

# *Simply* GRACE

GRACE TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE  
IN THIS PRESENT AGE

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rockhousepublishing  
charlestown • indiana

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Simply Grace: *Grace to Live a Goldy Life in this Present Age*

ISBN 978-0-9884303-1-0

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## *Acknowledgements*

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to personally thank four wonderful ladies who helped make this book a reality. The first is my lovely wife Kathy who has been tasked with putting up with me for the past 25 years. God knew exactly what He was doing when He brought Kathy and me together. Kathy has the difficult task of keeping me rooted and grounded in reality. To Kay Hawthorne (Mom), Jan Stewart, and Cindy Cross, I want to thank you for the many hours you spent reading and proofing this book. I especially want to thank Jan Stewart for her objectivity and her ability to reel in my thoughts when they seemed to stray.

I would also like to thank Reverend Shaun Garing and his crew of Rock House Publishing for creating the finished product that you now hold. Reverend Shaun was extremely helpful in guiding me through the publishing process and made the whole experience as painless as possible. Reverend Shaun conveys true humility.

Finally I want to thank my dad, John Hawthorne, for putting into motion the series of events that led me to step out of my comfort zone and write this book. He knows what I mean when I write, “You are never to do it again.”



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## *Prologue*

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### PROLOGUE

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Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear,  
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be,  
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease;

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I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.<sup>1</sup>

Like no other song that I know, “Amazing Grace” is the one song that will melt even the hardest of hearts. I have been in prison services where many of the inmates came just to have something to occupy their lengthy day. Prayers were prayed...they could have cared less. Sermons were preached...just another person jabbering their jaws. Play “Amazing Grace” and they jump to life like a spark to a flame.

What is it about that one song that evokes a total personality shift? Is it the message behind the song, or nostalgia from a simpler and possibly happier time? Or...is it the time when they felt the gentle nudge of the Holy Spirit and the abundance of His love as He called them to a new and better life?

Amazing Grace...If we could fully grasp just how truly amazing it really is. My desire, as you read this book, is for you to discover for yourself the abundance of God’s grace. God loves each of us so much and His desire is that we walk in the fullness of what He has planned for each of our lives. By understanding the many sided operations of His grace, we can walk in confidence knowing that our Heavenly Father is fully able to not only lead us through life’s many dangers, toils and snares, but to empower us to fulfill His divine destiny for our lives.

## *Prologue*

This book is written for the purpose of helping not only the young in Christ learn to walk in God's grace, but to serve as a reminder to those who have walked with Jesus for many years that God has plans and purposes for your life. You are never too old and your light is never too dim to walk in the fullness of what God has for you.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be,  
As long as life endures.

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<sup>1</sup> Amazing Grace was written by John Newton and first published in 1779. Newton, a self proclaimed wretch, wrote this song following his divine deliverance from certain tragedy as he tried to steer his ship through a violent storm.



## *Chapter One*

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### WHAT IS GRACE?

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Several years ago I asked the Pastor at a church I was attending the meaning of grace. His definition to me was one that undoubtedly had been passed down to him as it had been passed down to the one who taught him. His definition was, “Grace is the unmerited favor of God.”

What did that mean, “the unmerited favor of God?” I knew that unmerited meant undeserved, but what about the favor part? What was this favor that was meant for me to which I did not deserve?

Each question I asked brought with it more of the same vague type answers. It was not long into our conversation before I realized that my pastor was about as clueless on the subject as I was. Did that make him a bad pastor? Of course not...but it did open my eyes to understand that I needed to study the Word for myself and not lean solely on the knowledge of others.

Little did I know back then but that one question was the catalyst that would ignite the desire within me to uncover the truth concerning the meaning of God’s grace. Do I fully understand all aspects of God’s grace? Absolutely not! The

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Word of God is as infinite as its Author. However, each time I delve into the subject I learn more and more.

So what is grace? To many in the theological circles, the ‘unmerited favor’ definition would be expounded on to denote the grace by which God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, saved us from certain eternal death. This type of grace is known as salvation grace. Salvation grace is a gift given to us by our Heavenly Father. It is totally undeserved because of our sin nature, but greatly appreciated by those who walk in it.

### **Ephesians 2:8 (MKJV)**

*For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast.*

The grace given to us for salvation is a gift from God. There is absolutely nothing we could have done to earn it and nothing we could have done to deserve it. It was offered to us through the loving sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross. Our Heavenly Father loved each and every one of us (the world) so much that He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus) to suffer sin’s death penalty in place of us. (John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21)

For us to know and share the salvation portion of grace is of vital importance; however, it is only the tip of the iceberg as it relates to God’s grace. Unfortunately, there are pastors who are preaching the same salvation message week after week to the same group of people. They never get past the milk of the Word. As a result, many Churches are becoming cold and stagnant, and their membership is dropping off at an alarming rate. Parishioners, such as was with me, are leaving in search of a home where they can learn the meat of the Word.

## WHAT IS *Grace*?

Please don't get me wrong. Winning the lost from eternal damnation is of utmost importance. I do not belittle these pastors, nor do I negate the impact they have made in bringing souls into the Kingdom of God. However, if the Church has no growth, then that indicates that no new souls are being won for the Kingdom. Therefore the salvation message is not having its intended impact.

As I sat under this type teaching those many years ago, I realized that there had to be more to grace than just salvation. I wanted to know why God loved me so much that He gave Jesus, His only begotten Son, to die for me (John 3:16). Furthermore, I wanted the answer to another question directly tied to grace. That question was, "I'm saved...Now what?" Does God save us and then send us out to manage the best we can, or does He provide the wherewithal to live a victorious life?

Eventually the thoughts of grace began to take a back seat to other things. In time my quest to learn about grace was all but forgotten...forgotten by me, but not forgotten by God. What I did not know was that a seed had been planted and was awaiting the right time to sprout.

It was not until years later while listening intently to a message by my current pastor, Pastor Sam Carr,<sup>1</sup> that the flame would be reignited. That was when Pastor Sam began teaching a series on God's grace from Titus 2:11-14. It was verses eleven and twelve that made the greatest impact on my life.

### **Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)**

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly*

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*passions, and to live self-controlled, upright  
and godly lives in this present age...*

With those two verses my world opened up in a new and awesome way. Within a matter of minutes the Holy Spirit opened my spiritual eyes to see what I had been missing for so many years. My desire to learn about the grace of God was kicked into overdrive and I was hungry for more. For about a year “grace” was my primary focus.

Everywhere I went in the Word, I saw God and His grace in action. What had been head knowledge was making its way into my heart. Once a truth is captured in your heart, nothing can persuade you otherwise; you know-that-you-know. The more accurate term for this heart knowledge is ‘rhema’ knowledge, or a rhema word. Rhema is a Greek word which means, the Lord speaking His dynamic living word in a believer to inbirth faith.<sup>2</sup> A rhema word is a word that is embedded in your spirit by the Holy Spirit. It is a truth that has come alive within you.

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ONCE A TRUTH IS CAPTURED IN YOUR HEART,  
NOTHING CAN PERSUADE YOU OTHERWISE; YOU  
KNOW-THAT-YOU-KNOW.

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That is how grace had become with me. Through this newfound truth, I knew that God’s grace was not just for salvation. It was and is for so much more. The grace of God is a teacher. As a teacher, grace lets us know that we DO have the ability to renounce and reject all ungodliness and worldly desires. Furthermore, grace teaches us that we can live self controlled, upright, and spiritually whole lives right here and right now.

## WHAT IS *Grace*?

With grace comes a spiritual maturity that we would otherwise not be able to walk in. This maturity is not something we receive in the sweet by and by. No, it is something we can live for today...in this present age in which we are living. God's grace teaches us that we do not have to be conformed to this world, its ways, or its perverted ideas. Grace teaches us that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we may prove was is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

Grace teaches. Therefore, it is a learning process. Grace does not expect perfection overnight. Yes, there most certainly will be bumps and hurdles along the way, but if we hold fast and don't give up we will see our lives becoming more in line with Almighty God's standard of holiness. Better yet, God's abundant grace teaches us that God is not mad at us when we falter and make mistakes. Grace looks at the heart and the motives of the person. Grace looks at the manner in which we run our race.

In the course of this book, I plan to show various aspects of grace beginning with salvation grace. Furthermore, I will show how we sometimes frustrate grace so that it is not working effectively in our lives. Finally, I intend to show that grace is not a license to sin; it is not a license to say, "I will do what I want because God will forgive me."

### GRACE DEFINED

So, what is grace? As written earlier, God is infinite so it is impossible to give a "one-size-fits-all" definition that fully explains all aspects of grace... or any other Godly attribute for that matter. However, I can share a definition that I believe the Holy Spirit has placed within my heart so that I may better understand His grace.

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*Grace is God's abundant mercy. His desire is to not only save us from the penalty of eternal death (through the sacrifice of His dear son Jesus), but to empower us to live our daily lives in a self-controlled, upright, and Godly manner. God's grace is His strength, His power, His wisdom, and His love freely extended to all and within all who call upon Jesus as Lord and Savior. **Grace is the action to God's love.***

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor Sam Carr, Senior Pastor, Word of Life Center, 4425 Meriwether Road, Shreveport, LA 71109

<sup>3</sup> Rhema; BibleSuite.com; Strong's Concordance #4487 Greek; Helps Word Studies

## Chapter Two

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### SALVATION GRACE

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**(Titus 2:11-12)**

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.*

Notice in the above verse that the grace of God has appeared to all people to offer salvation. It does not say, “To some of the people.” No, it is available to each and every person.

There is a teaching that had diminished for some time but is resurfacing at an alarming rate which implies that God picks and chooses those whom He will save. This type of teaching is not only false but dangerous as it produces four major levels of thought concerning salvation.

The first major group is the prideful group. Because they view themselves as the “Heaven bound bunch,” they believe they are more precious in the eyes of God than others. On the complete opposite side - the second major group - there are those walking in fear believing that they do not measure up to God and will be on the list of those doomed to hell. The third and fourth major groups of thought are those who say, “Why bother, God has made up His mind anyway,” or “Hey,

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I'm saved, I can do whatever I want without fear or repercussion.”

In Chapter 10, the fourth group of thought will be discussed in the section pertaining to the perversion of grace. However, for the first three major groups of thought, the Word is much too clear concerning God's love and His desire for all to be saved. Consider the following verses:

### **John 3:16,17 (NIV)**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

### **2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)**

*The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

### **1 Timothy 2:3-6 (NIV)**

*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people...*

### **Romans 5:8 (NIV)**

*But God demonstrates his own love for us*

## *Salvation* GRACE

*in this: **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

These are but a few of the many verses establishing God's desire for all mankind to be saved. Christ Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world (John 3:17). Unfortunately, not all will accept this gracious offer of salvation.

Looking back at Titus 2:11, we see that salvation grace is offered to all mankind. However, it is up to us as individuals whether or not we will accept this eternal gift. As unbelievable as it may sound, some people just do not want to be saved. Some even joke about the wild parties they will hold with their friends while in hell.

Jesus said that if we know Him, we know the Father. From the Word of God it is easy to see that Jesus was available to whomever cried out to Him, but never once did He force Himself upon them. God will not force His salvation on anyone who does not want it. Through His Holy Spirit He will reach out to us, but ultimately the choice of whether we want to walk in fellowship with Him is totally up to us.

### THE WORD OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

Before we can fully understand any aspect of God's grace, it is necessary to first learn the relationship between grace and the Holy Scriptures. They go hand in hand and cannot be separated. To do so would cause the student of the Word to walk in error.

We are living in a period of time when more and more ministers are preaching messages that tickle the ears of the people in hope that they do not offend anyone. Sermons are becoming more watered down and as such are void of any

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power. Instead of using the Word of God as the source for their messages, many are using some 'Five Steps to Feeling Good' lecture or other self help courses.

The Apostle Paul made clear the importance of the Word of God in winning souls to the Kingdom. In Romans 1:16 (MKJV) he said, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

Try as you might, your words alone will never convince anyone of their need to accept Jesus as Lord. Your words must be backed by the power of the Word of God. This is made clear in the next verse. "For in it (the Word) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Notice that the Word reveals God's righteousness in a manner that is from faith to faith. This indicates that there is a learning process that must take place. In the beginning a newborn child of God has the faith to accept God's free gift of salvation, yet he has little faith for anything else. As he learns more and more of God's Word, so increases his faith; he spiritually goes from one level of faith to another. Again, apart from the power of the Word of God, a person's faith level cannot be increased. Faith comes by hearing and this hearing by the Word of God, (Romans 10:17). It is a combo package.

### THE MEANING OF SALVATION

The Word is the power of God unto salvation. The Greek word for salvation is 'Soteria'<sup>1</sup> which includes healing, deliverance, and preservation. God never intended to just save us and then let us fend for ourselves. No, He wants to deliver us from all evil, preserve (guard) us, and to heal our bodies.

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**Psalms 121:5-8 (The Message)**

*God's your Guardian, right at your side to protect you—Shielding you from sunstroke, sheltering you from moonstroke. God guards (preserves) you from every evil, he guards (preserves) your very life. He guards (preserves) you when you leave and when you return, he guards (preserves) you now, he guards (preserves) you always.*

It is so unfortunate that many Christians walk in doubt concerning God's will for them to live a life of health and preservation. Yet, that is their very request each time they recite what has become known as the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). "Our Father which art in heaven, holy is Your name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..." Notice the request – "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If there is no sickness in heaven, should there be any question concerning God's desire for us to be healed here on earth?

"Give us this day our daily bread..." By this request, we are asking that He preserve us and nourish us. "...deliver us from evil..." We are praying for deliverance. If Jesus taught us to pray this way, shouldn't we believe what it is that we are praying?

So often I hear people claim that God made them sick to humble them or teach them a lesson. How sad that they would think such a thing when the Word clearly tells us that Jesus, out of the abundance of His love for us, bore our sickness, pain and suffering on the cross.

**Isaiah 53:3-5 (NIV)**

*He was despised and rejected by*

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*mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and **by his wounds we are healed.***

### **1 Peter 2:24**

*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: **by whose stripes ye were healed.***

### **Matt 8:17**

*That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, **Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.***

Jesus took all of our negatives and turned them into positives so that we are able to run our own individual race in complete victory. Our salvation was not just a rescue mission from eternal death, but the provisions necessary to be successful in our earthly walk.

