

Getting Grace
How Does God Teach the Believer the Nature of Grace?

Pastor Tim Hoelscher
First Baptist Church
Royal City, WA.

God Gives It, I'm Not Sure If I Get It.

What exactly is God's grace?

God was gracious when He saved us.

Ephesians 2:8

What about other people?

Romans 4 - Abraham

Romans 4 - David

God is gracious when He saves us.

Ephesians 2:8 - Wait a minute this isn't just about the past?

Grace and the Christian life.

Grace and proper motivation.

Learning grace

Romans 6

Romans 7

Romans 8

God will be gracious when He saves us.

God is the God of all grace.

The problem of bad definitions.

The problem of our experience.

God's design for

Getting Grace 2

I've never met a Christian who doesn't believe in God's grace. We know what the Bible says about God. We know He's gracious. Most of us know Ephesians 2:8 by heart. Yet for some reason, the idea of grace seems to escape us. O, I don't mean that we think we'll make it to heaven by faith plus our works. We know better than that. I mean, we don't get grace in our daily lives.

God didn't save us just so we could go to heaven. Salvation is much broader. Just prior to Ephesians 2:8 we find, "that in the ages to come He might display the over-abounding riches consisting of His grace, in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus" (7). While salvation is in view, Paul was thinking about more than being saved from hell and going to heaven. He was thinking about what we learn about God; what God shows us about Himself through His work in our lives. In 3:10 of the same book Paul said God is teaching others about His multifaceted wisdom. Again, God does this through His provision of salvation.

Salvation. What is it? This is part of our problem in grasping grace. We often limit the definition of salvation. We limit it first by what we include in salvation. What has God provided us in salvation? The Scripture presents a broader view of salvation, a larger content, than many see, or have been taught for that matter. We also limit salvation in time. This is equally important to understanding grace. Is grace limited to a past moment, a few instances throughout our lives, or is God's grace an ongoing matter? Understanding these matters in salvation will clarify the issue of grace.

How do you read your Bible? Do you read it looking for a nugget of truth to get you through today? Do you read it as though it is one big promise book from God to you? Do you read it with discernment, seeing that some truths are plainly for you and other truths may actually be for someone else? How you read your Bible affects how you will grasp God's grace.

In the following studies we'll examine what the Bible reveals about God's grace. We'll attempt to see a bigger picture of grace than many of us see. It will be a brief study. We can't exhaust the truth and if I attempted an exhaustive work I could easily muddy the waters. We hope to let the Scriptures settle and the view of our gracious God to become clearer.

What is grace? What does the word grace mean or what does it represent? When I was growing up we were often taught the acronym

G od's
R iches
A t
C hrist's
E xpense

That's not a bad explanation of the word but it works from English backward. To understand grace we need to go back to the words used by the writers of Scripture. The closest Hebrew word was *chen* [with a hard ch - *ken*]. It was a word representing a gift or a favor. However, as we shall examine later it doesn't represent the idea of grace as clearly as the Greek word *charis*. This is largely because of a new emphasis applied to the Greek word. *Charis* derived from the Greek word for joy. It was a common greeting in New Testament times. People wished each other, "Charis!" It was sort of a combination of wishing them joy for their day and wishing it as a gift which was part of the meaning of *charis*. So, *charis* meant a joyous gift? Well, that's pretty close.

Words change. Language isn't static. We speak it, we modify it, we abuse it. Grammars and lexicographers¹ try to set down rules to maintain a continuity, however, people often don't care about grammar and disregard definitions. The English of a century ago is largely identical to modern English. The English of two decades ago is readable but discernible differences exist. Look at English writings from a millennium ago and you feel you are reading a foreign language.

The same is true of any spoken language. Two thousand years ago, Greek was a common language. People spoke it and altered it. Even Jesus and the New Testament writers altered parts of the language. They may have combined words to form new words which can only be found in the New Testament. They also used common words but with new or special emphasis.² This is the history of grace.

Grace was not a special word when the Church began. It became a special word in a short time. The first Biblical occurrence of the Hebrew word *chen* is in Genesis 6:8, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." In the context, it was because he was a righteous man and his genealogy was perfect³. Noah had character traits that elicited favor from God. This idea of finding favor due to some response or character trait is the most common usage of *chen* in the Old Testament. The same idea is seen in the Greek *charis*. After recounting one event of Jesus' youth, Luke added that He was in submission to His parents (Luke 2:51). As Jesus continued to grow, He grew not only physically and mentally but in grace with God and men (52). How did He grow in grace with others? He exhibited a character, an attitude, a way of life which endeared Him to others. In response others showed Him favor or grace. They did so because something in Him merited that favor. When the Church began, the character of the people was such that they had favor with all people (Acts 2:47). God caused Moses to find this kind of favor with Pharaoh and David found this favor with God (Acts 7:10, 46). In each of these instances, the word *charis* is used. In each instance, it is merited favor from another in response to some attitude or activity. This is not the meaning of the word as it is applied to us.

¹ Or compilers of dictionaries.

