierceness of fire," "a much sorer punishment" than "death without compassion" under the law of Moses. This is a description of spiritual death, eternal punishment in "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

In light of the danger of such complete apostasy as the Hebrew letter portrays, can we not see how important it is for the Christian to cultivate his faith in good works so that he will never reject the gospel of God's grace? See Hebrews 3:12-14. Every Christian needs to give constant heed to such exhortations as the following: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58); "And we desire that each one of you may show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to the end: that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:11,12).

### ***Falling Short of the Grace of God***

*"Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which*



*no man shall see the Lord: looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God . . .” (Hebrews 12:14,15).* The sanctification designated here, which is necessary for men to see God, is that which is the fruit of the sanctification sinners receive when they are made free from sin by the blood of Christ (Romans 6:22; Hebrews 10:29). It is the sanctification or holiness that is the result of faith working through love. Those who fail to follow after such sanctification, along with peace, will fail to see the Lord, falling short of the grace of God. How important it is, then, that each Christian should follow the exhortation of “looking carefully” to see that this tragedy of tragedies never happens to him. In so doing, he will give heed to such injunctions as the following: “Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom withstand stedfast in your faith . . . I have written unto you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand fast therein” (1 Peter 5:8,9,12).

### ***Returning to God and His Grace***

When a Christian falls from grace that does not mean per se that he can never stand again in God’s favor. Of course, if his apostasy is such that he has actually completely and determinedly rejected the gospel system, no longer to believe in the fact of Christ’s saving power, his eternal doom is irretrievably sealed. See again Hebrews 10:26-31. One who has so completely succumbed to the dominion of sin has lost the capacity for repentance and is therefore entirely unable to turn again to God’s saving grace. See Hebrews 6:4-8.

But the backslider who has yet to become so hardened by sin that he cannot repent, who still believes in the fact of Christ’s saving power, can most certainly return to God and His grace. If the Galatian Christians, who had “fallen away from grace,” were irretrievably lost, it is evident that Paul would not have wasted his time and effort in writing to them. But the wish that he had for them, which underlies the entire epistle, is expressed in the last verse: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.” It must have been Paul’s prayer that this wish would not be vainly expressed, but that those to whom it was directed would penitently return to the grace of Him alone who could save eternally.

In considering the possibility of falling from grace, let us not forget that there is no more odious spiritual state in the eyes of the Lord than lukewarmness. To the church in Laodicea, Jesus said, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Revelation 3:15-17). The spiritual condition of these Laodicean Christians, as well as all other

lukewarm Christians, involved a faith that obeyed some of the Lord's commands, but which involved a compromise between adherence to the Lord and adherence to the world. It involved such an attitude as attempted to accomplish the impossible: to cling to and serve both the Lord and the world (Matthew 6:24). Cf. 1 John 2:15,16. It is evident that such a faith is more barren in the eyes of the Lord than the faith of those who are outright backsliders.

But odious though the lukewarm condition be, the words of Jesus to the Laodiceans are words of encouragement directed to all today whose faith no longer uncompromisingly seeks to obey His will but who still believe in His saving power and have the capacity to penitently return to Him: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. He that overcometh, I will give him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:18-21).

Every child of God who has fallen from grace, but not irretrievably so, needs to "remember Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:8), to "consider him" (Hebrews 12:3), in order to revive his barren or flagging faith. As he penitently obeys the following exhortation, he will again trust in and obey the Lord, and thus stand again in divine grace: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee. Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:14-17).

We must not overlook the responsibility of faithful Christians to lead their unfaithful brethren back to God and His grace. Indeed, no Christian can truly have a living, loving, obedient faith in the Lord who overlooks this responsibility. "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20).

## Questions

1. Why must the Christian constantly be reminded to "cleave unto the Lord," to "continue in the grace of God," and to "receive not the grace of God in vain"?

2. Discuss the meaning of the phrases "severed from Christ" and "fallen away from grace" found in Galatians 5:4.
3. Discuss Hebrews 10:26-31. In light of the danger of the apostasy described in this passage, why is it important that the Christian cultivate his faith in good works? In your answer, give special attention to 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 3:12-14; 6:11,12.
4. In the context of Hebrews 12:14,15, discuss the importance of the Christian "looking carefully."
5. In light of such passages as Revelation 3:15-17; 2 Timothy 2:8, Hebrews 12:3, Ephesians 5:14-17, Galatians 6:1, and James 5:19,20, what hope is held out to the unfaithful Christian who still has the capacity for repentance?
6. What responsibility do faithful Christians have to their unfaithful brethren?