How sad that significant portions of the Gospel are ignored in lieu of teachings that stress the, “Sweet by and by,” mentality. As such, many Christians are walking defeated lives in the here and now. This is a point brought out by Andrew Wommack in his personal commentary:

## *Salvation* GRACE

*“...the truths of the gospel are not commonly preached or understood in many churches. This is the reason that so many Christians are not walking in all the benefits of their salvation. They don’t have the power of the gospel working in them.”*

*“If a person needs healing, it’s in the gospel. If deliverance is needed, it’s in the gospel. Prosperity, answered prayer, joy, peace, love; they are all found through understanding and believing the gospel.”<sup>2</sup>*

### ACCESSING SALVATION GRACE

Apart from the Word which is the power of God unto salvation, what does it take to access this salvation grace? That is simple. It takes nothing more than an open heart that is willing to say “yes” to the call of the Holy Spirit to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

#### **Romans 10:9,10 (NIV)**

*If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

Notice that! If you believe in your heart... This is rhema knowledge imparted by the Holy Spirit which bypasses your brain and is implanted in your heart. It is from the abundance of what the Holy Spirit has planted within your heart that you are enabled to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord; you know-that-you-know.

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Furthermore, it is with your heart that you are justified, or made in right standing with God. The word ‘justify’ means being made righteous. The moment you made Jesus Lord of your life, God no longer saw you through the filth of sin but through the pure blood of Jesus which washed you white as snow.

Surely more is required to be saved...that is much too simple? Nope! That is the beauty of God’s plan for our salvation. He totally removed us from the equation by making Jesus the surety of our salvation (Hebrews 7:22).

### A CLEAN SLATE THROUGH SALVATION GRACE

To be a surety means to take the responsibility of the debt off the one and put it on another. That is what Jesus did on the cross; He paid the penalty for our sins. As a result of His amazing sacrifice, He has absolved us from all sins past, present, and future. Jesus became the propitiation (satisfier; atonement) of our sin debt. Let’s look at the following verses:

#### **Romans 3:25-26 (The Message)**

*God sacrificed Jesus on the altar of the world to clear that world of sin. Having faith in him sets us in the clear. God decided on this course of action in full view of the public—to set the world in the clear with himself through the sacrifice of Jesus, finally taking care of the sins he had so patiently endured. This is not only clear, but it’s now—this is current history! God sets things right. He also makes it possible for us to live in his rightness.*

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### **1 John 2:1-2 (The Message)**

*I write this, dear children, to guide you out of sin. But if anyone does sin, we have a Priest-Friend in the presence of the Father: Jesus Christ, righteous Jesus. When he served as a sacrifice for our sins, he solved the sin problem for good—not only ours, but the whole world's.*

### **1 John 4:10 (NLT)**

*This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

### A SPECIAL NOTE

To those who would argue that I'm teaching "Greasy Grace" by telling people that God is totally accepting of us living life any way we desire, please see Chapter 10 dealing with abuse of grace. I would never subscribe to such a despicable lack of respect for our Heavenly Father and His loving grace; such behavior is a perversion of God's grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Soteria; BibleSuite.com; Strong's Greek #4491

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Wommack Living Commentary 2008



## *Chapter Three*

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### EMPOWERMENT GRACE

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Apart from salvation grace, there is another side to grace which is, in many cases, greatly misunderstood or unknown by the Body of Christ. This side of grace is known as empowerment grace. Unlike salvation grace, which is used to rescue those living apart from God, empowerment grace is only available to the child of God; it is not available to the world.

Empowerment grace is a special endowment of God to not just make it through life until we get to heaven, but to empower us to do what He has called us to do. We each are created unto good works through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). This means that God wants us each to join with Jesus in the works that He does, not so that we can earn or hang on to our salvation, but **because** of what He has done for us.

Empowerment grace is that special grace that helps us to stand firm when the world is seemingly falling apart. When chaos, panic, or grief is the order of the day according to the world's standards, God's grace will usher in peace and calmness in the midst of the storm.

Empowerment grace defies all common sense by the world's standards. Empowerment grace is seen in the soldier

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who stands in the midst of a battle and says, “A thousand may fall at my side and ten thousand at my right hand but it shall not come near me,” (Psalms 91:7). Or, it may be the business man or woman facing a seemingly insurmountable task who boldly proclaims, “I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me,” (Philippians 4:13).

Have you ever witnessed a person, whom you knew was born again, go through some type of crisis situation with a strength that seemed unnatural? You might have been thinking, “I could have never done that myself.” How about the parents who forgave a murderer for taking the life of their child...or, the mother who lost not only her child but other family members to an accident, yet had the strength to carry on with life and be a blessing to others? This is empowerment grace.

I am well acquainted with God’s empowerment grace. Not too long ago, my family and I witnessed my Dad having a major heart attack in which he died twice on the operating table before finally being resuscitated. Despite all negative reports of long term disabilities, our family refused to turn away from God’s report. The full account of God’s miracle working power is recorded in my first book, Great is Thy Faithfulness.<sup>1</sup>

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DESPITE ALL NEGATIVE REPORTS OF LONG TERM  
DISABILITIES, OUR FAMILY REFUSED TO TURN AWAY  
FROM GOD’S REPORT.

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It is because of the faithfulness of my Heavenly Father that I am able to write this book with such confidence. His amazing grace flooded my entire family. Through empowerment grace, we were able to pray for and stand with other families who also had loved ones in the intensive

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care unit. We were able to bring laughter to several who moments before were full of sorrow.

According to worldly logic, we should have been as many others in the waiting room who were exhibiting a myriad of emotions. Yet, what they witnessed was exactly the opposite. They saw in us an unexplainable peace and calmness. However, once they talked with us, they knew exactly Who the provider of our peace was.

### EMPOWERMENT FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

So far I have used crisis situations to illustrate empowerment grace, but this grace goes so much further than just having supernatural strength to make it through rough times. Empowerment grace is that grace available to us to help us accomplish everyday ordinary tasks. It is that grace that helps us operate in the gifts that God has bestowed on us. It is that grace that is leading me to write this book.

To illustrate how faithful God is to empower us, I will use myself as an example. To begin, my profession is that of a Firefighter/Paramedic. Along with this great profession, God has given me the gift for teaching the Word. I have been given the honor of being an instructor for the Word of Life School of Ministry in Shreveport, Louisiana. Also, for about nine years, I taught weekly to a group of men who were incarcerated at a nearby prison.

I love to share with groups of people the message that God has placed in my heart. I receive great joy when I see the eyes of the listener light with understanding as they discover a truth that was moments before unknown to them. However, each time I stand before a group there is always a huge obstacle looming over me...threatening to suck the very wind out of

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my sails. That obstacle is called, “Fear of public speaking.” You may be a member of the same club.

When I was a young child in grade school, this fear gripped me so tightly that I struggled to even speak one on one with my teachers. I was terrified. As I grew older, I learned to use humor to try and hide some of those feelings, but the anxiety never left.

Years ago, I had to make a decision. Was I going to let fear stop me from doing what God has called me to do, or was I going to stand firm in the knowledge that I was called to teach? Thank God I chose to trust Him and to allow Him to empower me to do what I don’t necessarily want to do in the natural.

For those who feel the same way concerning public speaking, I will tell you my secret for overcoming this fear. Before I stand before the group, whether it is a few or many, I remind the Lord that He called me to teach and that I am just the voice delivering His message. Several times I have said, “Well, Lord, if I look ridiculous, remember that You told me to do this, so You get to look ridiculous right alongside of me.”

To some that might sound so irreverent, but it is not intended that way. It is based off something the Lord placed in my spirit when I first began teaching. The Lord reminded me that He chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. He was not calling me foolish, but was simply telling me to not worry about how I appeared because it was not about me in the first place.

So, each time I speak before a group of people, I suck it up and force my feet to go. True to the faithfulness of God,

## *Empowerment* GRACE

barely does a minute or two go by before the anointing (empowerment grace) comes over me. At that point I could care less how many pairs of eyeballs are staring back at me.

This same empowerment grace is available to you. Whenever you feel that you are called to do something that goes beyond your own strength and your own abilities, know that you are right where you need to be. Never forget that the gift God has placed in you is not about making you look good, but is about letting others see the goodness of God through you. Just be obedient to the call and enjoy the journey as you watch God move.

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NEVER FORGET THAT THE GIFT GOD HAS PLACED IN YOU IS NOT ABOUT MAKING YOU LOOK GOOD, BUT IS ABOUT LETTING OTHERS SEE THE GOODNESS OF GOD THROUGH YOU.

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A great example of this is found in the Bible in the Book of Zechariah. The account involves an ordinary man by the name of Zerubbabel who was thrust into an extraordinary situation.

The time period is around 538 B.C. and the Jewish people are under the rule of the Medo-Persians who had just recently defeated the mighty nation of Babylon. Having a more humanitarian style of rule than the Babylonians, the king of Persia allowed waves of Jewish prisoners to return to their homeland to rebuild their cities. Of the first wave was a man named Zerubbabel who was appointed as governor by the Persian king to oversee the affairs of Judah. Accompanying him was a high priest by the name of Joshua.

## *Simply* GRACE

Zerubbabel was most likely born in captivity and never had a chance to see his homeland, much less see the glory of Solomon's temple. However, there is little doubt that he heard great tales of the magnificent structure and of its demise.

After a long journey of around 500 miles, Zerubbabel and Joshua arrived in what was left of war-torn Jerusalem following the wake of the Babylonian surge 70 years earlier. From Biblical and historical accounts, the Babylonians laid the city to waste. Despite all that needed to be done, the rebuilding of Solomon's temple was top priority.

At first the rebuilding process went well but it was not long before Zerubbabel was met with opposition from Samaritan settlers. Due to this opposition he only managed to restore the foundation of the temple during a two year period. Soon afterwards construction was halted by Persian leaders and was not allowed to proceed. For seventeen years, no further work would be done to rebuild the temple.

During the seventeen year period with no progress being made towards the completion of the temple, God raised up two prophets by the name of Haggai and Zechariah. Together, they spread the word that the house of the Lord would be rebuilt and that it was time for Zerubbabel to get back to the task of rebuilding the temple. I can only imagine the anxiety and fear that Zerubbabel was experiencing. Through what we see in the Word, it appears that he was feeling overwhelmed and was in definite need of encouragement.

One night while Zerubbabel is sleeping an angel woke him and gives him a message from the Lord. The angel said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts," (Zechariah 4:6). In today's vernacular we might hear, "Zerubbabel, it has nothing to do with you. It is not by

## *Empowerment* GRACE

your might that the temple will be rebuilt but by the Lord's. It is not by your strength, but by the Lord's. Zerubbabel, it is by My Spirit operating in you that this temple will be rebuilt.”

The angel was not through. Speaking in the authority of Almighty God, the angel spoke to the obstacles standing between Zerubbabel and the completion of the temple, “What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of ‘God bless it! God bless it!’” (Zechariah 4:7 NIV).

Wow! Can you image the boldness and the faith that must have risen up in Zerubbabel? Prior to the angel speaking, the obstacles before him may have appeared insurmountable, like a mighty mountain. After the angel spoke, the mountain gave way to level ground. Suddenly Zerubbabel could see beyond his own abilities and could now see through the sufficiency of God's grace working in and through him.

After empowerment from God, Zerubbabel had the faith and the strength to boldly go forth and rebuild the temple. Forget the opposition! Forget the hurdles! Forget the struggles! Zerubbabel had God's word and that was enough. Praise God!

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“NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT  
SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS,” (ZECHARIAH 4:6).

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The same applies to you and to me. Although we may have never been awakened by an angel, the Lord is just as concerned about our day to day affairs that He has tasked us to do. The one major difference is that we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us to continually guide us whereas Zerubbabel did not.

## *Simply* GRACE

### GOD'S GRACE GIFT TO YOU

Never think that God must have bypassed you when it came to the handing out of gifts and the empowerment to fulfill the calling in your life. Chances are you are walking in that gift at this very moment and don't realize it because it just seems so natural.

For instance, I no longer work on the fire line for my department but have gone into the EMS Division (Emergency Medical Services). At the time I went in, I had no clue about computers, organization, or many of the tasks that are related to operating in that division.

One day my boss, who has a wonderful gift for strategic planning, had an idea but did not know how to make the idea a reality. When he told me of the idea, I immediately set to the task of making it happen. Having never dealt with certain computer programs, I taught myself. In no time had a working model of what my boss wanted. What I learned that day is that I have a gift, in certain situations, for making other people's ideas a reality. I did not think of the idea on my own, but I instinctively knew how to make the idea an actuality.

You may be doing something that comes so easy to you that you think, "Anyone can do this." Then you look at someone who is struggling in the area that you find easy and you wonder what is wrong with them. On the flip side, you may be struggling with something that others around you are not. I would love to be able to play the guitar. I have tried several times, but quickly become frustrated because it is so difficult for me. For some reason my fingers just don't seem to want to conform no matter how hard I try.

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**1 Corinthians 12:12-26 (NIV)**

**Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.** For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact **God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.** The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!”

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GOD HAS PLACED THE PARTS IN THE BODY,  
EVERY ONE OF THEM, JUST AS HE WANTED THEM TO BE.

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*And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with***

Simply GRACE

**special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.**

Our Heavenly Father has a place for each of us. As the body of Christ, we are many parts making up the sum of the whole. For us to operate as a single body, each body part must do its assigned task to ensure fluidity of movement.

As with the natural body, the body of Christ has those parts which are more visible than others, but that does not equate to importance. For example, when dealing with our biological body, connective tissue is the most abundant tissue in the body. If you compare connective tissue with a major body part such as the heart, lungs, kidneys, etc., then you might be tempted to say it has no real value. If that is the case then you would be wrong. If it were not for the all important connective tissue, the body would have no support, anchors, or the ability to connect various parts of the body to the other. In other words, without connective tissue, the body falls apart and will cease to exist; it would die.

In Ephesians chapter four we are told that God has placed, within the body, apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, and teachers (five-fold ministry) for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry and for the building up (edifying) of the body. Yes, they are the most visible of the body but that is

## *Empowerment* GRACE

where the separation ends. Notice that their responsibility is to prepare you and me for the work of the ministry.