² The word *ἐκκλησία*, translated "church" in English Bibles is another example

³ Perfect is *תמימים* to be complete, whole or having integrity.

Getting Grace 4

We should notice that the merit may not be significant. When God showed this kind of favor to men, the degree of merit was obviously small. A friend of mine illustrates it as receiving a Cadillac for a nickel. The nickel was the amount of merit. The Cadillac, which is worth far more than a nickel, made it grace. So when these people found favor with God, don't think that they were outstanding, shining examples of virtue to whom God owed something. God still provided far more than anyone deserved, hence it was called grace rather than just a gift.

The apostle Paul took the word grace and gave it a new spin, a change of emphasis. It went from describing favor in response to another's attitude or work to emphasizing favor shown without regard to another's attitude or work. Maybe someone deserves it, maybe they don't; this definition of grace doesn't care. We find an example of this in Romans 11:6, "Now, if *it is* by grace, *it is* no longer from works, since then, that grace would no longer be grace."⁴ This is the grace redefined. Grace no longer describes a work or benefit provided in response to some merit. It now is unmerited of without regard to merit. Philippians 2:9 is an example of a gift given without regard to merit. In the preceding verses, Paul rehearsed Christ Jesus' willing submission to the will of the Father. Jesus is God. Being equal with God was not theft or seizure; it was His by right and nature. However, He emptied Himself. He gave up the free exercise of His divine abilities and became a slave to do the will of another, in this case the Father. That lowering or humbling of Himself led Him to the cross. So, in verse nine Paul stated that in response to this humility, the Father lifted Him up. The Father did something for Him in response to His work. However, in the next phrase, Paul used a verb form of the word grace, "and graciously gave to Him a name above every name ..." The work of lifting Him up was related to His merit. The giving of the name, was just done for Him by God without regard to His merit. Did He merit that name? Sure. But, God didn't give it to Him for that reason. It was just given as gift. Here is the real idea of grace redefined, a provision without regard to merit.

Since this new emphasis of grace excludes the idea of merit or work, it also excludes the idea of law. Law is a merit system. Moses said, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you will listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day; and the curse, if you will not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God," (Deuteronomy 11:26-28a). If Israel wanted a blessing from God, they were to obey God. Receiving a blessing for obeying is merit. They merited a blessing by obedience. They could also merit a cursing for not obeying. That is law. Since grace is not a merit system at all, there is no grace in law.

This does not mean that God never displayed grace to people who lived under His law. Paul cited David as an example of one under law, who knew that God had declared him righteous apart from the law (Romans 4:6-8; Psalm 31:1f). However, because grace is not given in response to a merit, anytime God provided grace under law, it was not because of the law or obedience to the law, it was in spite of the law.

Grace is an attitude. It isn't a substance. God doesn't inject people with some unseen substance called grace. God doesn't pour some thing over people called grace. Grace is an attitude. It is a way of thinking. Therefore, when the Scriptures speak of God's grace, they are describing God's attitude by which He chooses to not consider whether a person deserves what God can provide him. God graciously gave revelation, so that we might know some of God's gracious plans for us (1 Corinthians 2:9, 12). Do we deserve that revelation? No. Do we deserve those things which He has planned for us? No. God chose to provide both to us apart from our merit or more accurately, lack of merit. God has provided each be-

⁴ The longer version adds, "Now if it is from works, it is no longer grace since then, that work no longer is work." εἰ δὲ ἐξ ἔργων οὐκετι ἐστὶ χάρις, ἐπεὶ τὸ ἔργον οὐκετι ἐστὶν ἔργον. The support for this longer rendering is broad and it certainly drives home the point.

Getting Grace 5

liever a gift, an ability to serve within the body of Christ. That gift is from God's grace (Ephesians 4:7). Do we deserve the privilege of serving in the body? No. God chose to operate by grace and give that ability anyway. This is how grace functions. God mentally chooses not regard our lack of merit, and therefore, provides these benefits to us.

Some things don't mix. Hot and cold, oil and water, grace and law. Have you ever known two people who don't cooperate? One walks into a room and the other leaves. That's grace and law. If it is grace, then it isn't law. If it's law, then it isn't grace. We could also say, if it is merited, if it can be earned, if it can be deserved, then it isn't grace. We could also say, if it is free, if it is given even when one doesn't deserve it, then it isn't law. Paul wrote the Galatians, "I don't set the grace from God aside, for if righteousness *is* through law, then Christ died without merit." (Galatians 2:21). If they were able to merit righteousness on their own, then Christ's death had no merit. That would be pushing this grace from God aside, refusing it, saying we don't need it.

This brings up another point regarding grace. The grace we are considering, has been called by some, "cheap grace." By cheap grace they mean that it costs us nothing, that it makes no demands upon us. However, isn't that exactly what Paul was saying about grace. This is the problem many Christians have, we can't let go of our merit system. Yet, if that grace costs me something, then by definition, it ceases to be grace. Oh, don't get me wrong, grace costs something but you and I don't get the bill. Our Savior Jesus Christ paid the bill and paid it in full. Anyone who claims this is cheap grace is demeaning the work of Christ. He did it all. He paid the price with His life. That is why it is grace to me. It cost Him everything. It costs me nothing. That is God's grace!