## GRACE FOR LIVING (1)

As we noted in the introductory remarks of the preceding lesson, it is impossible for the Christian who has a trusting, loving, obedient faith in Christ to be eternally lost. But it is also true that for any Christian to live as he ought so that his faith will continue to have access to the Lord's saving power, he must depend on the grace of God. It is grace that saved him from his old sins, and it is also grace that will keep him saved so that he will receive by that same grace the heavenly inheritance.

Before we discuss the passages that expressly connect the grace of God with Christian living, we direct our attention to the following pertinent passage: "So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure*" (*Philippians 2:12,13*). The inspired apostle here presents both the Christian's side and God's side of salvation. The Christian's side is to obey the command, "Work out your own salvation." It is noteworthy that Paul does not say that the Christian is to work *for* but to work *out* his salvation. The meaning here is clearly expressed in Weymouth's translation: "Make sure of your salvation." Having received salvation from his sins by God's grace, the Christian is to give diligence to obey the divine will so that he will be continually assured of his saved relationship to God, thus never to fall but to be eternally saved. That is exactly the import also of Peter's exhortation in connection with the Christian's responsibility to supply in his faith the graces of holy living: "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to *make your calling and election sure*: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10,11).

But any Christian who diligently strives to obey the Lord's will is doomed to failure if he fails to recognize God's side of salvation: "for it is God who worketh in you." True, God's power to work in the Christian is unavailing if the Christian does not submit himself to the divine will, but it is also true that the Christian's submission to the divine will is unavailing without God's power working in him. As Bernard of Clairvaux expressed it, "Our will does nothing thereunto without grace, but grace is inactive without our will."

### ***Instruction of Grace***

The basic power of God that works in the Christian to produce a life of holiness, thus to make his salvation sure, is the instruction of grace: "For the *grace of God* hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

*instructing us*, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). The instruction of God’s unmerited favor given the Christian concerning His will is both negative and positive: it declares what he should do and what he should not do, to abstain from evil and to do good.

This instructing power of grace to make the Christian what he ought to be is found in the word of God. To the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, “And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). See John 17:17.

The most that the legalist can see in the building-up or sanctifying power of the divine word is the instruction concerning the *will* of Christ, the rules for Christian living and the example of Christ. But the instruction of grace in the divine word involves more than that; it also involves teaching concerning the grace that gives the Christian the power to make the Lord’s will real in his life. The all-sufficiency of the word of God is not in question here. See 2 Timothy 3:16,17. We do, however, strongly call into question the doctrine that the all-sufficiency of the divine word for Christian living is *limited* to its rules and regulations and to the example of Christ.

In virtually ruling out of their lives the enabling grace of God, the only power that can make them effective in obeying the Lord’s will and in following His example, it is little wonder that so many Christians are spiritually impoverished. Their idea of the Christian life is that God has given them some rules and regulations to be obeyed and the example of Christ to be followed, but to be done by main strength and awkwardness in their own power alone. In thus rejecting the grace that enables them to live as they ought, they have ruled the *Person* of God out of their lives. They have failed to see that the instruction of grace pertains every whit as much to the divine presence as it does to the divine will.

The promise of the divine presence in the faithful Christian’s life is plainly revealed in Hebrews 13:5, “For himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee.” And according to the following passages, the divine presence guarantees the Christian all the strength and help he needs to accomplish the Lord’s purpose concerning him: “. . . he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:6); “But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:17,18); “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word” (2 Thessalonians 2:16,17); “And the God of all

grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you" (1 Peter 5:10).

This sustaining, strengthening power of God's grace to keep the Christian on the narrow path that leads to eternal salvation is dependent on his faith in Christ: "Who by the power of God are guarded by faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time . . . receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:5,9). See 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 5:4.