Somewhere along the way many Christians have become skewed in their thinking believing that the pastor of the church, or those in the five-fold ministry, are the only ones qualified to speak into the lives of others. Not too long ago, a woman came to me upset that her pastor did not personally come to the hospital to pray for a sick friend of hers. My question to her was, “Why did you need the pastor? Why didn’t you pray for her?” After a moment’s thought she agreed that she had just as much spiritual authority to pray for the sick as did her pastor.

Besides the sick, there are people that only you will be able to reach with the Good News of God’s Word. If I were to try to approach them with the Word they might shut down and not listen. Often times it just comes down to them liking one personality over another or just simply trusting one person over another.

It is our responsibility to learn from the five-fold ministry so that we may go into the world proclaiming the name of Jesus. We are the connective tissue of the body of Christ. Without us doing our share of the workload, the body is not able to function as well as it should.

### **Ephesians 4:10-13 (The Message)**

*He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with His gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ’s followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ’s body, the church, until we’re all moving rhythmically*

*Simply* GRACE

*and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.*

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<sup>1</sup> Hawthorne, Patrick W; Great is Thy Faithfulness, A Modern Day Lazarus Experience, Saline, Mi., Diggypod 2012

## *Chapter Four*

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### GRACE IMPARTATIONS

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As I wrote earlier, one of my main questions concerning grace was, “I’m saved, now what?” I did not realize at that time the extent of what being saved meant other than escaping the torments of hell. I did not realize that, by accepting Jesus as my Lord, I was taking on the very nature of God Himself.

Jesus made this so clear in John 15:5. He said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me bears much fruit.” The next sentence is the key, “For without me you can do nothing.”

In nature, the vine carries all the nutrients to the branches. If the vine is healthy so will the branches be healthy. Conversely, if the vine is malnourished or lacking, so will the branches be in lack. In other words, what is in the vine is in the branches. You will never see a tree with healthy branches but an unhealthy trunk. To flip that around, there are many healthy tree trunks with dead branches. What was in the trunk (or the vine) was not received or accepted by the dead branches.

Thank God, Jesus is our vine. All aspects of His goodness, power, strength, etc, will carry over to us (the branches) as long as we do not block the flow. This means we can walk in the same power as Jesus walked. As He loves, so can we

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love. As He forgave, so can we forgive. As He operated in the power of the Holy Spirit, so can we operate in like manner.

Too many times, however, we fail to operate in the same anointing as Jesus because we try to do it in our own strength and our own abilities. Either that or we refuse to set aside something in our lives that is blocking the flow of this anointing.

Remember Jesus said that apart from Him we can do nothing. When we operate contrary to His Word, we block the flow of His abilities (His Grace) from operating in our lives as it should. However, when we flow in His grace we allow Him to impart His own goodness and holiness into our hearts.

You may be unaware, but each time you sing the third stanza of the Christmas song, “O’ Little Town of Bethlehem,” you voice God’s desire to impart His grace unto the world. “How silently, how silently the wondrous Gift is given; so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.” Jesus is the Gift that has been given unto the world. Furthermore, Jesus became the human vessel by which God’s grace could be imparted to us (Ephesians 1:3-6). Our walking in that grace brings praise and glory to the Father.

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WHEN WE OPERATE CONTRARY TO HIS WORD, WE  
BLOCK THE FLOW OF HIS ABILITIES (HIS GRACE) FROM  
OPERATING IN OUR LIVES AS IT SHOULD.

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For us to walk in the grace bestowed on us through our Lord Jesus, we must understand the various impartations. The following grace impartations are by no means the limit to what God has for us but are main points to help us on our journey to walking upright and godly lives. My hope is that, as you

## *Grace* IMPARTATIONS

begin to study grace for yourself, the Holy Spirit will show you the many other facets of His grace.

### GRACE TO FORGIVE

#### **Mark 11:25 (AMP)**

*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it drop (leave it, let it go), in order that your Father Who is in heaven may also forgive you your [own] failings and shortcomings and let them drop.*

The first grace impartation we will look at is the grace to forgive. Forgiveness is the ability to let go of any and all sins committed against us. Apart from God's mercy to forgive us our debts against Him, we would not be able to forgive others for He taught us what forgiveness entails.

Grace to forgive is the impartation of God's ability to forgive others as He has forgiven us. Forgiveness for the born again child of God is not a suggestion; it is a command. So often we think of a command as something to hold us back from doing what we want to do. That should not be your thoughts concerning God. His commands are for the purpose of setting us free; in most cases setting us free from ourselves.

Pope John Paul II made a profound statement concerning the freedom of forgiveness. He said, "Forgiveness is the restoration of freedom to oneself. It is the key held in our own hand to our prison cell."

Failing to forgive locks us in a prison cell of our own making. No one forces us to walk into that cell; we do it of our own accord. To make matters worse, we hold the key to

our freedom, yet we choose to stay imprisoned. “But you don’t know what so-and-so did to me.” No I don’t. But, no matter the offense against you or me, it will never match the offense that Jesus bore on the cross on our behalf.

**John 8:34-35 (The Message)**

*Jesus said, “I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead-end life and is, in fact, a slave. A slave is a transient, who can’t come and go at will.”*

Make no mistake; walking in unforgiveness is a sin. Jesus made it clear in John 8:34 that whoever commits and practices sin is a slave to sin. When we refuse to forgive someone, we will be slaves to the memory of what they did to us. As a result, we become slaves to that particular person. We have effectively allowed that person to restrict our very movements. The sad part is that the offender may not even be aware they hold this power over you. Just recently, I came across an old “Happy Days” television rerun that perfectly illustrates this point.

In this particular episode, a character played by Tom Hanks shows up out of the blue and wants to fight the Fonz for something that happened seventeen years earlier when they were eight years old. In the typical comedy fashion, Tom Hanks attacks the Fonz but is not able to inflict any damage.

Towards the end of the fight, when the Fonz is about to take his turn inflicting injury, he tells the Tom Hanks character, “You stood up to the Fonz...I like that.” Tom Hanks then asks the Fonz if after all these years he still thought him a coward. To that Fonz just looks at him and says, “This may come as a shock to you, but for all these years I haven’t given

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you a thought...I hate that you spent seventeen years tormenting yourself.”

Although the show was a fake, there was truth in what was said. Think back to a time when someone hurt you. If you are like most people, each time you crossed paths with that particular person, the memory of the event resurfaced. Immediately, as if on auto drive, you began to replay the incident in your mind as if it just happened.

I know of people who have been hanging on to a particular hurt for years. Each simply refuses to forgive the person who did them wrong. In some cases, the one who did the hurting has moved on and has no clue that the other person is harboring these ill feelings. Constantly we hear of grown people who use past hurts as a justifier for their present status in life. They have become slaves to the past, imprisoned in a cell of their own making. They have allowed the bully to become their masters.

The grace for forgiveness is the ability to pray, “Father, so-and-so hurt me, but I forgive them as You have forgiven me. I ask that You open my eyes to see them in the love that You have for them.” When we pray with an open and sincere heart, God will begin the process of replacing the hurt and negative feelings with an honest love for that person. As a result, the next time we see that particular person, we will begin to rehearse our prayer of forgiveness and love and not the feelings of hurt.

Is forgiveness always easy? No, it is not. If it were then we would not need God’s grace. Does it happen overnight? In most cases no, it does not. However, when we begin to let God have the hurt He will, according to His Word, turn our sorrow into joy.

## *Simply* GRACE

Does forgiveness mean we are to automatically trust the person who did us wrong? Definitely not! Once trust is lost it is up to the offender to prove that they can be trusted again. As one person said, "Forgive freely, trust slowly." There is truth in the old saying, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." Wisdom should always be a companion when opening the door to trust.

What if the one you are failing to forgive is yourself? Maybe you are having a hard time getting past your "old" self and your selfish deeds. Whatever it is that is keeping you from forgiving yourself, be comforted by the knowledge that you were on the mind of Jesus when He hung on the cross. Remember that you hold the key to your prison cell. The only guard holding you back from leaving that cell is you. The same blood that was shed for the forgiveness of sins is the same blood that has set you free from your past.

Jesus freely offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice in order that we could be free from all personal efforts to make ourselves respectable. Through His blood we can have a clear conscience no matter what we did or how bad we may have been (Hebrews 9:14-15).

If you are dealing with unforgiveness, whether it is concerning another person or maybe yourself and you want to be free, take a moment and pray this simple prayer of faith.

*Dear Heavenly Father, I have struggled with forgiving (myself/others). I know that the hurt inside of me in no way compares to the suffering you bore on my behalf. As Jesus forgave those that hurt Him, I too forgive (myself/others). Lord, I release this pain and anger I have been holding. Help me see (myself/others) through your love. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen*

## *Grace* IMPARTATIONS

### GRACE TO LIVE A SANCTIFIED (HOLY) LIFE

#### **1 Peter 1:13-16 (The Message)**

*So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then; you do now. As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, **"I am holy; you be holy."***

It is very unfortunate that many well intentioned Christians have fallen into condemnation over this one scripture. It is true that sanctification (holiness) grace is imparted upon the born again child of God at the moment of adoption into the Kingdom of God, but that does not mean suddenly walking a life void of mistakes.

The word sanctification is a ten dollar word which simply means to be made holy. The Word of God says we are to be holy as He is holy. God would never assert His level of holiness upon us unless He had first made provision for us to attain such a level. Looking back at Titus 2:11, we see that grace teaches us how to live a life of holiness. It is a growth process that does not occur overnight.

Peter wrote warning Jews and Gentiles alike to not allow themselves to slip back into their past lifestyles as when they did not know better, but to let themselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, (1 Peter 1:13-16). This gentle pull of the Holy Spirit is a life long process. It is not a quick

*Simply* GRACE

yank, but instead is a gradual tug. Our part is simple; we do not resist.

**Hebrews 10:38-39 (AMP)**

*But the just shall live by faith [My righteous servant shall live by his conviction respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, **and holy fervor born of faith** and conjoined with it]; and if he draws back and shrinks in fear, My soul has no delight or pleasure in him. But our way is not that of those who draw back to eternal misery (perdition) and are utterly destroyed, but we are of those who believe [who cleave to and trust in and rely on God through Jesus Christ, the Messiah] and by faith preserve the soul.*

The word, “draw back” in the preceding verse means, “To back off, especially due to compromise.”<sup>1</sup> When we draw back, or shrink back from our Heavenly Father, we are compromising what we know to be right. This goes beyond the occasional sin. It is a process by which our attitude and hearts turn from what we know to be holy to what is unfruitful for our lives. Of course the Lord can have no pleasure in such a rebellious attitude. He is pulling one way while we are attempting to pull another. We are in a spiritual tug-of-war.

The key to living a sanctified life is found in verse thirty-nine of Hebrews chapter ten. “...but we are of those who believe [who cleave to and trust in and rely on God through Jesus Christ, the Messiah]....” Clinging to, trusting in, and relying on the Lord is paramount to walking a life of holiness. For more on living a holy life, please see Chapter 9, “Grace and Trust.”

## *Grace* IMPARTATIONS

### GRACE AND PEACE

**Ephesians 1:2** *Grace be to you, and peace,  
from God our Father, and from the Lord  
Jesus Christ.*

Fourteen times, the Apostle Paul began his letters to the church with this type introduction, “Grace be to you, and peace...” By looking at the historical content behind this salutation, it is evident that Paul was combining greetings commonly used by both Jew and Gentile. However, in this case, he was speaking to a single body of New Testament believers made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

Although, from a natural view point, the grace and peace salutation was a combination of a common greeting, from a spiritual standpoint I believe Paul was conveying the very heart of God towards His people. Notice that he writes, “. . .From our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” As I wrote earlier, God will empower us through His grace. Of necessity, we must first receive His grace before we can walk in His peace. His grace empowers us so that His peace may settle us.

#### **John 14:27 (ISV)**

*I'm leaving you at peace. I'm giving you  
My own peace. I'm not giving it to you as  
the world gives. So don't let your hearts  
be troubled, and don't be afraid.*

The word for peace in Hebrew is, “Shalom.” Its Greek counterpart is “Eirene.” Both words have the same basic meaning which is, “Wholeness. . .nothing missing, nothing broken.” God’s peace entails not only a sense of calmness, but also a life that is complete in and through Him, including health, welfare, safety, fullness, rest, and so much more.

## *Simply* GRACE

We are covenant children of the Most High God. Walking in His peace is to trust Him with every detail of our lives. In good times and hard times we can boldly claim that our God has our best interest at heart and He will make a way when there seems to be no way.

My goal in life is to one day reach the same level of peace as Jesus. I know this is a lofty goal, but He is the One who said that we do not have to have troubled hearts, nor do we need to be afraid. Furthermore, Jesus is the One who said, “I’m giving you My own peace.”

An example of this level of peace can be found in Matthew 8:25. In this account, Jesus and His disciples are in a boat headed across the sea when suddenly a mighty tempest springs to life. With winds roaring and waves crashing, the boat is in danger of sinking. The disciples are in a state of panic.

Having myself been in a major storm in the middle of the ocean, I can definitely identify with how they must have felt. The atmosphere is anything but peaceful. Yet Jesus, who was in the same storm, the same atmosphere, and the same chaos was asleep. He was not the least bit phased by the storm. Why? Because He was resting in the fact that His Father had complete control of His well being. He was resting in the wholeness of “Shalom” peace.

I’m sure the disciples must have been in disbelief at seeing Jesus in such peace because the circumstances dictated panic and fear; yet Jesus was taking a nap. Waking Jesus, the disciples cry out, “Master, save us! We’re going to drown.”

After chiding the disciples on their lack of faith, Jesus stood against the side of the boat. With a loud voice He shouted above the wind and the noise, “Peace!” Suddenly there was

## *Grace* IMPARTATIONS

a great calm. What happened? Jesus turned His peace towards the circumstances and commanded the circumstances to line up with His peace. All around Him fear, chaos, and a myriad of other emotions filled the atmosphere. Yet, He remained at peace and was neither troubled at heart nor afraid.