“For by grace are you saved through faith...” (Ephesians 2:8). Regardless of when you were saved, I bet you know that verse, probably by heart. We’ve used that verse when presenting the gospel to the unsaved. We want them to know that they need to believe the gospel. We want them to know that believing is all they can do, that’s why God used the word grace. Indeed this verse does contribute to properly understanding how God saved us.

In order to understand salvation by grace, it is necessary to understand what it means to be lost. Failing to grasp the seriousness of man’s lost condition and the extent of man’s separation from God can skew (and often has) man’s understanding of salvation. The Bible presents the fact that mankind is lost. Understanding what it means to be lost and God’s solution, is the difference between eternity with God or without God; of heaven or hell. So, we’ll start by examining the Biblical description of man’s lost condition.

The Biblical concept of “lost”

The New Testament idea of “lost” is found in the Greek verb *απολλυμι* [apollumi]. This word comes from *απο* - “away” and *ολεθηρος*⁵ meaning “destruction, ruin, death.”⁶ Therefore it meant to “completely destroy” or to “ruin away.” It is illustrated in Matthew 2:13 when Herod desired to kill the child Jesus. Here kill has the larger sense of ruining or destroying. Herod saw Jesus as a threat and wished to destroy the threat by killing the child. In Matthew 8:25 the disciples were crossing the sea of Galilee when a storm arose. They feared they would perish in the boat. They feared that they would drown. These are physical examples of “lost”. Lost can also describe a spiritual condition. It described Israelites who needed to be saved (Matthew 10:6; 18:11). Lost described those from whom the good news about Jesus Christ is hidden (2 Corinthians 4:3). Those who have not believed the good news and do not have eternal life are lost (John 3:15, 16). Paul wrote of some people who, in the future, will not love the truth so that they should be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10). These will be lost. So, lost in a spiritual sense describes those who are not saved, who do not know the good news about Jesus Christ, and therefore do not have eternal life.

The Bible represents the lost as dead ones. This isn’t physical death but spiritual death. We (that is, believers) were once dead in (or by means of) trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). God views the world of the unsaved as a graveyard full of dead people (Ephesians 5:14). An unsaved man is spiritually dead because he is alienated from God’s life (Ephesians 4:18). He is physically alive, but spiritually cut off from or separated from God. Therefore, man needs God to make him alive (Ephesians 2:5). Romans 6:23 states that the wages for the sin *nature* is death. The death is contrasted to eternal life, which is God’s kind of life. Spiritual death is separation from God’s life.

⁵ G. Abbott-Smith ties this to *ολλυμι* - to destroy. A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament. p. 315.

⁶ F. Wilbur Gingrich. A New Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. p. 138.

Getting Grace 7

The lost man rejects God. The fool has said in his heart that there is no God (Psalm 53:1). God looked down to see if anyone understands, if anyone is seeking God (v. 2). What God found is that all had turned back. No one is looking for God (v. 3). In contrast, the believer knows God and is known by God (Galatians 4:9). Think about that last part, “known by God.” If you believe in Jesus Christ, God knows you! The importance of this becomes plain when we read Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:23 “Depart from Me, ... I never knew you.” Jesus used the Greek word *ginosko* which means experiential knowledge rather than knowledge by observation. As God, Jesus knows everything and knows who everybody is. He knows who they are but He has no relationship with them. We can summarize the lost man’s problem like this; he denies God, he doesn’t look for and naturally he has no relationship with God. It follows that if one denies the existence of God,⁷ and isn’t looking for God, that this one would be cut off from God’s kind of life. He is lost.

Ephesians 4:17-18 furthers describes how a lost man lives his life. When a person is lost, he has a number of problems. First, his mind is empty (v. 17). The Greek word for vain or empty looks at the result⁸ and indicates that the mind is ineffective. An unsaved man does think but he can’t relate to the world as God intends. Therefore, the output of mind is always empty as regards God and God’s purposes. Second, his thoughts are darkened (4:18). He can’t think about things as God intends because the lights are off. He might think about many things but when it comes to the things about God, he has no light to see them. Finally, he is alienated [cut off] from God’s life (v. 18). He doesn’t have God’s kind of life. He is alienated because of ignorance, because He doesn’t know God. He is alienated because of the hardness of his heart. He doesn’t want to know God. He’s too stubborn to do what God tells him to do. He may be religious and even name the name of Jesus, but when he asserts his own means of achieving God’s goal. He refuses to submit to God’s means of salvation by insisting that he is able to do his part.

Apart from salvation, all mankind is lost. No one is excluded. David wrote that he was already in a perverse state and in sin at the point he was conceived (Psalm 51:5). Psalm 14:1-3 states that there no one who does good. This is from God’s perspective, not man’s. We read in Romans 5:12 that the whole human race sinned. Together, these verses help us see that every one is lost without salvation.

