

The Glory of Grace

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is the founder and now the senior pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens' ministry has spanned four decades and has included the establishment of Maryland Bible College and Seminary in Baltimore and the development of "The Grace Hour", an Angel Award-winning radio talk show that is still heard on Christian stations throughout North America and via the internet.

This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

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

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INTRODUCTION

Grace is a word of indescribable depth and significance to the Christian. In reference to God, this word represents the instrument of His unconditional love. Romans 3:10 states, “there is none righteous, no, not one.” No one deserves the divine favor of heaven. Yet in His mercy, God has chosen to deal with all men according to grace—unmerited favor—despite the deceitfulness of their hearts (Jeremiah 17:9), the sickness of their heads (Isaiah 1:5) and the continual wickedness of their thoughts (Genesis 6:5).

The greatest expression of His grace is, of course, His Son, Jesus Christ. In order to bring men to Himself, God chose His Son to endure the wrath of sin. He was sacrificed upon the Cross and now all people have access to the throne of grace in Hebrews 4:16.

Taken primarily from an exegetical, verse-by-verse study of Ephesians 2:1-10, this booklet shows that man is the chief beneficiary of grace,

and that God's ultimate aim in using this instrument is to bring glory to Himself.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

Chapter One

GRACE—UNMERITED FAVOR

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

The first three verses of Ephesians 2 explain a man’s helpless condition before God. Whether he knew it or not, every believer walked “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2a) before he received Christ as his Savior. Satan, who has dominion over the lower atmosphere (*aer*), manipulates the world system to project, initiate and persuade men to live as “children of disobedience”—his plan is to keep them from coming to Christ. He uses the career syndrome, attempting to preoccupy people with their occupations. Educational, political, business and social realms of society have been af-

fectured by the devil's influence. His aim: to keep people—believers and non-believers—from walking worthy of the vocation they are called to in Ephesians 4:1. God created man in His image (Genesis 1:26) and, like all things, man was made to glorify the Creator (Revelation 4:11).

“Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” (Isaiah 43:7).

A Christian's vocation is to glorify God by hearing and implementing the Word. His occupation simply provides him with the necessities of life. Therefore, it can be said that each believer lives a life of full-time service in the Kingdom of God as a pastor, housewife, laborer or teacher. Whatever his occupation, the Christian is totally centered on Christ as a vocation. “Full-time Christian service” means that the heart is after Christ full time. Each is called “to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

Satan's outward dominance together with the inherent adamic sin nature in all men (Genesis 5:3; Romans 5:12) render it impossible for a person to fulfill this vocation himself. However, there is Ephesians 2:4, which begins with the

beautiful words, “But God.” “But” is *de* in the Greek—a conjunction indicating a great contrast. What a contrast it is! God is eternal, men’s lives are but a vapor (James 4:14). He is absolutely just, while thoughts of the human heart are “only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Despite the fact that His character and essence are completely opposite of men’s, in His mercy and love, God makes alive those who are dead in sins.

How does He accomplish this? The answer is in Ephesians 2:8a, “For by grace are ye saved.” *Chariti este sesomenei* is how this phrase appears in the original Greek text. Together, these three words represent one of the strongest, clearest structures available in the Greek language. *Chariti* is the instrumental case, which indicates the means or vehicle of action, of *charis* or “grace.” *Sesomenei* is a perfect passive periphrastic indicative of *sozo* (save). What this means is that God, using the instrument or vehicle of grace in the person of Jesus Christ, saved us in the past and the effect of that salvation persists now and exists forever. Each believer was “quickened with Christ” at the point of regeneration and is continually kept alive in Him through grace.

Grace is unmerited favor. It means that be-

cause of the richness of God's mercy and the supreme depth of His love toward all men, He makes available to them the opposite of what they actually deserve.

Chapter Two

SEATED IN GRACE

Watchman Nee made this statement: “Christianity begins not with a big do, but with a big done.” He was speaking of the Finished Work performed by Jesus Christ at Calvary. There, nearly 2,000 years ago, each believer’s complete salvation was accomplished through grace personified. Galatians 2:20^a expresses that the Christian was crucified “with Christ.” Ephesians 2:6 reveals that God also has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” This is an aorist active indicative, explaining a tremendous truth about a Christian’s position. Positionally, each Christian has already died, risen and ascended because of his faith in Christ.

No one can change these facts. In His sovereignty, God designed the plan of grace. He recognized the frail design of men and understood their inability to fulfill any system of righteous-

ness in themselves. With that in mind, the Father provided the way to salvation.