As I meditated and prayed on this passage of Scripture, the Holy Spirit reminded me of an all important truth, a truth I had recently experienced but had forgotten. In crisis situations, people tend to gravitate to those who appear to have it together; the ones who seem to be at peace amidst the raging storms of life. I saw this first hand when my family and I joined together for a week long stay in the waiting room when my dad experienced his cardiac arrest. Complete strangers would come and sit with my family when there were plenty of other areas they could sit. Some mentioned that they were drawn to our laughter and the apparent joy that we had. I'm sure that some who approached us thought it strange that we could be at such peace, but nevertheless they wanted what we had.

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AS DID JESUS, YOU TOO CAN STAND IN THE MIDST OF A STORM, WHETHER IT IS A NATURAL STORM OR A STORM OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND CRY OUT, "PEACE!" YOU TOO CAN LET YOUR PEACE DICTATE YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES RATHER THAN LET YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE YOUR PEACE.

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This same peace is available to you. As did Jesus, you too can stand in the midst of a storm, whether it is a natural storm or a storm of circumstances and cry out, "Peace!" You too can let your peace dictate your circumstances rather than let your circumstances dictate your peace. How? By trusting in, relying on, and adhering to the Giver of peace; by developing a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Don't wait for a storm

## *Simply* GRACE

to develop before you seek the author of peace. Seek Him now so that when the storms of life do appear you can rest in the knowledge that He will shroud you in His abundant peace.

As one pastor said, “Allow God in on the front side instead of waiting till a problem arises and then letting Him in on the backside.” In these last days, days when God is systematically being removed from every facet of life, it is so important to begin to allow Him to have center stage in every area of your life. The storm clouds have moved in and the world is at unrest. However, that does not have to affect your peace.

The same God who promised Israel that He would never leave them nor forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:6), is the same God who will never leave you, nor forsake you. However, it is up to you as an individual to give God place in your life whereby He can be your “Shalom” peace.

Make that commitment today. Allow the Lord to flood you with His, “nothing missing – nothing broken,” wholeness; His Shalom peace. When storms arise tempting you to fear, cry out in faith, “Peace, in the mighty name of Jesus.”

If you have been struggling with fear or a lack of peace, I invite you to pray the following simple prayer from your heart:

*My Heavenly Father, Lord, You are my peace, my strength, and my joy. Instead of looking at my circumstances, I look to You. Lord, saturate me with Your “nothing missing – nothing broken” peace. Whenever I am tempted to fear, please remind me to rest. Amidst the chaos and panic of this world help me to be that light that draws all to Jesus and*

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*His Good News. In the name of Jesus, I  
pray...Amen*

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<sup>1</sup> Draw back – Greek ‘hupostello’ BibleSuite.com/Strong’s 5288; Helps word studies



## Chapter Five

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### GRACE FOR THE GIVER

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#### **2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (AMP)**

*[Remember] this: he who sows sparingly and grudgingly will also reap sparingly and grudgingly, and he who sows generously [that blessings may come to someone] will also reap generously and with blessings. Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, “prompt to do it”) giver [whose heart is in his giving]. And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstances and whatever the need be self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation]. As it is written, He [the benevolent person]*

## Simply GRACE

*scatters abroad; He gives to the poor; His deeds of justice and goodness and benevolence will go on and endure forever!*  
**And [God] Who provides seed for the sower and bread for eating will also provide and multiply your [resources for] sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness [which manifests itself in active goodness, kindness, and charity]. Thus you will be enriched in all things and in every way, so that you can be generous, and [your generosity as it is] administered by us will bring forth thanksgiving to God.**

If you simply skim over the above verses, you will miss some important life changing truths. Paul is writing directly to the church concerning their giving towards the work of the ministry. Furthermore, he is writing out of a concern for their attitude behind their giving.

We are to follow in the footsteps of our Heavenly Father who has given more than we could ever imagine. “For God so loved the world that He gave...” When we become givers, God is able to pull out the selfishness within our hearts and replace it with His own generous nature. Let’s look at just a few of the many truths concerning this introductory verse.

### THE FIRST TRUTH

Giving activates a measure of grace for God to be able to meet our needs. *And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstances and whatever the need be*

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*self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation]. 2 Corinthians 9:8*

When we are willing to give, not grudgingly or because we feel compelled to give, God will activate a measure of grace that we would not otherwise receive. God is not in the arm twisting business. He will not force you to receive His blessings if you are not willing. Nor will He be able to impart portions of His grace to you unless you are willing to do things His way. This is not because God is withholding His grace from you, but because you are blocking the flow of His grace to you.

So much giving these days is done out of guilt. Daily we are inundated with Hollywood trying to shame us into giving to this organization or that organization. Some have even gone as far as calling those who do not give to their organization unpatriotic.

This is not so with God. He has motive and reasoning behind everything He asks us to do which has nothing to do with guilt or shame. Remember from Titus 2:12 that grace is our teacher, instructing us how to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives. By becoming givers, we are learning to walk in the love and goodness of our Heavenly Father; there is no selfishness in love.

### **1 Corinthians 13:4,8 (AMP)**

*Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]*

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Once again, God is the ultimate giver and He wants us to follow His lead. When we begin to trust Him as our source and begin to give out of a desire to bless others, He is able to impart His own generous nature into our lives. Furthermore, He is able to activate an abundance of favor and earthly blessings so that we may become self-sufficient requiring no aid or support.

Favor and earthly blessings is not always about financial prosperity or getting back dollar for dollar. There are multiple ways in which God can meet our needs. Regardless the method, He promises that we will have all sufficiency in ALL things.

### THE SECOND TRUTH

You alone determine the amount of grace that will be imparted into your life. *[Remember] this: he who sows sparingly and grudgingly will also reap sparingly and grudgingly, and he who sows generously [that blessings may come to someone] will also reap generously and with blessings (2 Corinthians 9:6)*

Using the analogy of a farmer, Paul shows the principle of giving as it relates to planting seed. A farmer knows that if he/she plants little (sparingly) they will reap little (sparingly). If they plant in abundance, they can expect a bountiful harvest. The decision is completely up to them concerning how much they receive back with the harvest. The actual Greek word for “sparingly” which is used twice in verse 6 is PHEIDOMENOS which means to be stingy. Paul is telling the Church at Corinth that if they give with a stingy heart then they should expect to receive the like.

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But notice the operative word... “Sow.” If you sow you will reap. Sow sparingly, reap sparingly. Sow bountifully, reap bountifully. In physics we learned that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The same applies with our giving. When we give with an open and grateful heart, a heart that desires to see the furtherance of God’s Kingdom, we can expect, based on His promises, a return on that giving.

### THE THIRD TRUTH

Being a giver is an issue of the heart, not the amount in your wallet. *Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart...*  
(2 Corinthians 9:7)

God is not concerned about the amount you are able to give but your motive behind your giving; again, it is about the heart. In the Book of Luke we have the account of the poor widow woman to illustrate this point.

In Luke chapters 20 and 21, we find Jesus and His disciples at the temple. Jesus has been teaching the people the Gospel when many of the high priests, religion scholars, and other religious leaders confronted Him before the crowd. With raised voices and strong accusations, they demanded to know from whom He received His authority to speak and act as He had.

Attempt after attempt was made to catch Jesus in a verbal slip-up so that they would have an, “Ah ha” moment in front of the crowd. Nothing worked, not even sending in spies to trick Jesus. After a few more verbal exchanges, Jesus turned to his disciples. Within the hearing of all the people He said, “*Watch out for the religion scholars. They love to walk around in academic gowns, preen in the radiance of public*

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*flattery, bask in prominent positions, sit at the head table at every church function. And all the time they are exploiting the weak and helpless. The longer their prayers, the worse they get. But they'll pay for it in the end."* (Luke 20:45-47 The Message)

As could only be orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, Jesus turns towards a line of people who are placing their offerings in the treasury just in time to see an old widow woman drop in two mites. Through a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit, Jesus knows that she just gave all the money she has in the world, which is very little.

Using this as a lesson for His disciples, Jesus says, *"Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had,"* (Luke 21:3-4 NKJV)

Jesus understood that the giving by the rich in the crowd was simply them 'going through the motions,' whereas the poor widow woman was giving out of a heart of faith. As I was thinking about this woman, the Holy Spirit showed me that, according to the world's standards, this woman was the poorest of the poor. However, in God's eye she was richer than all the wealthy who gave that day. Why? It was because she understood and relied on God, her source and provider. She was giving in faith believing that her God would supply her needs.

As you read this, I must caution you to not fall into the trap of thinking that God detests people having riches. That is not what this account is about at all. If that were the case, Moses would not have had to tell the people to remember

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who it was who gave them the ability to prosper in the first place, (Deuteronomy 8:18).

The purpose of prosperity is so that we may be a blessing to others. How can we bless others unless we ourselves are blessed, (Genesis 12:2)? The only time any negativity should be attached to the word wealth is when the wealth is accompanied by selfishness.

Consider the words of Andrew Wommack from his Living Commentary:

*“Those who argue against prosperity invariably cite the examples of those who have gathered riches to consume them upon their own lusts. They use these negative examples to make the point that those who are rich are selfish and corrupt, and then argue against prosperity on the grounds of greed. However, that is not the purpose of God giving us wealth (De 8:18). As this verse states, it is so we may help others.”*

*“The purpose of God’s prosperity in our lives is so that we can be the blessing to others that we need to be. Before we can be a blessing, we have to be blessed (Ge 12:2). If we are not selfish with our riches, then wealth can be a wonderful thing.<sup>1</sup>”*

### THE FOURTH TRUTH

You must sow (give) by faith.

Notice that God multiplies the seed that has been sown. From math we learned that anything multiplied by zero equals zero. God promises to do His part in the multiplication process, but that entails us first doing our part in the sowing process.

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As discussed earlier in this chapter, sow sparingly, reap sparingly. Sow bountifully, reap bountifully. The more you sow, the more God is able to multiply back to you. This is a spiritual law set in place by God and is just as real as is gravity. You can't see gravity, but that does not mean it doesn't exist. Yet, step off a tall building and you will quickly learn the effects of gravity. The same is with giving. Step out in faith that God is true to His word and you will see this spiritual law in operation.

To the carnal way of thinking, giving is a subtraction issue. It is by faith that we first give with the assurance that God will multiply back the seed that has been sown. As He demonstrates His commitment to His word, we gain confidence that His desire is for us to be blessed so that we may bless others; we increase the fruits of our righteousness.

God never intended for us to amass riches so that we could become stingy. No, His desire is to bless us so that we may bless others. We give, He multiplies, we give, He multiplies, we give, He multiplies. . . It is a continuous cycle.

I will never forget the first time my wife Kathy and I truly trusted the Lord with our giving; that was the day we began to tithe. Tithe means a tenth. We set our hearts to give the first tenth of our pay to the Lord. On top of that we continued to support missions and building projects with our offerings which were over and above the tithe.

To be honest, I was very uneasy about the whole issue. I don't remember the exact words of my prayer but it went something like, "Lord, I'm stepping out on faith, but I must admit that I'm a little concerned because we have some serious bills."

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At first we did not see any increase, yet we continued to tithe by faith. There was no extra money coming in the mail and no strangers offering us money. From the natural, it looked as if God was not moving. However, after a couple of months we noticed something strange. We had given more money than we ever had before, our bills were getting paid just as they had before, and we had a good little cushion in our checking account. The strange part was that our pay checks had not increased one bit and we had not changed our spending habits to coincide with the tithes and offerings we were giving.

I learned a very valuable lesson from that experience. God's multiplication is a supernatural process. At first I was unable to explain why we had more to give when we were not receiving more from our pay checks. But then the Word brought to light the reason.

### **Malachi 3:10-12 (AMP)**

***Bring all the tithes (the whole tenth of your income) into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now by it, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it And I will rebuke the devourer [insects and plagues] for your sakes and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine drop its fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy and blessed, for you shall be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.***

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The storehouse, in verse ten, in modern days is the local church. God's desire is to plant us in a church with a pastor to shepherd us. The tithe is for the purpose of providing for the personal needs of the ministers and for the work of the ministry. When we do our part by bringing our tithes into the storehouse, God goes to work doing His promised part.

Notice God's response to our faith in trusting Him with the tithe. He says, "Prove Me now by it, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The word "prove" means to test. God is saying, "Go ahead, test me in this and see if I don't open up heaven itself and pour out blessings upon blessings. You can't even imagine the extent of what I have planned for you."

Wow, what an awesome promise! Yet, He goes further. In verse eleven God says that, when we tithe, He will harshly reprimand (rebuke) the devourer for our sakes so that he (the devourer) shall not destroy the fruits of our ground. In the context of this verse, the devourer was insects or plagues. What is it that tries to devour your current livelihood?

In Kathy's and my case, we began to notice that things were not wearing out as quickly as they had in the past. For example, our vehicles just did not seem to break down or need maintenance repairs as quickly as they had before. Appliances and necessities of modern life just seem to keep on ticking past their normal life expectancy. God continues to prove Himself over and over again.

Unfortunately, there is much debate in the religious circles as to whether the tithe is required in the New Testament. Some teach that it is a bygone Old Testament principle. The subject

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is much too lengthy to discuss in this book, but for me there is no debate...God is truly faithful to His Word.

For about fourteen years now, Kathy and I have been faithful with our tithes and offerings. Giving has become so much a part of our lives that to turn back now would be to deny the faithfulness of Almighty God. My God has made all grace abound to me. I have sufficiency in all things and I have abundance for every good work...

### THE FIFTH TRUTH

Your giving brings thanksgiving to God. “...and [your generosity as it is] administered by us will bring forth thanksgiving to God.”

One day as I was driving to work I saw a man walking down the road carrying a backpack. As I drove past him, I felt in my spirit the Lord tell me to give the man five dollars. I protested and said to myself, “All I have on me is five dollars. What will I do for lunch money?”

I drove a little further down the road but could not get past the prompting in my spirit to give the man the money. At a safe point I turned my car around and headed back in the direction I had just come. Obeying the Lord was more important to me than my stomach

When I reached the man, I pulled over and stepped outside of my car. I said, “This may sound strange, but the Lord told me to give you five dollars.” What happened next surprised me. I was expecting to be laughed at, but the man, with eyes wide looked at me and said, “He did?” I just chuckled and said, “Yes sir, He did.”

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By my being obedient to the request of the Lord, the man, who had before looked depressed and tired, now had a beam in his eye. It was not the money that made him happy. It was the fact that somebody cared enough to turn around and let him know that God was thinking about him. His thanksgiving was turned towards the Lord.