### **Plenteous Grace**

Let us now consider the following passages which expressly deal with enabling, sustaining grace—plenteous grace for the victorious Christian life:

*"And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).* The word "all" here, according to the context, designates the entire Jerusalem church. The unmerited favor of God which rested on them manifested itself in the generous distribution of their material goods in meeting the needs of their indigent brethren (verses 32,34,35).

*"And thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled" (Acts 14:26).* The work referred to here was that which was fulfilled by Paul and Barnabas during the first missionary journey. The success of this work was due to the grace, unmerited favor, of God to which they had been committed. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:7. This grace had sustained and protected them during their perilous journey, making it possible for them to accomplish the work they had set out to do. And whenever else the missionaries of the early church set out to do the Lord's work, they were also committed to divine grace; for example, "But Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord" (Acts 15:40). Moreover, when Christians today undertake any work in the name of the Lord, they too should be committed to God's grace, with the realization that only as they depend on that grace do they have the assurance of fulfilling God's purpose concerning them.

*"For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward" (2 Corinthians 1:12).* Paul affirms here that he and his fellow-worker Timothy were indebted to the grace, unmerited favor, of God for their holy and sincere behavior during their stay in Corinth. Not only had God's grace instructed them how to live, but it also gave them the power to make this instruction efficacious in their lives. Paul omitted no opportunity to credit the grace of God for his godly living, and his example should be followed by Christians today.

*"For all things are for your sakes, that the grace, being multiplied*

through the many, may cause the thanksgiving to abound unto the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15). In the context of this passage, "grace is the divine energy which is shown in the labor, suffering, and triumph of the apostles" (Marvin R. Vincent). This grace given the apostles resulted in God's saving grace being brought to many sinners, who in turn thanked God for this wondrous, unmerited favor bestowed on them. And the enabling, sustaining grace of God still works through faithful members of the church to bring God's saving grace to sinners, redounding to the praise of His glory.

"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:1,2). The rich liberality of the poverty-stricken Macedonian Christians was not of themselves alone, but of God's grace given to them. Indeed, Paul affirms that "beyond their power, they gave of their own accord" (verse 3). What these extremely poor saints gave, which was impossible by their own power alone, was made possible by the power of God's grace working in them. The apostle speaks of this power for liberal giving in the Corinthians saints as "the exceeding grace of God in you" (2 Corinthians 9:14).

Since liberal giving is made possible by divine grace working in the Christian who is submissive both to the will and the power of God, such giving is itself designated by the word "grace": "Insomuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this *grace* also. But as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this *grace* also . . . and not only so, but who was also appointed by the churches to travel with us in the matter of this *grace*, which is ministered by us to the glory of the Lord, and to show our readiness" (2 Corinthians 8:6,7,19).

"And God is able to make all *grace* abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). In this passage and its context (verses 9-11), Paul contemplates the grace that gives the faithful Christian the power to accomplish every good work. And that power or grace, Paul insists, is due to the fact that God is *able*. No Christian can possibly fail to abundantly bear fruit in good works who recognizes and trusts in the unlimited ability of God to fulfill His righteous purpose for him.

". . . *inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace*" (Philippians 1:7). The grace designated here is the unmerited favor of God that made it possible for Paul to successfully preach the gospel in the face of all the persecutions and troubles that confronted him. The Philippian saints shared in this grace by imparting material help to the apostle (4:15) and also by suffering themselves for the gospel's sake (1:28-30).

They were empowered and sustained in all this by God's grace.

*"Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1).* In this passage, the strength the Christian receives in Christ is expressly linked to grace, unmerited favor. The meaning of this command given to Timothy is that the Christian is to rely on the grace that God imparts through Christ. We are reminded here of such passages as the following: "But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14); "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might" (Ephesians 6:10); "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Since Christ's presence is realized through the Spirit (1 John 3:24), it is evident that the Holy Spirit, who is designated as "the Spirit of grace" (Hebrews 10:29), makes possible in the Christian the presence and power of God's grace. This conclusion is confirmed in Ephesians 3:16,17, ". . . that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Then, too, a comparison of the following passages will also show that the presence and power of God's grace is equivalent to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit: "Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited" (Hebrews 13:9); "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). See 2 Timothy 1:13,14.