Jesus Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would convince the world of mankind of three problems, three needs (John 16:8-10). After each problem, Jesus clarified what that problem is or how God solves each problem. The first problem, found in verse 9 is sin. Many claim to believe in Jesus Christ, but they do not believe in the Jesus Christ of the Bible. The Bible records just a few facts about Jesus that one must believe in order to be saved? Christ said that one needed to believe that He was “I AM” (John 8:24). “I AM” is the Old Testament name of God -“Jehovah.” This name is usually translated LORD [capitals]

⁷ The lost may acknowledge the existence of a god. They may even claim that it is the god of the Bible. However, when the lost

⁸ In Scripture three Greek words communicate vanity: **εὐκνη** is emptiness of purpose, **κενος** is emptiness of content, **μωτταιος** is emptiness of outcome or result.

Getting Grace 8

in English Bibles. So, first, it is necessary to believe that Jesus is God, not just a god or a good man! In the rest of the John 8:24, Jesus said that if one didn't believe that "I Am" or that He is God, that one would die in his sins. In John 3:18 Jesus said that the one who has believed into the name of the special⁹ Son of God is not judged but the one who has not believed into Him is already judged. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 states two more things which one must believe to be saved. First, Christ died for our sins (v. 3). His burial was a proof of His death. Then He Christ rose again the third day (v. 4). The many witnesses to His resurrection were a proof of His resurrection. Therefore, when one is convinced of sin, he is convinced that he has not believed that Jesus is truly God, that Jesus Christ died for his sins and that He was raised the third day.

Righteousness is the second problem (John 16:10). Jesus said He would go to His Father and they would see Him no more. He alone is righteous and has the right to enter the presence of the Father! Therefore, one needs the kind of righteousness Christ has. Paul wrote that there is none righteous, not even one (Romans 3:10). He went in Romans to write "... his faith is logically counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5). Since the lost one has not believed in Jesus Christ he doesn't have this righteousness. Romans 5:7-8 adds that Christ didn't die for righteous people but for sinners! He had to, because no one is righteous, not one! So, one convinced of righteousness knows that Christ alone is righteous. He knows that he can receive that righteousness by faith, by believing in Christ as we saw in the last paragraph.

The last thing of which the Spirit convinces the world is judgment (John 16:11). He convinces of judgment because the prince of this world is judged. The prince of this world is Satan (Ephesians 2:2). If God judges him, and Satan is more powerful than man, no man can escape that judgment. Some people might agree that they don't believe in the Jesus of the Bible. They might agree that they are not righteous by biblical standards. However, they don't think it makes any difference. They're wrong. Judgment will come upon those who do not believe and are therefore unrighteous! We saw in John 3:18 that the one who has not believed is already judged. John 3:19 states why that judgment exists. The light, the Person of Jesus Christ, came into the world but men loved darkness rather than light because their works are evil. In contrast John 5:24 promises us that those who have believed have passed out of death into life and will not come into judgment. So, one who is convinced of judgment, knows that he will be judged if he does not believe in Jesus Christ and does not have Jesus' kind of righteousness by believing.

All three of the above problems will come together in the future. God will enter into judgment with mankind upon the earth (2 Thessalonians 2:12). He will judge those who have not believed the truth. In addition to unbelief, they take pleasure in unrighteousness. God reserves the unrighteous for a

⁹ Only begotten in many English versions. However, this word stresses uniqueness of kind, not birth or begetting. Compare Gingrich, p. 130.

Getting Grace 9

day of judgment (2 Peter 2:9). So, they do not believe and are not righteous. In fact they take pleasure in unrighteousness. As a result God will judge them. This illustrates Jesus' words in John 16.

In summary, we've seen several characteristics of those people who are lost. One who is lost doesn't know God. He doesn't believe in Jesus Christ as the Scriptures describe Him. He has no righteousness before God. The final state of one who is lost is that he will be judged. He will hear Jesus tell him to depart into the lake of fire, because He [Jesus] never knew him.

This lost condition, this terrible state of alienation from God and impending judgment is dealt with by God, not by the lost man. Our loving, merciful, righteous and gracious God has acted to save men from this condition. Our study will focus on God's grace.

Saved by grace

We may not be able to identify God's first act of saving grace. Perhaps the very act of not destroying Adam after he sinned was grace. When God became man, that was an act of grace. "The Word (that's God the Son) became flesh (human) and dwelled among us, and we saw His glory, glory of a special one from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). That man is Jesus Christ. Only God could provide salvation to man. He did not call on some created being to save us. He Himself did what was necessary and that is an ultimate expression of grace. Hebrews 1:8 and 9 states that the Son is God.¹⁰ Though He is God, He became a little lower than the angels so He could experience death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). He had to become one of us so He could die for us. Read on in the same chapter, and you find that the Son became flesh and blood because we are flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14). This was an act of grace which made possible another act of God by grace.