When you sow seed (finances) into a Godly ministry, you are helping to promote the Gospel. God could have chosen any method to finance the spreading of the His Word, but He chose to do it through us. When we bless others in His name, we become the praise to His glory; we bring forth thanksgiving to God.

### HOW DO I KNOW WHICH MINISTRY TO GIVE TO?

Over the years there have been too many reports of ministries abusing their finances. The 1980's and 1990's was wrought with serious scandals of ministers using the prosperity message for selfish gain. In the wake of these teachers, many people were left with a bad taste in their mouths concerning tithes and offerings. Furthermore, many were despondent wondering if God would honor their giving even though it was not used for what it was intended; I too was one of the despondent givers.

As I have written in the previous section, your giving is an issue of the heart. In the account of the widow woman giving the two mites (Luke 21:3-4), Jesus had just rebuked the religious scholars for doing the same thing these abusive ministries of today's age have done. *“Watch out for the religion scholars. They love to walk around in academic gowns, preen in the radiance of public flattery, bask in prominent positions, sit at the head table at every church*

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*function. And all the time they are exploiting the weak and helpless. The longer their prayers, the worse they get. But they'll pay for it in the end.” (Luke 20:45-47 The Message Bible)*

After Jesus finished rebuking the religious scholars, He then looked over at the widow woman who had just given her entire life savings. Jesus knew that much of the tithes and offerings were being used erroneously, yet he did not chide the woman for being naïve with her giving. He commended her because her heart was right and she was being obedient to His Word.

God is true to His word even when we are not true to ours. If you have given with a right heart, be assured that God will honor His word. As I mentioned above, I too have given to ministries that I found out later were abusive with their finances. Even so, God has blessed me and my wife despite our ignorance or their abuse. At the same time, through His Word and through promptings of the Holy Spirit, we have gained wisdom concerning our giving.

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WHEN WE BLESS OTHERS IN HIS NAME,  
WE BECOME THE PRAISE TO HIS GLORY;  
WE BRING FORTH THANKSGIVING TO GOD.

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If you are in a church that you know God has placed you then your tithes (First Tenth) belong to that church. Although there are many wonderful television ministries, the pastor of that television ministry most likely has not been assigned by God to be your pastor. Because it is often logistically impossible, the television minister will not be able to personally pray with you or to surround you with the proper support you may need.

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This is not to say that it is wrong to help support these ministries. If you are being fed (given the sound Word of God) by a television ministry or a ministry other than your home church, then pray about supporting them with your offerings. The Holy Spirit will direct you if you are willing to listen to Him. Follow His peace. If you have a tug in your spirit that just does not feel right about supporting a certain ministry, then don't. However, if you feel a tug in your spirit that you are to give, then be obedient to the leading.

Lastly, every born again child of God is instructed by Jesus to go into all the world to preach the Gospel (Mark 16). Although not everyone is called to be a missionary to foreign nations, this does not mean we should not support those who are called. Contrary to popular belief, preaching the Gospel is not cheap. Yes, the Word of God is free, but getting the right people to the right locations to preach the Word is an expensive endeavor. If we ourselves are unable to go, let's support those who can go.

### **Romans 10:14-15 (Phillips)**

*Now how can they call on one in whom they have never believed? How can they believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how can they hear unless someone proclaims him? And who will go to tell them unless he is sent? As the scripture puts it: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'*

As a child of God, we have an obligation to further the Gospel so that others may receive the same wonderful gift of salvation. In many cases we do this by giving to support those

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men and women of God who have been directed to preach and teach the Word. Trust in and rely on our Heavenly Father to direct you with your giving. Take a leap of faith and give. I promise you, based on the promises of God's word, that He will bless your giving.

**Luke 6:38 (NKJV)**

*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Wommack's Living Commentary 2008



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*Chapter Six*  
**THE SUFFICIENCY FOR GRACE**

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**John 15:18-19 (NKJV)**

*“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*”

Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that following Jesus will automatically exempt the believer from all trials and tribulations. Actually the opposite is true. Jesus made this point clear when He said that the world hated Him first and, as His followers, we will get the same treatment.

If your trust is in the Lord and you are walking in His grace, the world will look at you as the odd person out. When chaos and calamity are the order of the day but you are at peace and walking in joy, the world looks at you as if you are the strange one. Some people will find your inner strength odd but encouraging, others will find it intimidating, and some will view it as outright infuriating.

Furthermore, when you gain revelation into the very heart of God, such as with the abundance of God’s grace, you have

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just placed yourself on the devil's hit list. The devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8) and he would like nothing better than to destroy anyone or anything having to do with Almighty God. Just look at this modern day world we live in. All that is declared holy is under attack and is being systematically removed.

Satan is a deceiver which is why he is viewed in some cases as a roaring lion in pursuit of prey. Lions are good at being great deceivers. They sometimes appear lazy and inattentive creating an atmosphere of calmness so that their prey will relax their guard. The devil too wants us to become lax. He wants lazy Christians who are no threat to him and can be easily caught in his trap of deceit.

However, once you learn priceless revelation, such as the fullness of God's grace, you become a threat. No longer are you that easy prey, but now you are alert to the devil's schemes. However, having the knowledge and walking in the knowledge are two separate issues.

Once you become a doer of the Word and put into practice those revelation truths you have learned, the devil will go from appearing lazy and inattentive to doing whatever is necessary to stop your forward progress. He usually does this by putting obstacles in your way to stop your forward movement. This is exactly what happened with the Apostle Paul.

### **2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV)**

*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this*

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*thing **I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.** And He said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you,** for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

In the above passage, Paul explains that he had received a vast amount of revelation from the Lord. Because of this revelation, a messenger of satan was sent to be a thorn in his side. Great care must be used with this verse because it has led to many false assumptions that God was the one who sent the messenger of satan to keep Paul humble and from being exalted by pride.

I am a firm believer in letting the Word defend itself. This is something I stress numerous times when I teach “How to Study the Bible.” In order for the Word to defend itself, we must first take opinion out of the way and answer any questions by the Word. To begin with, let’s look at the words of Jesus concerning a divided kingdom.

In Matthew 12, we have the account of Jesus healing a demon-possessed man. The Pharisees, seeing the astonishment of the people, said to themselves, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons that this fellow drives out demons.” Jesus, knowing their thoughts said, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.” Jesus made it clear that

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any kingdom, whether it is a natural kingdom or a supernatural kingdom, divided against itself will soon fall.

The Word of God tells us that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus and satan are from two separate kingdoms that cannot be united. If God did use satan as an enforcer to keep His people under control then, according to His word, His kingdom would surely fall. I can assure you that will never happen.

God is not in the business of sending out goons to keep His children humble before Him. Furthermore, He will not impart His knowledge and wisdom (His grace) to you and then beat you down to slow your growth rate. Actually the opposite is true. He wants you humble in heart so that He may exalt you in a manner that will encourage spiritual growth.

### **James 4:6 (NKJV)**

*But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, **But gives grace to the humble.**"*

### **1 Peter 5:6 (KJV)**

*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, **that He may exalt you in due time.***

### **Matthew 23:12 (NKJV)**

*And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, **and he who humbles himself will be exalted.***

God will exalt the humble. Clearly, from the standpoint of Scripture alone, the messenger from Satan was just that, a messenger from satan and not God. Paul had received an

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abundance of revelation from the Lord and the devil was doing all in his power to stop the message from being preached to the world. Looking at this in light of the Word, does it make sense for God to exalt Paul and then send the devil to humble him?

Our next question is this, what was the “thorn in Paul’s side?” Was it some physical infirmity or something much simpler? Again, it is important to let the Word defend itself rather than offering up opinion. What does the Word refer to when dealing with thorns in the side?

**Numbers 33:55 (NKJV)**

*But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides...*

**Judges 2:3 (NKJV)**

*Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’*

From the above verses it is evident that the term “thorns,” in your side, was dealing with people or groups of people. Looking through the Book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles (books that Paul wrote), it is clear that satan had skewed the minds of a group of Jews who would follow Paul from town to town. One day revival would break out and the next Paul would be beaten and driven out of town by these Jews who would start city wide riots. Three times Paul prayed for a break from the messengers who were sent to buffet him. Buffet

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means to hit over and over again. That is exactly what they did. They were constantly harassing him and causing strife.

Notice the Lord's response to Paul's plea. "My grace is sufficient for thee." At first this seems that God is telling Paul to just deal with it, but that is not the case whatsoever. The Lord is telling Paul, "My strength is your strength. My peace is your peace. Trust in Me and I will give you whatever is necessary for you to preach My Word. Paul, My grace is sufficient for you!"

When Paul got a hold of that rhema word, he confidently boasted, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Praise God! That sums up grace in a nutshell. When you are at your weakest, in actuality that is when you are at your strongest. That is, if you allow the grace of God to be active in your life. Why? It is because you are not trying to do things in your own strength and power. You are resting in the Lord. This is confusing to those who are not saved. The reason being is because they do not have the benefit of seeing through the eyes of the Holy Spirit as does the born again child of God.

### **Hebrews 11:1-3 (NKJV)**

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that*

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*the things which are seen were **not made**  
**of things which are visible.***

A famous man once said that Christianity is a religion for losers. Another said that organized religion is a sham and a crutch for weak-minded people... Although these were meant to be offensive statements, I take no offense at all. These two men were simply trying to make sense out of a non-sense world.

They were looking at the world through natural eyes. Christians, on the other hand, have the benefit of looking at the world supernaturally... through eyes of faith (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is the assurance of things we hope and pray for. It is the proof of things seen in the supernatural through spiritual eyes but not yet manifested in the natural.

For example, I have been praying for a particular person who was diagnosed with a debilitating disease that causes muscles to become weak to the point where they are no longer supportive. The natural progression of the disease usually causes the person to become wheel chair or bed bound. One day as I was praying I saw in a vision this person jumping up and down praising God. The person was completely healed. In the natural, the person doesn't look any better. However, by faith I know-that-I know that this person has been totally healed and restored. I have seen with spiritual eyes (faith) that which has not yet manifested in the natural.

Because of closed spiritual eyes and shut spiritual ears, those who have not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior cannot understand how we can make such grand boasts in things they cannot perceive with their natural senses. Never forget that we too were once blind to the things of God. Just as He opened our spiritual ears to hear, He too has opened their

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spiritual ears to hear. Pray for them that they choose to hear and allow Jesus into their hearts.

Lastly, don't think it strange if you are persecuted for your beliefs, especially if the persecution comes from the religious circles. Religion is the number one tool used by the devil to try and divide the Church (body of believers).

I have found that I receive more criticism from fellow believers than from the world for daring to believe that God wants His children to be blessed and to be a blessing to others. Satan has deceived many Christians into believing that God is mad at them and wants any opportunity, no matter how small, to beat them into the ground and to keep them there.

Jesus came to give us abundant life (John 10:10). It is satan who is the thief and has come to steal, kill and destroy. He (satan) wants nothing more than to discourage you from fulfilling your God-appointed destiny. As such he will use whatever means he can to stop any forward momentum on your behalf. Trust in the sufficiency of God's grace. Trust that He has plans for you for good and never for evil.

### **Jeremiah 29:11(AMP)**

*For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.*

### **Isaiah 40:10 (AMP)**

*Fear not [there is nothing to fear], for I am with you; do not look around you in terror and be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and harden you to*

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*difficulties, yes, I will help you; yes, I will hold you up and retain you with My [victorious] right hand of rightness and justice...*



## Chapter Seven

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### GRACE AND WORKS

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**(Titus 2:14 ISV)**

*He (Jesus) gave Himself for us to set us free from every wrong and to cleanse us so that we could be His special people who are enthusiastic about good works.*

Read carefully the above verse. Jesus gave Himself (died on the cross) for the purpose of redeeming us (purchasing our freedom) from EVERY bit of wrong and to purify us so that we could become His special people who are enthusiastic about good works.

I addressed this in an earlier chapter, but nowhere does the Bible state that we must perform good works to be saved, nor does it state (as some teach) that we are to perform good works to maintain our salvation. Our good works are for the benefit of ushering the lost into the Kingdom of God by utilizing the gifts (grace) He has placed within us.

Each of us has been endowed with gifts by God to be used for His kingdom. These gifts are not for the purpose of saying, “Look at what I can do,” but are for the purpose of bringing glory and honor to the Father.

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**1 Peter 4:10-11 (CEV)**

*Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well. If you have the gift of speaking, preach God's message. If you have the gift of helping others, do it with the strength that God supplies. Everything should be done in a way that will bring honor to God because of Jesus Christ, who is glorious and powerful forever. Amen.*

The word “gift” in verse ten is the Greek word Charisma<sup>1</sup>, meaning grace-gift. It is a grace endowment, part of the empowerment grace, which is used for the purpose of carrying out God’s plan for His people. As such, we are all gifted (or graced) to fit in where God needs us. The problem exists when we begin to think our roles are not necessary for the fulfillment of God’s plans.

Each of us has a position and a role to play for the Kingdom of God. Through our natural eyes, it may seem that one person’s role is greater than another’s. But, to our Heavenly Father, no one role is greater than another.

In God’s eyes, the man or woman who is called to teach school for a living is just as vital as the world renowned minister who is called to preach salvation to the lost. By walking in God’s grace, each fulfills a role in reaching others for the kingdom. We should never cater to the belief that someone else’s gift is any better or greater than ours. Nor should we covet another’s gift.

**Ephesians 2:10 (AMP)**

*For we are God's [own] handiwork (His*

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*workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].*

We are God's handiwork... His artistry. When we were born again, we were born anew to do good works. What this means is that He has graced us to do good works as He does good works.

### THE MEANING OF GOOD WORKS

Stop and think a moment. What exactly is the definition of good works? "Well, that's pretty obvious," you might be thinking. "A good work is... well... it's uhh..." We might try to categorize works we think are good, but that in and of itself is not a definition.

After thinking seriously about it, giving an exact definition is not as easy a task as it may seem on the surface. However, through the Word, the definition is made quite clear. Good works, according to Biblical standards is to do the will of our Father. In other words, "Thy will be done, not mine."

Jesus said it best, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me," (John 6:38). A particular work is a good work **only** when it is overseen by God's will. What might be a good work for one might not necessarily be a good work for the other.