The Father sent the Son as “the way, the truth, and the life” in John 14:6*b*. Jesus went to the Cross after living a life of perfect righteousness. His death satisfied the justice of God, and thus, His love is now free through grace to be expressed to all sinners no matter how guilty they are.

Personal sins are not mentioned in Ephesians 2:1-3. Part of Satan’s program of distraction involves getting people occupied with failures. But 1 John 2:2 explains that since Christ’s crucifixion, personal sins have never been an issue: “And he (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” God, in His infinite plan and foreknowledge, knew every man would need a Redeemer. “Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Romans 5:18*a*). Adam’s transgression was imputed to all men, and each person entered this life condemned and spiritually dead. However, he also is born with his sins already paid for. All one has to do is to receive redemption in this: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31*a*).

This word “believe” is *pisteuo* in the Greek, and it has a far deeper meaning than just a head knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is a trusting, a clinging to, a total reliance on one’s own good works or in any human merit. Believing is the only work left to men (John 6:29). And through this instrument of faith, they are made children of God, “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17). “Joint-heirs” is *sugkleronomos*, meaning “co-participant; participant in common.” The believer has an unchangeable position as an heir or brother of the Son with an inheritance in heaven.

Even if his experiences seem to indicate otherwise, God perceives the Christian only as he is “in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6*b*). What caused the believer to become a joint-heir, raised up and seated together with the Son? Not a religious program of works, but a personal relationship to Christ through an adoption of grace (Romans 8:15).

“That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7).

No Condemnation

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (1 John 3:20-21).

“There is therefore now no condemnation” (Romans 8:1a).

Christians who experience feelings of condemnation simply do not recognize their position as expressed in the Word of God. “Condemn” (*kataginosko*) in 1 John 3:20 and 21 speaks of “self-judgment.” Every personal sin was judged at the Cross, but some believers dwell on their failures to the point where they develop guilt complexes. In this state, one esteems his guilt above the Word of God, which tells him there is no condemnation. Often, the self-condemned person has difficulty dealing with others because things they do remind him of his failure. There is one solution: he must believe on “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2b). Once he views himself and his sins as dead with Christ, he will be free from guilt and empowered to serve in grace.

Forgiveness

First Peter 5:10a reveals God as “the God of

all grace.” Despite this fact, many believers do not trust His grace in forgiveness. The Galatian church in particular had this problem. These believers exercised faith in receiving Christ as Savior, but were trying to become mature by striving in the flesh (Galatians 3:3). Needless to say, it was not working. Thus, Paul wrote, “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11).

Christians must realize that grace is responsible for their entire justification and sanctification. In the worst situation of his life, the Christian still can only “believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29b). Even after a series of wrong decisions, one returns to experience communion with God through exercising the instrument of faith in the following verses:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Grace Glorifies God

One of God's attributes is omniscience—the ability to know all things at once. In other words, all of the past, all of the present and all of the future is ever in front of His eyes. Foreknowledge—His aptitude to know things to come—is a sub-category of omniscience. He knows the results of His instrument of grace.

Grace is bestowed not only for man's sake, but for God's benefit as well. This fact is illustrated in Ephesians 2:7: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." "Shew" is *endeiknumi* in the middle voice, a voice used to indicate that the subject is producing the action of the verb for his own advantage. God is the subject here and the action of His saving men through grace is in His best interest. Grace glorifies Him. Jesus said in Matthew 5:46, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? God loved and sacrificed His Son for those who did not love Him and His reward, according to Ephesians 2:7, will be manifest in "the ages to come" or eternity. Sinners saved by grace are the prizes of God, and

throughout eternity they will be on display for the angels to marvel at and exalt the richness of His mercy.

Grace also offers God the way for Him to embarrass Satan, the “accuser of our brethren” in Revelation 12:10. The very next verse details that believers “overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 12:11*a*), which was completely spilled out in mercy for men. This is the reason joy breaks out in heaven when a sinner repents and comes to Christ.

Chapter Three

GRACE: THE BEGINNING AND THE END

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

The phrase “for by grace are ye saved” appears also in verse 5 of Ephesians 2. Why did God have it repeated? He knew the heart of man. Men have always been stubborn in the belief that they can produce something good in themselves.