Christ died for us in order to save us. He carried our sins in His body, when He hung on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). He died for us when we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). The first part of the good news of salvation is that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). By His death, the Bible reveals that Christ satisfied God regarding our sins (1 John 2:2), paid the debt we owed so we could be forgiven (Colossians 1:14), and made peace (Romans 5:10). Each of these is a provision from God's grace, based upon the death of Christ.

Three days after He died and was buried, Christ physically arose. He didn't rise as a ghost or apparition. Others saw Him after He arose. Some doubted his resurrection (John 20:25-28). He is alive right now and has a body of flesh and bone (Luke 24:39). Soon He will return, and when He does, He will come in that same real body in which arose (2 John 7). We are born again by His resurrection (1 Peter 1:3). He can't give us life if He's still dead. We are justified (declared righteous) because of His res-

¹⁰ Many passages state that the Son is God. See for example John 1:1; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; Philippians 2:5.

Getting Grace 10

urrection (Romans 4:25). To be saved we must believe God raised Him (Romans 10:9). The second part of the good news of salvation is that He rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4).

Christ's death and resurrection provided everything necessary to reverse or correct man's lost condition. His death paid the price for our sins. His resurrection is able to remove our alienation from God and His life. His death and resurrection makes it possible for God to declare us righteous. If our sins are forgiven, our alienation is removed and we are declared righteous with God, then we will not face judgment in the future. Jesus once said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does **not come into judgment**, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24, ESV).

Notice that Jesus' requirement was that they believe. Jesus spoke those words before He died on the cross and rose again. This is why they had to believe in the one who sent Him. When the jailer in Philippi asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?", Paul answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus¹¹ and you will be saved." (Acts 16:30-31). We might ask, what must we believe about Jesus? The Bible reveals many facts about Jesus. How many do we have to believe? Paul tells us what we have to believe in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. One must believe that Jesus died for his sins, was buried (that was a proof of His death), and rose again. This, a man must believe about the Lord Jesus. This is called the gospel, a word meaning good news. It is good news because Christ bore the penalty we owed for our sins, and because He didn't remain dead, but He rose again from the dead and is alive right now!! Through Him we can be forgiven, be right with God and not be judged. That is good news.

We've seen what one must believe. Now let's consider the act of believing. Paul answered the jailer, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." Why does God ask us to believe? Because believing is compatible with grace. In Romans 4:5 we see, "Now to Him who doesn't work, but believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is logically counted to him for righteousness." Paul distinguished believing from working. Believing is a response to a promise from God, but it is not a work. Ephesians 2:8-9 agrees with this, "For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is gift from God. It is not from works, so that no one can boast." Faith (the noun form of believe) is not a work.

We need a biblical definition of faith before proceeding. Faith gives substance to or makes real the things being hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). "Substance" is *hupostasis* [ὑποστᾶσις] the undergirding, the substance or solid frame work. Faith makes a thing hoped for "real"; it gives a solid frame work so that one can act upon it. Hope results from a promise (Acts 26:6, "Hope from..."). Hope also involves something which one doesn't see (Romans 8:24). The promise of the gospel is salvation! In Acts 10:43 one who believes in Jesus Christ is promised forgiveness of sins (see also Acts 13:38). Acts 13:39 adds the promise of justification, or being declared righteous. So, when a person believes the gospel, he is be-

¹¹ Some texts add Christ.

Getting Grace 11

believing that he will be forgiven and declared righteous with God. Faith makes that promise real, so that a man can trust his eternal destiny upon Jesus Christ.

We've seen that grace and works are opposites. When grace walks in, works walk out and visa versa. Faith and grace are not opposites. They cooperate. We saw in Romans 4:5 that faith is not a work. Paul continued through Romans 4 to demonstrate that God has provided salvation through faith. Paul used two examples to make this point. He first pointed at Abraham. Romans 4:3 quotes from Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed God, and it was logically counted to him for righteousness." If one worked, that would not be grace (v. 4). If you work for an employer, you receive pay. That pay is not considered grace. That pay is given on the basis of merit, your merit, your work. Your employer owes you that pay. God owes us nothing. God has acted toward us in grace. This is why He justifies (declares to righteous) man through faith not works. None of us, through our works could be declared righteous with God. God didn't count Abraham's works to be righteous but his faith.

Paul then pointed to David (Romans 4:6). Paul interprets David's words, that a man is happy who is counted righteous by God apart from works. David is a good examples because he lived five hundred years after God had given Israel the law. David knew the law well and even wrote about his love for God's law (Psalm 119). But, David also knew that a man can not be righteous with God by law. "Happy¹² ones *are those* whose lawless acts are sent away, and whose sins are covered over. Happy *is* a man, for whom the Lord absolutely does not logically count sin." (Romans 4:7-8). Though David loved God's law, he knew that a man was happy if God forgave him apart from law.

Paul continued through the following verses of Romans 4 to demonstrate that God counts men righteous based on faith. God doesn't count anyone righteous because he is religious, even if he has a religious mark on his physical body, such as circumcision (vv. 10-12). This is proved because God counted Abraham righteous before he was circumcised. Second, God does not provide this righteousness by obeying the law (vv. 13-16). God counted Abraham righteous over 400 years before He gave the law to Israel.