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For instance, I believe that you (the reader) and I would agree that, on the surface, being a pastor is a good deed. But what if the person acting in the pastor's role was never called by God to fulfill that role? What if this person was best suited for the music ministry but decided they would prefer to preach?

You see, good works are not solely based on what we classify in the natural to be good works. What determines whether our works are good is by examining it through God's will for our lives.

“Well, bless God, I'm going to do this or that for the Lord and I believe He will bless me anyway.” If that is your attitude then get ready for a reality check because you are in for a hard fall. God will grace you to do His will, not yours.

In the natural you might succeed for a short time or maybe even for a long time but that will not be because God blessed you. You will be walking in your own strength and own abilities under the guise that you are in God's will.

There is a very stern warning in the Bible for those who walk according to their own will. Out of the many versions of the Bible, I believe the Message Bible brings across the point very well.

### **Matthew 7:21-23 (The Message)**

*“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master, Master,’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—doing what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-*

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*sponsored projects had everyone talking.’  
And do you know what I am going to say?  
‘You missed the boat. All you did was use  
me to make yourselves important. You  
don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of  
here.’*

If this is you, I would advise you to change course immediately. In Matthew 5:16 we are told to let our light shine before all men so that they can see our good works but give the glory to God. For them to see that our works are good, we must be in the position that God wants us to be.

### **Romans 12:6-8 (NKJV)**

*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

### **I WANT TO BE IN HIS WILL, BUT I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO**

When I was going through the school of ministry, the number one concern I heard was, “I know I’m called, but to what I don’t know.” Now, as one of the teachers for the school of ministry, that same concern still resonates with the students; it has not changed.

When I attended the school of ministry, there were a few who knew that they were called to the five-fold ministry and a

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few more who thought they were called to the five-fold ministry. But for the most part, the majority of us just knew we were called to attend the school of ministry and nothing more. Funny thing is that most who fell into the category of knowing what they were called to do are not doing much of anything for the Lord now. It was their will and not the Lord's will for their lives.

I was in the second year of the school of ministry without a clue as to what I was supposed to do. As a school requirement, each student had to devote time to various outreaches and ministries within the church. I remember feeling that somehow I had missed the mark because I just could not seem to find a good fit with any of the ministries. They were great ministries doing great things for the Lord, but I just didn't feel like I belonged.

One evening, as another requirement for the school, I went out to a local prison. To this day, I can remember walking into the prison foyer leading to the dorms. As soon as the heavy metal doors clanged shut behind me, I felt a peace that was not of this world. I know it sounds strange, but it felt as if I was at home.

Right then I knew I was where I was supposed to be. At first, my assignment in the prison was simply to assist the leader of the ministry, Doctor Scott Forrest, with managing the secretarial aspects of the ministry. His ministry was an extension of the Word of Life School of Ministry where he and a couple of volunteers taught the same courses. I was in the "Helps" capacity and I was perfectly fine with my role.

One evening, as I was headed for the prison, Brother Scott called me and informed me that he would not be able to attend that evening due to some unforeseen work issue. Being

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as the other teachers were not scheduled to teach that evening, he told me that the class was mine. With a lump in my throat I let him know that I had it. Hanging up the phone, I immediately launched in to “Fear” praying.

“Lord,” I said. “I don’t have anything prepared. You have got to help me because I don’t have a clue what I am to talk about.” I wish I could tell you that I felt an immediate peace. Truth be known, I fretted and worried the rest of the way to the prison.

With knees shaking and feeling weak, I made it into the meeting room. A few minutes later, around forty-five to fifty inmates filled the room in expectation of being taught the Word. My mouth was so dry I couldn’t even fathom eating a dry cracker.

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INSTANTLY I HAD A BOLDNESS THAT WAS NOT THERE  
A FEW MINUTES BEFORE... IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT  
I REALIZED THAT GOD HAD ACTIVATED  
HIS GRACE WITHIN ME TO TEACH.

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Walking up to the podium, I said a short prayer and began a lesson that was straight from my head. As I stammered and stuttered my way into a lesson, that I was sure would be finished in all of two minutes, a funny thing happened. I suddenly felt the anointing of the Holy Spirit come over me. Instantly I had a boldness that was not there a few minutes before.

It was at that moment I realized that God had activated His grace within me to teach. As I wrote earlier, I dislike public speaking immensely, so I know that I know it is God’s ability (His grace) active within me. With that new-found

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boldness, I simply let the Holy Spirit bring to my mind what it was that He wanted taught, and I just went with His flow.

That evening I learned two valuable lessons. The first was that I needed to stay in the Word so that the Holy Spirit could pull the Word out of my heart. After all, you can't pull water from a dry well. The second lesson I learned was that the Father would never leave me nor forsake me. I was in His will doing what He called me to do. Therefore, I knew I had the grace to teach.

After that evening, I continued to operate in the 'helps' capacity, but the door was opened for me to teach occasionally. Not knowing when I might be asked to teach, I simply stayed in the Word and began to develop some study habits. Looking back now, I believe God was developing in me a serious desire to not just read the Word but to digest the Word.

A couple of years later, Brother Scott was asked to be the Dean and a lead teacher of the Word of Life School of Ministry. Being as I had been faithful in the Helps ministry, he asked me to join him at the school as a coordinator and to assist his wife with whatever she needed done. Again, I was happy to assist with whatever they needed, whether it was copying papers or helping to grade tests. I was happy in my role.

After several years, it was evident that God was taking Brother Scott on a new path. As such he could no longer dedicate his time to the prison. Because of my faithfulness to do the small things, he turned the prison ministry over to me. Around the same time he also asked if I would teach one of the classes at the school of ministry entitled, "How to Study the Bible."

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The point that I am making through this story is that I learned that if I would just be faithful where I was, God would make sure that He placed me where He needed me at His appointed time. Do I sometimes still feel the need to ‘help’ God move me where I think I need to be? Yep, and it never turns out right. All I can do is back up and let God handle it His way.

### JUMP IN WITH BOTH FEET

Your question now may be, “How do I get started when I don’t know what to do?” The best advice I can give you is the advice given to the school of ministry class by a friend and minister, Paul Troquil.

When asked the question of getting started, Brother Paul told the students “Do everything. Just jump in and begin doing everything you can find to do for the Lord. He will get you where you need to be.”

Brother Paul went on to explain that when we jump in and start doing something, it is like jumping into a large funnel. A funnel is very wide at the top but becomes very narrow at the bottom. As we go from one area to another we find what works and what doesn’t work for us. Eventually we funnel our way to the bottom and are right where we need to be.

At first I thought he was a bit nutty with his suggestion, but the more I listened the more I knew that he was right. That was exactly what happened with me when I discovered that the prison ministry was where I was supposed to be. I had jumped in the top of the wide funnel and through a process orchestrated by the Lord, I made my way to the bottom where I needed to be.

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When you find the area where you know you belong, rest in the knowledge that God will promote you at the proper time. Don't for one second think that where you are now is a stepping stone to where you will eventually end up. To claim it as a stepping stone is to acknowledge that those in your care do not require the best of what you have to offer.

Remember that grace is a teacher. There is vital training that must take place prior to moving to higher levels with the Lord. The sooner we learn this, the sooner we are trusted with more responsibilities.

“Well, I'm ready to promote but my pastor is holding me back.” This is a common statement that I have heard many times and have been tempted to utter myself. The fact of the matter is that no man or woman can hold you back from what God has called you to do. If anything, it is your attitude holding you back.

Whether you are called to the five-fold ministry or are called to be a helper for someone in the five fold ministry, always remember that your role is vital to the functioning of the body. We each have our role to play.

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<sup>1</sup> Charisma – [Biblesuite.com/greek/5486.htm](http://Biblesuite.com/greek/5486.htm)

## Chapter Eight

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### GRACE AND REPENTANCE

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**(Titus 2:11-12 NIV)**

*For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...*

As written multiple times in this book, walking in God’s grace is a learning process. Grace is the teacher and we are its students. The implication from the above verses is that it is a process whereby we learn through on-the-job training.

Try as we might, as long as we are in these earthly vessels, we are going to make mistakes. Furthermore, we are on occasion going to sin. Some might say otherwise but truth be known, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23).

When thinking about Romans 3:23, our tendency is to view this verse as being negative when in reality it is a verse meant for encouragement. If you read this verse in the context of the chapter, it is referring to trying to live life by Old Testament (The Law) standards instead of living under God’s

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grace. When viewed in the light of the Law, we will most definitely fall short. However, that is not the intended meaning of this verse.

This verse, if studied out, actually indicates that all have fallen short of seeing themselves as God sees them<sup>1</sup>. We often see ourselves through our failures, but God sees us as victorious through Christ Jesus. When we begin to see ourselves in the light of how He sees us, then we will quit being so self judgmental. So, how does He see us?

-As a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9, Colossians 3:12)

-As holy and blameless in His sight (Ephesians 1:4-5)

-As His artistry...His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10)

-As His children  
(Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:14, John 1:12-13)

-As friends (John 15:15)

-As dearly loved (Colossians 3:12, 1 John 3:1)

-As righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:21-26)

-As sanctified (made holy)  
(Hebrew 2:11; John 17:19; 1 Corinthians 6:11)

-As wise (1 Corinthians 1:30)

These are but a few of the many verses in the Scriptures telling us of how the Father sees us. How heart breaking it must be for Him to have His children viewing themselves as

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complete failures when He sees us as so much more. God loves us...that is the bottom line. It is about time that we as a body begin to see ourselves as He sees us.

### SIN CONSCIOUSNESS

When I began a more extensive study of repentance, I discovered a habit in my own life that was very disturbing to me. I discovered that I was more sin conscious than grace conscious. To be more precise, I thought more on not sinning than I thought on the grace which helped me not to sin. I was so conscious of my sins that it was difficult for me to understand how God could love me and see me as anything but a sinner. But then, through the Holy Spirit, I had an epiphany concerning repentance.

Repentance simply means to turn and go the opposite direction. For a person to need to repent means that they first had to turn away from what they knew to be the truth. That is the prime definition of sin...turning from the truth of God's Word.

Stick with me a second on this one. If we sin (or turn from what we know to be the truth) we are to repent (or turn back to what we know to be the truth). Do you notice the vicious cycle we get ourselves into? We are going around in circles and not accomplishing anything!

We turn from the truth (sin), turn back to the truth (repent), miss the mark again (sin), turn back again to the truth (repent), and on and on... By being sin conscious, this is exactly what I was doing. I was going around in one circle after another.

Repentance should be more than just turning around from our sins. Yes, it is true that if we sinned we did momentarily

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turn from what we knew to be right. However, repentance should not be an afterthought. If that is the case, we will never break free from the chains that tend to bind us. No, repentance should be a lifestyle.

Repentance should also be more than an, “I’m sorry, I promise not to do it again,” statement. True repentance should not be looking back at our mistakes, but looking forward to the magnificence of what God has for us. A great illustration of this principle can be found with the farmer plowing his fields.

When starting a row for a garden or a field, farmers have learned to pick a single point at the end of where they plan to stop their row. As they till up the ground, they will keep their eyes focused on that point so that their rows will remain straight. To move forward but look behind is to ensure the row will be crooked. That is because they take their eyes off the future point and focus on their past. Through the Holy Spirit, I began to understand that a repentant lifestyle meant taking the focus off self and putting the focus on Jesus. As I did, certain chains began to break off that once held me so tightly I never thought I would be free.

Instead of focusing on my failures, I began to focus on the victories I had through Christ Jesus. Now, whenever I fail, instead of beating myself up, I simply look to the Lord and tell Him, “I’m sorry, I missed it. Thank You, Lord, that You have forgiven me.” I then carry on my forward momentum as if it never occurred.

At this point I can envision someone hollering across the room, “See, I told you he was condoning sin. He is preaching greasy grace.” That is not the case at all. The Word tells us that if we make it our habit to confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us those sins and to cleanse us from all

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unrighteousness, (1 John 1:9). The word ‘confess’ means to speak the same thing as. We are to call our shortcomings exactly what God calls them...sin!

If you mess up, don’t play patty-cake with your sin. Fess up and call it exactly what it is; there is no sense in denying it or trying to make it sound better than what it is. If your sin is lying, lust, envy, strife, etc, call it what God’s Word says it is. After you have admitted your wrongdoing, let it go...just as our Father has let it go.

### **Psalms 103:12 (NIV)**

*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

Some might say, “It is not that simple. You must pay some sort of penalty to get back in God’s good graces.” To that I say, “What in this world could we possibly pay that could out price what the blood of Jesus did for us on the cross?” There is absolutely nothing.

I don’t mean to step on the toes of those who believe otherwise, but the truth of the matter is that penance is a form of trying to earn back God’s grace by our works or our actions. Truth be known, penance only makes us feel better because we feel as if we have suffered for our sin. Again, no matter how much we feel we have suffered, it will never outdo what Jesus did for us when He spilled His precious blood for our sins.

### **Isaiah 53:4-6(NKJV)**

*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But **He was***

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**wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; *And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.***

“But, I feel so bad after I sin,” might be your thought. “I feel like I have to do something to make things right.” Those feelings are a part of human nature. We mess up, we fess up, and we want to make it right. Jesus took on a human condition so that He could know firsthand how we think and feel. No, He did not sin, but He knows very well how we think.

Think back to Peter. This was Mr. Tough Guy who said that he would go with Jesus to the bitter end. Yet, when Jesus was arrested, Peter denied him three times. His shame was so great that he distanced himself from the other disciples and went back to fishing.

After the resurrection Jesus did not point His finger at Peter and condemn him. He didn't even tell Peter that he had to beg for forgiveness before He would speak to him. No, Jesus simply looked at him and said, “Peter, do you love Me?” When Peter answered yes, the Lord said, “Tend My sheep,” (John 21:15-17).

Three times this happened and finally Peter said, “Lord, you know I love you.” There is more going on with the reasoning as to why Jesus asked this question three times, but the point that needs to be understood is that Jesus did not condemn Peter for his actions; Jesus approached Peter in love.

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God so loved the world... Jesus came to this earth knowing that it can be a disorganized mess. Yet, He came not to condemn the world (John 3:17), but to help put it right again...mess and all.