*"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28).* This passage affirms that the acceptable service Christians render God depends on His grace. Therefore it behooves every Christian who seeks to do God's will to seek always also the grace that both empowers and sanctifies his obedience.

*"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:6,7); "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5,6).* In the respective contexts of these passages, James 4:7-10 and 1 Peter 5:7-10, the grace spoken of is that which makes it possible for the Christian to resist the devil and to live a life of sanctification. See 1 Corinthians 10:13. No matter how powerful the devil and temptation may be, the Christian can receive from God "more grace" to successfully resist them. But it is only as he is humble, having a submissive spirit, that he has access to this grace.

"The sure way to please God is to submit to the dispensations of his grace and providence; and when a man acknowledges him in all his ways,



he will direct all his steps" (Adam Clarke).

In light of what James and Peter have to say about the relationship of grace to humility, it is not difficult to recognize the folly of the pride that characterizes legalism. The legalist tacitly believes that he must depend on his own power alone in order to live the Christian life. He would submit himself to the divine law without submitting himself to the giver of that law. Thus in failing to humble himself in the sight of God and to depend on the strength that comes from His grace, his life can only be spiritually destitute and empty, without the power to become conformed to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

### Questions

1. In light of the teaching of Philippians 2:12,13, discuss man's side and God's side of salvation.
2. Discuss the instruction of grace in the word of grace as involving both the will of God and the power to make that will real in the Christian's life.
3. Discuss the following passages which deal with the divine presence and power in the life of the faithful Christian: Hebrews 13:5; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 4:17,18; 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17; 1 Peter 5:10; 1 Peter 1:5,9; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 5:4.
4. What was the "great grace" that was upon the Jerusalem church?
5. Why should Christians today, like the early Christians, never undertake any work in the name of the Lord without being committed to divine grace?
6. Discuss the grace that gave Paul and Timothy the power to live holy and sincere lives.
7. Discuss the grace that makes for liberal, generous giving. Why is such giving itself designated by the word "grace" in the New Testament?
8. Discuss the ability of God to make all grace abound unto the Christian for every good work.
9. How were the Philippian saints partakers of Paul with grace?
10. What is meant by the command given to Timothy, "Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"?
11. According to Hebrews 12:28, why do Christians need grace?
12. Discuss the relationship of grace to humility as taught in James 4:6,7 and 1 Peter 5:5,6.

### GRACE FOR LIVING (2)

Involved in grace for living are the gifts of that grace, the endowments of God's unmerited favor which make possible the functioning of the body of Christ, the church. Concerning these grace-gifts, Paul wrote, "For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry, etc." (Romans 12:4-8); "I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:4-7); "But unto each of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. . . . And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ, . . ." (Ephesians 4:7-16).

Some of the gifts enumerated in these passages pertain to miraculous power, which the church was endowed with during the state of its infancy; for example, prophets (prophecy) and apostles, who were endowed with the power of inspiration. This was a necessary gift for the functioning of the church before the New Testament scriptures came into existence. Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:4,8-11 in connection with 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; 14:29,30. See Ephesians 2:19-22.

Concerning the apostleship as a gift of God's grace, Paul wrote, ". . . Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake" (Romans 1:4,5); ". . . the grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God . . ." (Romans 15:15,16); "(for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me . . ." (Galatians 2:8,9); "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:7,8). See Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 3:10; Ephesians 3:1,2. Cf. Acts 6:8.

#### *Grace Upon Grace*

It is noteworthy that whatever the gifts of God's grace may be,

whether the miraculous gifts during the church's infancy or the un-miraculous gifts with which the church has always been endowed, they cannot be utilized without the strength which grace supplies. It is grace upon grace, then, that makes possible the life that fulfills God's purpose for His people, the church. Paul had this in mind when he wrote, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Notice that it was grace that made Paul what he was, an apostle, and it was also grace that made it possible for him to abundantly labor as an apostle—*grace upon grace!*

The foregoing concept is also expressed in 1 Peter 4:10,11, "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Peter here affirms that the gifts involved in the manifold grace of God must be utilized through the strength which God supplies. This strength, as we previously considered, depends on "the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). As important as it is for Christians to loyally apply themselves to the will of God and to the gifts He has given them, they can accomplish nothing to His glory without His strength working in them. And since both the gifts and strength of which Peter speaks are expressions of God's grace, unmerited favor, then God is to be glorified in all things. Human merit, then, is completely ruled out of the successful, victorious Christian life. See James 1:17.