This righteousness is from faith. Righteousness is not from religious observance, circumcision or obedience to law. Therefore, in Romans 4:16, "It is from faith, that it might be measured by grace..." Since faith is not a work, faith and grace can cooperate. The only requirement God has for men to be saved, is to believe in Jesus Christ: that He died for their sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. It is grace, that all God asks of us, is to believe. Remember, that isn't cheap grace. Jesus Christ did everything necessary. Rather, if God were to require anything more of me or you, it would cheapen Christ's work. By the very definition of grace, it wouldn't be grace. Thankfully, it is from faith, so that it can be by grace.

¹² "Blessed" in most English version.

Getting Grace 12

Paul concludes these thoughts in Romans 4:23-25. The reason he was considering Abraham and David, faith and works, faith and grace, is for you and I. Those Old Testament records were written just for them but for us to understand that God also counts us righteous through faith. We are to believing Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (v. 24). Jesus was given over *to die* for our trespasses (everything we did that offended God) and He was raised so we could be declared righteous by God (v. 25). God required faith of Abraham, Jesus required faith of those in John 5, Paul required faith of the jailer in Philippi. God also requires faith of you and I. Why? Because the only thing we can do that is compatible with grace, is believe.

Before we finish we need to consider the issue of repentance. What is it? Many think of repentance as crying or sorrow. This comes from misreading 2 Corinthians 7:9-10. Paul did not equate sorrow and repentance. He wrote that the grief which comes from God, produces repentance. Human grief may not produce repentance. It may produce only regret. Unfortunately, Matthew 27:3 has been mistranslated in some Bible version. It gives people the impression that Judas repented. However the Greek word indicates that Judas regretted what he had done. The word regret¹³ means to have a different care or concern. It involved a change of feeling. The Bible presents repentance as an activity of the mind. Repentance is a translation of the Greek word *metanoeo* [μετανοεω]. The word literally meant, “to think after.” Repentance is not a change of “feelings”, but a change of thinking or mindfulness.

So, how is repentance related to faith and the gospel? Is repentance an additional requirement? Paul preached repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). He was urging people to change their minds about God. Some people (usually Jews) needed to change their minds about God and believe that Christ Jesus is God. Some people (usually Gentiles) needed to change their minds regarding God and believe that there is only **ONE** God who is Christ Jesus! God announces that all men everywhere are to repent (Acts 17:30). They were to change their minds that God is not a god made of silver or gold or made by men’s hands (v. 29). Man needs to believe that God will judge the world of mankind by Jesus Christ who is raised from the dead (v. 31).

So repentance is simply a changing of one’s mind. When one doesn’t believe in God, he needs to change his mind and believe in God. When one doesn’t believe that Jesus Christ is God, he needs to change his mind and believe that Jesus Christ is God. When one doesn’t believe that Jesus Christ died for his sins and rose again the third day, he needs to change his mind and believe that He did. When one doesn’t believe that his salvation is based on Christ’s death and resurrection alone, apart from any works he might do, he needs to change his mind. He needs to believe that he will be saved by God’s grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ. In each of these situations, repentance is the change from unbelief to belief. Repentance is not an added requirement, it is simply another perspective on faith.

¹³ The Greek is μεταμελομαι.

Getting Grace 13

_____ God has provided us salvation by grace. First, He sent the Son to become man. Then, the Son gave His life for our sins and rose again. Finally, God requires man only to believe in Jesus Christ. Each of these express the grace from God to us.

Being Saved by grace, You mean, it's not just about the past?

You ever have de ja vu? “For by grace you are saved ...” There’s that verse again. However, now we want to see why Paul really wrote it. Did you know that Paul didn’t write that verse to be used for evangelism? That’s right. He wrote nothing in the immediate context about evangelizing the lost. He wrote that verse to the Ephesians and they were already saved. Had the Ephesians forgotten that they were saved by grace? No. Paul was telling the Ephesians about their condition. He wrote that verse to encourage them about their lives.

Our English Bibles have a limitation, the English language. We have no perfect manner to represent the idea Paul penned. That was a play on words, because the verb form Paul used is a Greek perfect. The word “saved” is a perfect participle. A perfect expressed an action which was completed in the past and has a continuing result¹⁴. If we expand the phrase from Ephesians 2:8, it could read, “for we were saved in the past by grace with the result that we are still saved by grace...”

For some Christians that might be a new idea. I find that many Christians think of salvation as primarily something that happened in the past. When they see some form of the word “saved” they think of believing the gospel, being forgiven their sins and being saved from eternity in Hell. The Bible presents more than this. Sometimes the word saved means physical deliverance from drowning or a disease. Sometimes it refers to political deliverance from the abuses and taxation of foreign nations. Most of the time in the New Testament, it refers to some form of spiritual salvation.