It may be that you are struggling with something in your life that keeps rearing its ugly head. You love Jesus with all your heart but sometimes feel like a failure because you can't seem to break free from a particular sin. If that is you, I have good news for you. God's grace can break whatever it is that is keeping you bound. Sometimes He will do it instantly and sometimes it is a growth process in which you have to trust the sufficiency of His grace. If that describes you, please take a moment and pray this simple prayer.

*My Heavenly Father, I have been guilty of dwelling on my past failures and looking at the circumstances surrounding my actions instead of looking to You. Lord, I trust in the sufficiency of Your grace to help me break free from (name the sin). No more will I dwell on my past failures, but will rejoice in my victories through You. Lord, I thank You that I can live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life. In the name of Jesus I pray...Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> From Helps Word Studies: The word for come short is 5302 hystereo (failing to fulfill a goal) means to be in lack and hence, unable to meet the need at hand because depleted (all run out). This state of lack (insufficiency, privation) naturally results when a person misses out on what is vital. The word for glory is 'Doxa' (from dokeo, "exercising personal opinion which determines value) - glory. 1391 /doksa ("glory") corresponds to the OT word, kabo (OT 3519, "to be heavy"). Both terms convey God's infinite, intrinsic worth (substance, essence). Doksa (1391 John Thayer) literally means "What evokes good opinion, i.e. that something has inherent, intrinsic worth."



## Chapter Nine

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### GRACE AND TRUST

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**Psalms 119:105 (NKJV)**

*Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a  
Light unto my path*

The Word of God is our moral, intellectual and spiritual compass. It keeps us from stumbling into sin if we allow it to be our guiding light. Problems arise, however, when we put trust in ourselves and our own capabilities over our trust in God and His Word. We walk around with blinders over our eyes, not knowing which way to go, assuming we have all the answers.

For grace to teach us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives, we must first trust the Giver of the grace. We must pull off the blinders to self and turn our eyes upon the One who is able to change us from the inside out.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And  
lean not on your own understanding; In  
all your ways acknowledge Him, And He  
shall direct your paths.*

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We are to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts, not just a portion. When times are good...trust the Lord. When times are hard... trust the Lord. When you don't see any way out and all looks hopeless...trust the Lord.

Trust means to commit something into the care of another. It is a firm reliance on the integrity, ability, and in the case of our Heavenly Father, His character. Trust in the Lord is to not only have faith in Him, but to go one step beyond faith.

Having faith is to believe that God will act according to His Word. Trust, on the other hand, is to have full confidence that the Lord can and will work out a situation in any manner He chooses as long as it does not violate His character or His Word.

Is it possible to have faith in the Lord but to not trust him? Let me answer that question with an all too familiar scenario. It is not uncommon to hear, "I believe it is the Lord's will to heal, or to meet my needs, or to empower me with grace for this situation...BUT..." For some reason we seem to have confidence in the Lord for someone else, yet when it comes to ourselves, we are not so sure. "I trust the Lord...BUT..."

For us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts, we must replace the word "But" with the word "And." For example, "I have this particular need in my life AND, even though I don't know how, my Lord will take care of this situation. His grace is sufficient for me. I will simply put my trust in Him!"

So often we try to put God in a box. Theologically we seek out ways to make Him conform to our way of thinking. If God does not do something exactly the way we like or expect, or He seems to be taking too much time, we often

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succumb to feelings of frustration; we succumb to the urge to “help” Him along.

That is exactly what happened with Abram (later named Abraham) and Sarai (Sarah). In Chapter 15 of Genesis, the Lord spoke to Abram, telling him that an heir would come from his (Abram’s) own body – and Abram believed God, (verse 6). The faith was there, but what about the trust?

After waiting years for the fulfillment of the promise, Sarai grew impatient. Being an old woman at the time of the promise, she just could not see past the natural into the supernatural. Her eyes were focused on her biological clock which, in her mind, had run out. Sound reasoning and worldly statistics had convinced her that, if Abram was to have a child from his body, it would have to be with a woman other than herself.

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BECAUSE OF A LACK OF TRUST IN THE LORD, BOTH ABRAM AND SARAI WERE WILLING TO SETTLE FOR A SUBSTITUTE TO THE PROMISE RATHER THAN TO WAIT FOR THE MANIFESTATION OF THE PROMISE.

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Sarai, with the blessing of Abram, decided to take matters into her own hands by having Abram sleep with her maidservant. “After all,” Sarai reasons, “The Lord has kept me from having children,” (Genesis 16). Worldly logic led her down a progressive path from believing that God would provide the promised child through her to believing that God did not intend for the promised child to come from her.

Because of a lack of trust in the Lord, both Abram and Sarai were willing to settle for a substitute to the promise rather than to wait for the manifestation of the promise. They had

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faith in God to give them a child but had no trust in His methods for fulfilling the promise.

Oftentimes, when we don't see an immediate response to a promise or a predicament, we assume that we either missed the mark with God or that we did not do enough on our end for Him to adequately fulfill the promise. We try to "work out" the promise according to how we feel it should be worked out. Then we ask God to bless our mess.

As a result of their "reasoning," Sarai's maidservant gave birth to a son who was not of the promise. Barely had his young life began before Sarai became filled with jealousy and bitterness towards both mother and son. Where there is no blessing, there is no grace.

When Abram and Sarai conceded that they had made a mistake by getting ahead of God, He was able to make His promise come to pass. However, the consequences of their inability to trust the Lord still remained in the form of a child, consequences which can still be felt in the Middle East.

### STEPS TO TRUSTING THE LORD

#### **Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him And He shall direct your paths.*

For us to trust the Lord, we must first know that He is trustworthy. So often our view of God is based off of the failures and disappointments of mankind. We feel that, if the world can be so cruel and unfair, then so must be the creator of this world. That is simply not the case. The following are

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some practical guides to help you with your journey for trusting the Lord.

### **GUIDE #1 YOU MUST KNOW THAT GOD LOVES YOU DEARLY.**

As discussed earlier in this book, God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son Jesus to die for each of us. Jesus is our Savior. He came to this earth for the purpose of saving us. In Luke 2:11, we are told, “For to you is born this day in the town of David a Savior, Who is Christ (the Messiah) the Lord! Once again, salvation entails not only being saved from spiritual death (being separated from God), but healing and preservation as well. God expressed His love by taking on a fleshly body and coming to this earth to save us.

Another way God expresses His love for us is through his thoughts for us. Remember back to the time you first fell in love. If you were like most, your thoughts were continuously on that one person. Barely a moment would go by without you thinking of your true love. The same applies to our Heavenly Father. He loves each of us so much that He continuously thinks about us.

#### **Psalms 139:17 (AMP)**

*How precious and weighty also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!*

#### **Jeremiah 29:11 (AMP)**

*For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for*

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*evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.*

**Psalms 40:5 (AMP)**

*Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts toward us; no one can compare with You! If I should declare and speak of them, they are too many to be numbered.*

I like that! So many are the thoughts that God has for each of us that none could compare; so many are His thoughts that they cannot be numbered. You are not a waste of His time. You are not inconveniencing Him by constantly seeking after Him. If only our thoughts could be on Him as much as His are on us.

**GUIDE #2**

**TRUST THAT GOD HONORS HIS WORD**

Remember, trust goes one step beyond simple faith. Trust is turning whatever situation you may have over to the Lord and expecting Him to honor His Word in the manner He deems best. However, for you to trust Him you must trust that He honors His Word.

**Isaiah 55:11 (AMP)**

*So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

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Notice that when God's Word goes forth from His mouth, it accomplishes what it is intended to accomplish. The same applies to us. When we speak the Word of God in faith, it carries the same authority as if God Himself were speaking it. Why? It is because it is the written authority of God.

When we speak in faith (and in context) what is written in the Word of God, we have the name of Jesus to backup our authorization to use His words. In fact, our Heavenly Father has placed so much emphasis on His Word that He has exalted it above His very own name, (Psalms 138:2). In other words, He has "Staked His reputation on His Word."

### **John 15:7 (AMP)**

*If you live in Me [abide vitally united to Me] and My words remain in you and continue to live in your hearts, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you.*

A word is only as good as the name behind the word; the name backing the word. There are some people that I would not trust to keep their word no matter how convincing they may be. Why? It is because of their inconsistent reputation and repeated falsities. We do not have such a concern with our Heavenly Father.

### **GUIDE #3**

#### **LEAN NOT TO YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING.**

This is the portion of trust which causes so many people to fail. Trust is looking beyond our own understanding and abilities and turning the care completely over to God...one hundred percent...with ALL our hearts.

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When you lean on the Lord you lean on an unmoving, unshakeable rock; a firm foundation. However, if you lean on your own understanding and abilities, your support can be easily kicked out from under you. The prophet Jeremiah understood this when he wrote:

**Jeremiah 10:23-24 (The Message)**

*I know, GOD, that mere mortals can't run their own lives, That men and women don't have what it takes to take charge of life. So correct us, GOD, as you see best...*

Fully trusting the Lord is not always an easy task, yet it is necessary for victory. How many times must we wander around in the wilderness before we come to the realization that God knows more than we do? His plans and purposes for us are far more than what we could ever imagine for ourselves.

**Jeremiah 29:11 (AMP)**

*For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome.*

Allow the Lord to guide you. Trust Him that He will never take you anywhere you do not need to go and no farther than you need to be. Learn to listen to Him. In ALL your ways, know Him, observe Him, and recognize Him. Let Him be the Light to guide you through the darkness of this world.

Begin by practicing the following prayer that is based on individual verses from the Word of God. Speak it in faith knowing that you have been authorized through Jesus to speak

## *Grace* AND TRUST

the very words of Almighty God. Trust the Lord to fulfill His Word, not as you think it should be fulfilled, nor in the time frame you choose, but in the manner He chooses.

*My Dear Heavenly Father, Lord I come to you asking You to help me. I'm tired of trying to do things my way and I want to fully trust You. Lord, I know that, according to Your Word, You have thoughts and plans for me that have my best interest in mind. They are plans for good and never for evil, (Jeremiah 29:11). In all my ways, I acknowledge You and ask you to direct my paths (Proverbs 3:5). Thank You, that because I have put my trust in You, I need not be anxious for anything (Philippians 4:6) for I know that you are with me always and will never leave me nor forsake me. (Hebrews 13:5; Psalms 91:14-16) In the matchless name of Jesus I pray. Amen*



## Chapter Ten

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### ABUSE OF GRACE

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**Psalms 89:14 (KJV)**

*Justice and judgment are the habitation  
of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go  
before thy face.*

The teaching of God's grace is always a touchy subject with many in the religious community. There are many who will think the message of this book is heresy because of their focus on the justice and judgmental side of God. Furthermore, many will think I subscribe to a form of "Greasy Grace" whereby we can do what we want, when we want without any repercussions. That is not so!

God is all about justice and judgment, but He is just as much about mercy and truth. We cannot separate the two sides of His nature. To do so will give the student of the Word a warped view of Almighty God. To better understand the two sides of His nature it helps to break down the meaning of His justice and judgment along with His mercy and truth.

**Justice** says,

*"Because of the sins of Adam, you are born  
with a sin nature and as such you are  
accountable for your sins."*

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**Judgment** says,

*“The penalty for your sins is death.”*

**Mercy** says,

*“I must enforce this penalty. However, I will take your penalty on Myself and I will die in your stead. I will be your substitute.”*

**Truth** says,

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”*

Through the blood atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the justice, judgment, mercy, and truth side of God’s nature was fulfilled once and for all. There is no do-over. There remains no more a sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 10:26).

So now the question that needs to be answered is this, is it possible to abuse God’s grace? The answer is an emphatic, “Yes!” In this chapter I will cover two abuses of God’s grace which is “Frustrating the Grace of God,” and “Perverting the Grace of God.”

### FRUSTRATING GOD’S GRACE

Although I purposely did not write the words “frustrating God’s grace,” in the previous chapter, I alluded to it when I wrote about offering penance for sins committed. Frustrating the grace of God occurs when we try to make our works correspond with God’s grace...or, more simply, when we try to do something to get in God’s good graces.

## *Abuse* OF GRACE

In Romans chapter 7, Paul stresses that the Law (the Old Testament commandments) was holy in the fact that it showed us what was pleasing and displeasing to God. However, the Law in itself was not able to save us. Otherwise why would Jesus have needed to die on the cross?

Furthermore, the Law is a list of dos and don'ts with serious repercussions for violation. With the Law came blessings for keeping the rules, and curses for violation of the rules. The Law served as a school teacher of sorts to show mankind just exactly why it is impossible for us to live a holy life apart from Jesus. Thank God that Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming the curse for us (Galatians 3:13). It was not by our actions (our works) that He saved us but solely by His grace. Our part is simple...we just have to have faith.

Frustrating God's grace occurs when we (born again believers) try to bring works back into our relationship with our Heavenly Father. As I wrote in the Grace and Works chapter, we are to be zealous for good works for the benefit of the kingdom, but not for maintaining a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Just as penance for forgiveness is not required by the Word of God, neither are good works. Otherwise we could boast of our good deeds.

### **Romans 4:2 (GWT)**

*If Abraham had God's approval because of something he did, he would have had a reason to brag. But he could not brag to God about it.*

### **Romans 3:27 (GWT)**

*So, do we have anything to brag about? Bragging has been eliminated. On what basis was it eliminated? On the basis of*

## *Simply* GRACE

*our own efforts? No, indeed! Rather, it is eliminated on the basis of faith.*

A prime example of trying to mix grace with works is through baptism. Some stress that a person is not saved unless he/she is baptized. Did baptism save you or did Jesus save you? Don't get me wrong, I firmly believe in baptism as an outward demonstration of the inward work which the Holy Spirit has begun in us. Furthermore, I believe we are to be obedient to God's Word and be baptized. However, baptism will not save you.

We have Scriptural evidence of this in Acts chapter ten. Peter is sent by the Holy Spirit to the house of Cornelius the Gentile. While Peter was in the middle of his message of proclaiming the Good News to Cornelius and his family, the Holy Spirit fell on the entire family and they ALL began to speak in other tongues. Peter was astonished! In verse 47 he says, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

Notice the order of events. The house of Cornelius first believed, then was filled with the Holy Spirit, then spoke with tongues, and then was baptized. The point is that the baptism did not save them. It was God's grace combined with their faith that saved them.