The first-born of Adam and Eve, Cain, offered God “the fruit of the ground,” the product of his own labors in Genesis 4:3. Cain’s offering, like anything produced in natural energy, was rejected on the basis of Isaiah 64:6: “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

At this point, Paul expounds and further supports the premise that salvation is entirely of God through grace. Even the instrument of faith is from heaven. It is not of men, it is of God. Romans 10:17 explains the origin of faith: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The law was given to show man's incapability to keep it. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Also consider John 20:31: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Simply, the Gospel exists to expose men to their helplessness and utter need for a Savior.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

The Word is the power of salvation; the vehicle by which men come to know the grace of God. Man certainly had nothing to do with what is in the Bible, according to 2 Timothy 3:16. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." "For ever,

O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" explains Psalm 119:89. The Word was given in grace, and by the hearing of it, faith is produced. And, faith is exercised in grace results in salvation, which is...by grace. It could not be made any clearer. This logical progression plainly shows that the believer's salvation and position in God's plan begins and ends with grace. The Christian believes, that is his only role in the plan. A life in Christ is a free, unmerited, undeserved gift of God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 3:9). No one can boast nor will they ever be able to. There is not a Christian who can take an ounce of credit for his position. All he did was accept God's grace provision. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). All the glory must go to the Lord.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Chapter Four

HIS WORKMANSHIP OF GRACE

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

The word “workmanship” in this verse is *poiema*, “something that is made.” A Christian is what he is by the grace of God. No believer “made” himself: he is God’s handiwork. The next portion of this verse, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” clearly expresses the divine order of the spiritual life. Notice, the first child of God was created or saved in Christ Jesus, then he possesses a life “unto good works.” Apart from Christ, he can produce nothing of eternal value. “For without me you can do nothing,” Jesus said in John 15:5b. In other words, the Christian’s redemption by the Son is what makes him a “vessel unto honour” (Romans 9:21). Even the works that the believer

does in Christ were “before ordained” by the Father. God knew everything before the foundations of the world. In His omnipotence and omniscience, He called the Christian to a specific, divine purpose that was prepared and settled in His grace. “Walk” is *peripateo*, which speaks of “ordering one’s behavior or conduct.” *Peripateo* appears as a verb in the Greek aorist subjunctive tense, which refers to simple undefined action instead of continuous action. It is an action performed at different, separate points of time.

This creates a beautiful picture for the believer. The examination of the original text shows that God understood that the Christian would not live a life of continuous “good works.” The Father knew there would be times of failure for each believer. He perceived beforehand that they would not “walk” in good works and He therefore prepared a plan of recovery as recorded in 1 John 1:9.

Grace According to Truth

“For the law is given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

“Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in

you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (Colossians 1:6).

Grace cannot be separated from truth. A believer's position can never be disturbed; his salvation is eternally secure. He will forever be seated in heavenly places. But the Christian's experience on earth is according to truth. The beautiful plan of grace for the believer's life is nullified in his experience when he deliberately violates truth. Jude 4 warns against making grace a license to sin:

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

To separate grace from truth is to separate grace from Jesus Christ since He represented the embodiment of both. God desires that each believer be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). Not just for His glorification, but for his own sake. He who lives in truth has a life of joy. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). To live experientially outside of truth is to walk without

grace “in truth,” according to Colossians 1:6. Psalm 119:11 explains that the Word of truth is necessary to keep the believer from sin: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

The Word is God’s testimony of His grace. The myriad of His promises, provisions and blessings are listed in the Bible. Each line is good and acceptable before God and able to encourage and build up the believer. In His Word, the Father goes on record. He says He is not a liar in Titus 1:2 and Numbers 23:19.

Christians today would do well to follow the example of the Berean church in Acts 17:10 and 11. These believers “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11b). Those who take a “precept upon precept; line upon line” (Isaiah 28:10) approach to the Word will grow to become like Timothy “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1b).

CONCLUSION

Simply, grace includes all that God has done. The Christian believes this through the instrument of faith and in doing so activates all of the promises and provisions in the Word of God for his life. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). In grace, He has freely given believers all things in Romans 8:32. It means so much to God that He closed the canon of Scriptures speaking of it.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21).

The Father, the Son and the Spirit are full of grace. Through grace, sinners are called (Galatians 1:15). It causes them to be saved (Ephesians 2:5) and it keeps them from ever being lost (John 6:37). In grace, men receive power to pray with boldness (Hebrews 4:16). Through it, believers' lives testify of His glory in a world of darkness (2 Corinthians 1:12). Where does the Christian

find strength (2 Corinthians 12:9)? Where can he find the power to give in liberality? Where is his sufficiency?

All of these are found in grace. And God gives all things in grace so all glory will be His for eternity.

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 4:15).