Even when used of spiritual salvation, the word save has different dimensions. It can refer to initial salvation or what happens in the moment one believes the good news about Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5; Romans 1:16). Growth or maturing in the Christian life is also called salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Timothy 4:16; Philippians 2:12). Finally, Christ’s return for us and the change we will then experience is described by the word save (Romans 13:11; 5:9-10).¹⁵ Like the New Testament writers we can refer to it as saved, being saved, and salvation.

Understanding this threefold division of salvation helps us with some of the problems Christians have. I find that the questions many believers have about salvation or their problems with various aspects of salvation result from confusing the past with the present or future. For instance, when Paul wrote, “workout your own salvation” he wasn’t writing about the past (Philippians 2:15). He wasn’t telling the Philippians to work to get saved. He was telling them work out or produce from what they had. When he wrote that our salvation is nearer than when we believed (Romans 13:11), he didn’t mean that his future was uncertain and he was hoping to make it. He meant that the final aspect of our salvation, the culmina-

¹⁴ David Alan Black. *It’s Still Greek To Me*. pp. 107-108. “While dealing with the past to some extent, the perfect tense is primarily concerned with present time.”

¹⁵ Christendom has often called these justification, sanctification and glorification. Personally I find these inadequate as each of these can be said to have happened in the past, to be ongoing and to come to a culminating point in the future.

Getting Grace 15

tion of our faith was closer than at the moment when we first believed and were first saved. We've been growing, hopefully, since then and that final point is now closer. When Paul told Timothy that by giving attention to himself and specific doctrine, he would save himself and the ones who hear him, Paul wasn't referring to initial salvation. He was referring to growth. He wanted Timothy to pay attention to those things which would help believers make progress in living their christian lives. Yet, by not pay attention to these various dimensions, some Bible teachers have given believers the wrong impression about their salvation. Sometimes believers are even left uncertain as to whether they are saved or if they are, whether they will make it to the future.

In order to understand grace in the present tense requires us to compile some of the benefits which the Scriptures attribute to God's grace. Secondly, it will be necessary to assess how the Scriptures connect God's grace to these benefits. It will help us to contrast the manner in which law motivated men to live and how grace motivates us to live. With that information in hand, we will hopefully be able to understand something of grace in the present.

Benefits of Salvation by Grace

The believer's salvation can be divided into two facets: the results of regeneration, the results of Spirit baptism. The former, popularly referred to as the new birth, involves members of the Godhead indwelling the believer. The later involves the Holy Spirit placing believers into Christ resulting in a position in Christ. First will survey the benefits of being in Christ and then the benefits of regeneration. Both facets of salvation involve God's grace.

The Spirit's baptism¹⁶ places the believer into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). That baptism is also described in Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:12; and Acts 1:5. Since we are finite physical beings, we can only be in one place at a time. As a result, being in Christ is an imputed relationship. This means it is a relationship which God credits to be true for our benefit. An example of imputation is given in Romans 4:5, 22-24. This passages states that God counts¹⁷ our faith to be righteousness for us. Yet in 2 Corinthians 5:21, we are made God's kind of righteousness in Christ. Therefore, God mentally counts or credits us to be in Christ and in this way counts us to be righteous. This "in Christ" relationship is ini-

¹⁶ The Greek βαπτίζω describes an immersion into something. This word is not translated in our English Bibles but given an English pronunciation. This allows Bible teachers to present their own views on baptism without conflicting with a translation. However, to be accurate we must remember that this word properly refers to a "placing in to." Sometimes the emphasis seems to be on the resulting identity from being immersed. Some have claimed the word means to put into and take out of. They have reasoned that when water baptism is practiced, people are put into water and then taken out. However, the act of taking out is not the point of water baptism, only the dunking part.

¹⁷ Some of our English Bibles use a several different words to translate λογίζομαι, reckon, count, and impute. λογίζομαι is a logical process of the mind.

Getting Grace 16

tiated by the Spirit's baptism¹⁸ and depends on God's mental activity. As long as God remains gracious and faithful, we know that God will keep on counting us to be in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 reveals that God extends those benefits to us by blessing us. The words "blessed" and "blessing" describe good words and the act of speaking those good words. Both Isaiah and John saw brief glimpses of heaven. Both saw spirit beings praising God night and day. Those beings are saying "good things" about God; they are blessing God. God also says good words about us in Christ in the heavenlies. For example, in verse four God chose us to be holy and blameless in Christ. While in life we may not always live holy and we might be blamed for some activities, in Christ, we are holy and without blame. This is so because God chose to say we are holy and without blame. In verse five, God determined to place us as son (English "adoption") a term emphasizing special privilege and position within a family. So God deals with us as privileged ones. In 1:7 we see that we have redemption and forgiveness of trespasses. The term "redemption" considers the price paid which results in a release or freedom.¹⁹ The release then involves, in part, the forgiveness or sending away of trespasses or our offenses against God. In Ephesians 2:5 God also says we are alive with Christ and seated in the heavenlies in Christ. This follows our death and burial with Christ, which is also in Christ (Romans 6:3-4, 11). These are good things God is saying about us. In addition to righteousness, the believer in Christ is given many benefits like these.