And every virtue we possess,  
And every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness  
Are His alone.

### **Prayer**

No discussion of the grace that makes possible the fruitful Christian life is meaningful without due consideration being given to prayer, for it is in prayer that the Christian overtly relies on the grace that God supplies for victorious living. A significant passage in this regard is Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." The throne of God, symbolic of the place where Christians meet God in prayer, is described by the word "grace" because the blessings the petitioners receive from God are not on the grounds of their merits or just deserts but according to "the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ" (Ephesians 2:7). Every faithful Christian has the sure promise of God that at any time he may approach the

throne of grace with boldness and confidence, knowing that he will receive from God all-sufficient grace to meet his every need.

A striking example of prayer as access to the sustaining, strengthening, succoring grace of God is given in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

It is true that in praying to God for deliverance from the thorn in his flesh, whatever that thorn may have been, Paul did not receive what he asked for. But he did receive the all-sufficient grace of God through the power of Christ to sustain him in this difficulty and in every other difficulty he faced. Thus he greatly rejoiced. And every other Christian can also be strong in the Lord, receiving through prayer the grace that will give him victory in the face of every difficulty. He, too, can rejoice in the all-sufficient grace of God that meets his every need.

The way is open to the throne of grace,  
Draw near, and in the name of Jesus plead,  
You who have been saved by His blood,  
Look to Him come now with all thy need.

The Father waits to hear thy humble prayer,  
And Jesus speaks, Ask and thou shalt receive;  
Most gracious is the call, the promise great,  
Full blessing will be thine if thou believe.

Not only are we to approach the throne of grace to receive grace to meet our own needs but also the needs of others. Concerning prayer for his fellow Christians, Paul wrote, "To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:11,12).

### ***Growing in Grace***

It is entirely fitting that this series of lessons should draw to a close with a discussion of the significance and need of growing in divine grace. Christians are commanded in 2 Peter 3:17,18, "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow

in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The contrast drawn in this passage is between falling from steadfastness, thus to fall from grace (Galatians 5:4), and growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. There is no standing still for the Christian in his spiritual relations. Either he is going forward with Christ to heaven or backward without Christ to hell. If the Christian would therefore never lose his steadfastness, never to be "carried away with the error of the wicked," he must grow spiritually, which depends on his growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. As he grows in the knowledge of the will of Christ through his study of the divine word, giving diligence to translate that knowledge into his life, he will also grow in the unmerited favor of God that will make it possible for him to live faithfully and obediently whatever his circumstances may be. Such a life cannot fail to be victorious in Christ.

"The word 'grace' [in 2 Peter 3:18] sums up the manifold Divine gifts, gifts of the grace of God—the gift of holiness, the gift of love to God and love to man, the gift of spiritual energy. All the blooming aspirations, all the budding spiritual hopes, all the ripening fruits of holy endeavour are due to the Divine life within, are through the grace of God in Christ. As the sun shines forth in his radiant strength, thaws the frozen earth, and causes the seed to spring up, the leaves and fruit to appear, so when the sun of God's grace shines upon the soul, then in the soul will increasingly appear those graces that are an image, however faint, of the Divine grace; and holiness and righteousness will 'grow from more to more,' manifesting themselves in purer beauty, richer fruitfulness, and nobler power" (James Hastings).

*"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14).*

### Questions

1. Discuss the gifts of God's grace, the endowments of God's unmerited favor which make it possible for the functioning of the body of Christ, the church.
2. Noting 1 Corinthians 15:10; 1 Peter 4:10,11; 2 Timothy 2:1, discuss the grace of God that makes possible the utilization of His grace-gifts—grace upon grace. Why is human merit completely ruled out of the successful, victorious Christian life?
3. In light of Hebrews 4:16, what is the significance of prayer in the life of the faithful, victorious Christian?
4. What lesson should Christians today receive from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10?
5. Discuss the Christian's approach to the throne of grace on behalf of others.
6. Why must the Christians who would live victoriously "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"?