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, had become irritated by their slide from grace back in to works. He said in chapter three, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...?" I like the way the Message Bible simplifies his response to them.

### **Galatians 3:2-6 (The Message)**

**Let me put this question to you: How**

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**did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up! Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you? Don't these things happen among you just as they happened with Abraham? He believed God, and that act of belief was turned into a life that was right with God.**

Any time we try to add some formula of works into the mix of God's grace, we frustrate the grace rendering it inoperable in our lives. Make no mistake; God will not compete with us. As I wrote earlier, God will grace His will, not our will.

Therefore, if your motivation to work for the Lord is based on a platform of guilt or out of a sense that you must please God, then stop! You are frustrating His grace. However, if

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you are performing good works because you love Him and desire to please Him then you are on the right track.

### PERVERTING GOD'S GRACE

#### **Jude 1:4 (AMP)**

*For certain men have crept in stealthily [gaining entrance secretly by a side door]. Their doom was predicted long ago, ungodly (impious, profane) **persons who pervert the grace (the spiritual blessing and favor) of our God into lawlessness and wantonness and immorality**, and disown and deny our sole Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).*

In the above verse, the main characters that are perverting God's grace are Church members. They have come into the body of believers as one who outwardly acts and says the right thing giving them an air of holiness, yet inwardly their motives are for nothing more than devilish gain.

Those who pervert the grace of God are those who literally turn aside from what they know to be right. They distort the truth to make it fit their personal agendas. Their heart's desire is for personal gain and they have little concern for who gets hurt in the process of them fulfilling their personal desires.

Perversion of God's grace goes beyond the occasional sins committed. It is an attitude of total depravity with little regard for God or others. It is the "I'm saved because I accepted Jesus as my Savior," mentality. The problem though is that they have not accepted Jesus as their Lord.

## *Abuse* OF GRACE

Unfortunately, many who pervert the grace, thus perverting the Gospel, are leaders within the Church body. In many cases they are leaders with a high level of authority and as such find it easy to prey upon those who are not firmly rooted in the Word of God. I know of such a minister.

A couple of years ago, a young minister came to me asking me questions about the Bible. In reality, he wanted to argue what he thought the Bible declared versus what the Bible truly taught. As I talked with him, I quickly became aware of the fact that he was not studying the Word for himself, but was instead studying what a certain group of theologians declared to be the Word.

Over several months we talked and he seemed to have a genuine desire to learn more of the Word for himself. His desire to argue was soon replaced by a desire to know my thoughts concerning certain subjects.

As our talks continued, certain people who knew both of us came to me with reports that this minister was openly doing some things that were very questionable for any born again child of God much less a minister. For instance, he was often seen late at night sitting alone in cars with females who were not his wife.

One day when he came to talk with me I asked him directly about the rumors. His response was that he was ministering to these women and nothing more. Of course, that answer did not sit well with me. He is a minister in authority and as such he needed to use sound discretion and wisdom. I informed him that, even if he was not doing anything wrong, he needed to abstain from the appearance of evil. He just laughed and walked off.

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Time went by and the rumors continued to increase. Not only were rumors of sexual promiscuity increasing, but rumors of violence towards his wife and others began to surface as well. I had a hard time believing some of the things I heard, but most turned out to be factual.

Once again our paths crossed and he again brought up the Word of God and how the Holy Spirit was showing him new things. Enough was enough. When I asked him about the rumors, he said that he was saved and it did not matter what he did. I could only shake my head and turn away; he was beyond words of reasoning.

What this minister was doing was perverting the grace of God. He was using his position of authority as a license to sin. Furthermore, he was taking the written Word and was twisting it to fit his perverted lifestyle. There is no telling how many lives he has damaged by his perversion of God's grace.

Since that time, this minister's life has been falling apart bit by bit. He is now in the midst of some legal issues and was fired from his job. Furthermore, he was pulled from the pulpit by his senior pastor and is not allowed to preach. His mockery of the things of God is coming back on him.

I'm sure that, more than once, this young minister read the stern warning in 2 Peter 2:10-22, but was too blind to see that he was one of those whom Peter was speaking of.

### **2 Peter 2:10-22 (The Message)**

**God is especially incensed against these "teachers" who live by lust, addicted to a filthy existence.** *They despise interference from true authority, preferring to indulge in self-rule. Insolent egotists,*

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*they don't hesitate to speak evil against the most splendid of creatures. Even angels, their superiors in every way, wouldn't think of throwing their weight around like that, trying to slander others before God. These people are nothing but brute beasts, born in the wild, predators on the prowl. In the very act of bringing down others with their ignorant blasphemies, they themselves will be brought down, losers in the end. Their evil*

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THEY'VE LEFT THE MAIN ROAD AND ARE  
DIRECTIONLESS, HAVING TAKEN THE  
WAY OF BALAAM, SON OF BEOR, THE  
PROPHET WHO TURNED PROFITEER,  
A CONNOISSEUR OF EVIL.

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*will boomerang on them. They're so despicable and addicted to pleasure that they indulge in wild parties, carousing in broad daylight. They're obsessed with adultery, compulsive in sin, seducing every vulnerable soul they come upon. Their specialty is greed, and they're experts at it. Dead souls! They've left the main road and are directionless, having taken the way of Balaam, son of Beor, the prophet who turned profiteer, a connoisseur of evil. But Balaam was stopped in his wayward tracks: A dumb animal spoke in a human voice and prevented the prophet's craziness. There's nothing to these people—they're dried-up fountains, storm-scattered clouds, headed*

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*for a black hole in hell. They are loudmouths, full of hot air, but still they're dangerous. Men and women who have recently escaped from a deviant life are most susceptible to their brand of seduction. They promise these newcomers freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, for if they're addicted to corruption—and they are—they're enslaved. If they've escaped from the slum of sin by experiencing our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ, and then slid back into that same old life again, they're worse than if they had never left. Better not to have started out on the straight road to God than to start out and then turn back, repudiating the experience and the holy command. They prove the point of the proverbs, "A dog goes back to its own vomit" and "A scrubbed-up pig heads for the mud."*

It is sad that this young minister's life has turned out the way it has, but truth be known, he chose the path he is now walking; he is dealing with the consequences of his actions. I heard him preach and he definitely had the grace-gift in operation. However, he chose to use that God-given grace and to pervert it for momentary pleasure.

Although a large portion of the perversion of grace comes from the pulpit, the congregation itself is not exempt. There are many who will seek out false teachers or teachers who will tickle their ears. They choose to sit under a leader who will tell them what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. Consider the words of Paul to young Timothy:

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**2 Timothy 4:3-5 (The Message)**

*You're going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages. But you—keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good; keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.*

We are seeing this type behavior more and more. It has become fashionable for people to give the appearance of holiness while their lifestyle is void of anything considered holy. Their hearts are focused on self and personal agendas rather than being focused on the King of Kings. How sad it will be on the Day of Judgment when the Lord must speak those dreaded words, “Depart from Me. I never knew you.”



## Chapter Eleven

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### RUN YOUR RACE

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#### **Hebrews 12:1-3 (The Message)**

*Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. **Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!***

Whenever I read the above verses I'm reminded of my school days when I was running in a natural race. I can remember being towards the back of the pack and watching

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as the leader pulled further and further away. My initial thought was to just quit. After all, there was no way I could win the race because I just did not have what it took to go any faster.

Just at the point when I was ready to throw in the towel and quit I remember seeing the leader, who had finished the race, headed back towards those of us in the rear. With shouts of encouragement, he began to run alongside of us persuading us to push past what we thought was our limit. Mostly he encouraged us to just keep moving. He had already run and finished his race, yet here he was running alongside of us to help us finish our race. Because of his encouragement, my attitude went from, “I can’t make it,” to an attitude of “I will not give up.” This same encouraging attitude is how Jesus responds to each of us in our own individual races.

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BECAUSE OF HIS ENCOURAGEMENT, MY ATTITUDE  
WENT FROM, “I CAN’T MAKE IT,” TO AN ATTITUDE OF  
“I WILL NOT GIVE UP.”

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Jesus was the first (the author) to cross the finish line of the faith race that would allow us to have direct access to the Father. Because of His sin free life and His loving sacrifice on the cross, Jesus was able to pave the way for each of us to not only enter the race, but to also complete the race in a triumphant manner.

When life seems a little rough and you are tempted to quit, look to Jesus. Look at His Word and see how he handled certain situations. Remember that Jesus came to this world in the form of man. He momentarily put aside the privileges of His deity and as such, had to run His race just like we have to run ours. That means He had to trust in the sufficiency of God’s grace just as we do.

## *Run* YOUR RACE

### **Luke 2:52 (NIV)**

*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Let the Word of God be the lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path (Psalms 119:105). As you keep a steady forward pace, a light unto your feet will show you those things immediately before you which will cause you to stumble if you don't deal with them. These stumbling blocks could be the weighty sins that need to be dealt with or simple distractions that take your focus away from Jesus. The light unto your path will show you directional changes or course adjustments you might need to make along the way. Stay at God's pace for your life and resist the desire to rush ahead in your attempt to help God along. If you have driven a car at night, you probably learned that it is possible to reach speeds where you seemingly outrun your head lights. In reality you cannot outrun your lights, but what you can outrun is your ability to react properly to upcoming obstacles and course changes.

The same principle applies to staying at God's pace for our lives. When we try to move faster than the pace that God has set for us, we get into error; we miss the sharp curves of life up ahead of us. When that happens, we must stop our forward momentum and ask the Lord to get us back to where we need to be.

Finally, run your own race and finish strong. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is the only race worth running. I've run hard right to the finish, believed all the way. All that's left now is the shouting..."<sup>1</sup> Resist the temptation to think someone else's race (gifts and callings) is better or easier than yours. As written in the "Grace and Works" chapter, a particular work is a good work **only** when it is overseen by God's will.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

The following are some tips to help you in your journey to the finish line.

**NUMBER ONE:**

**FIND A CHURCH WHERE YOU ARE BEING FED  
THE MEAT OF GOD'S WORD.**

For you to grow and to become strong in the Lord, you must find a church congregation where you are being fed the meat of the Word. Remember, the Word is the power of God (Romans 1:16). Without the Word, there will be no growth in your faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The most common excuse I have heard for not attending a local church is, "It is full of hypocrites." If you really stop and think about that excuse you will see that, in most cases, it has no merit. Just as you are learning to live a self-controlled, upright, and godly life, so too are others.

**Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)**

*Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another –and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**NUMBER TWO:**

**CHOOSE YOUR COMPANY WISELY.**

I recently counseled with a man who has a problem with alcohol. One main lesson he has learned and is applying to his life is the need to put distance between him and those who will cause him to stumble and fall back into the bottle. Not all

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company is good company... or, as the Bible states, “Bad company ruins good manners,” (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Jesus said to go into the world. However, this does not mean you must live as those without hope. Surround yourself with those who are strong in the faith and have a genuine love for the Lord.

### **NUMBER THREE:** **STAY IN THE WORD OF GOD.**

One of the strongest verses in the Bible concerning staying in the Word is found in Joshua 1:8. It says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Let’s take a closer look at this verse...

- 1) “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth...” This indicates that you must not only read the Word but speak the Word.
- 2) “...but you shall meditate in it day and night...” You must think about what you are reading. Meditate on the Word, ponder it, and study it so that it will come alive on the inside of you.
- 3) “...that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.” You must be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (James 1:22). Knowledge is great, but knowledge

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without action can lead to puffed up egos with little substance. (1 Corinthians 8:1).

Notice that your success is dependent on what you are willing to put into it. "...For then YOU will make your way prosperous, and then YOU will have good success." In a crisis situation, what is in you will surely come out. The more Word you have in you, the stronger you will stand.

Furthermore, when you read the Word, meditate on the Word, speak the Word, and become a doer of the Word, it will become noticeable to others. Look carefully at the advice that Paul gave to young Timothy concerning staying in the Word and using the grace upon his life.

### **1 Timothy 4:13-16 (NKJV)**

*Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, **that your progress may be evident to all.** Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*

### **4) Pray, Pray, Pray...**

Our Heavenly Father desires to have fellowship with His children. As such, He has granted us unlimited audience whereby we can talk to Him anytime we desire. Furthermore, He even tells us that we can come boldly into His throne room of grace that we may find mercy when we miss the mark and grace to help in the time of need (Hebrew's 4:16).

## *Run* YOUR RACE

Prayer need not be a chore. Sometimes we fall into the trap of thinking we need to pray for a certain amount of time each day, every day at a specific time. Before long, if we are not careful, prayer becomes legalistic.

I love the attitude of Smith Wigglesworth, a turn of the century Evangelist, when he was questioned about his prayer life. His response was that he never prayed for longer than fifteen minutes, but never went more than fifteen minutes without prayer. In other words, prayer became a lifestyle and not a chore with Wigglesworth.

### **Hebrews 4:16 (AMP)**

*Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].*

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 4:7-8 (The Message)



## Conclusion

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### CONCLUSION

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*Grace is God's abundant mercy. His desire is to not only save us from the penalty of eternal death (through the sacrifice of His dear son Jesus), but to empower us to live our daily lives in a self-controlled, upright, and Godly manner. God's grace is His strength, His power, His wisdom, and His love freely extended to all and within all who call upon Jesus as Lord and Savior. **Grace is the action to God's love.***

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...Once you understand just what His grace entails, the song takes on a whole new meaning. No longer is it merely a nostalgic song that evokes warm feelings. Now it is a truth that will carry us through this life into eternity.

'Tis grace that taught...God's grace is a teacher and its subject is how to live self controlled, upright, and spiritually whole lives. In our earthly race, God's grace will empower us to fulfill all that God has called us to do. Allow Him to flood you with His abundant grace.

*Simply* GRACE

The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope  
secures; He will my shield and portion be, As long as life  
endures.

## *About the Author*

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Patrick Hawthorne graduated from the Word of Life School of Ministry in 2002. Several years afterwards he was given the privilege of returning to the school as an instructor. His first book, *Great is Thy Faithfulness, A Modern Day Lazarus Experience*, was written after the miraculous healing of his dad following cardiac arrest in 2012. Patrick and his wife, Kathy, reside in Shreveport, Louisiana.

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*Please include your testimony or help received from this book when you write.*