Why would God choose to say these good things about us? The spirit beings who bless God night and day in heaven do so because God is infinitely worthy of such blessings. We, however, are without merit. We previously saw that nothing within mankind is worthy of even one blessing. Those who have believed in Jesus Christ have these blessings from God because of His grace. We find in Ephesians 1:6 that the benefits we have in Christ result from God's grace, "to the praise of the glory of His grace with which He has graced us in the Beloved." Grace is used twice in this verse, first as a noun and then as a verb.²⁰ The Beloved One is Jesus Christ. These benefits exist in Jesus Christ. These benefits were given to us by God by grace. He says we are in Christ, in part, because of His grace. He says we are holy and without blame, not because of how we live, but because of His grace to us in Christ. Since these benefits are extended by grace, they were not earned nor can they be lost due to our failure. That would not be grace.

¹⁸ The Spirit's baptizing work may be the initiation of a new act of thinking in the mind of God. It might be as though the Spirit tells the Father, "Now begin to count _____ to be in Christ." Since the Scriptures don't reveal that it happens this way but it may help us understand how the baptism works.

¹⁹ Gingrich and Danker, "release ... Fig. redemption (lit. 'buying back'), deliverance, acquittal, ransoming" p. 23.

²⁰ Some English Bibles don't translate the verb so that the verbal idea of grace is seen. The A.V. translates it "accepted" and the idea of grace is missed. The English Standard version translates it "blessed." This verb form is used only twice in the New Testament. See also Luke 1:28. This verb emphasizes a state connected with an action. The -OO ending, is active, state, see J. Harold Greenlee. A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. 1979, 20. This form also occurs in Luke 1 when Mary is pronounced, "graced" by God.

Getting Grace 17

The gracious benefits in Christ fall into one of two classifications: positions and possessions. Positions are what God counts true of us in Christ: we are part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), we died with Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 2:20), we were buried with Christ (Romans 6:4), we are raised with Christ (Ephesians 2:6), we are saints (Ephesians 1:1). The body of Christ exists in Christ (Romans 12:5). The body is the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23). This is not a church, such a group of believers in a town. This is the Church made up of all believers, no matter where they are on earth. It even includes the believers who have gone before, those who served on earth, have died and are now in heaven. God counts us all to be a part of that body. God does not see you by yourself or me by myself. God chooses to see all²¹ believers as part of one body in Christ (Galatians 3:27-28). Because we are in this body, God does not distinguish believers by racial differences, sexual differences or social position. That's grace from God in Christ.

Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried and rose again. That is the heart of the gospel and it is historically true. His death was physically, and emotionally painful, and spiritually excruciating. His experience was real! I died with Christ, was buried with Christ and raised with Christ. I'm not arrogant. I'm graced. Paul himself said, "I am crucified with Christ ..." (Galatians 2:20). God counts each of us to have participated in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. For Christ to have genuinely suffered, and then have God count that to us, that's grace!

After Christ rose, He ascended. He returned to heaven, and arriving in heaven, He sat down at the Father's right hand. He deserved that. It was a consistent response to His character. Does it surprise you to know that God counts you and I to have been raised up, and to now be seated in Christ? Ephesians 2:6 states that God, "raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." To be seated in Christ means that we are no longer distant from God, but that we are near to God (Ephesians 2:13). That nearness is by Christ's blood. It was through His blood that we have redemption and forgiveness of trespasses (Ephesians 1:7). Because He forgave us, we can be near. By being near to God, we are set apart to Him. That means we are saints in Christ (Ephesians 1:1). Being a saint is not about doing something outstanding, or catching the notice of others. Being a saint is about being set apart to someone. We are set apart to God, seated at His right hand. By being set apart to God, we are also set apart from sin, ungodly behavior, and the world. However, the emphasis is upon being set apart to God. Because all benefits in Christ are by God's grace, then we are raised up, seated near to God, and saints by God's grace.

The other side of our position in Christ consists of possessions. Possessions are provisions from God based on our position. Possession are not merely counted to us but given. Since God counts us to be part of the body, He has given each of us a gift, a special ability to serve within the body (Romans

²¹ All believers is limited to those from the day of Pentecost immediately following Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. It was at that time that Jesus promised to send the Spirit and that the Spirit would begin baptizing believers (Acts 1:5).

Getting Grace 18

12:4-6). Gifts are given for the benefit of the whole body (1 Corinthians 12:7). The believer can minister his gift to others (1 Peter 4:10-11). God has equipped us, and put us altogether so we serve one another. In this way, Christ provides to all the members of the body what the body needs to grow (Ephesians 4:17). Christ does this through all the members. Therefore, all the members are necessary. You are necessary, because God gave you a special ability to serve, and that service is necessary. Are we necessary because we brought something to the body of Christ, because God said, I have to have _____ on my team? No! We are each necessary, because God graciously provided us what we needed to serve. That's grace!

Our ability to serve in the body is connected to other possessions in Christ. We possess freedom in Christ (Galatians 2:4). That freedom is from the law and from the sin nature. We are no longer under law, and therefore, we are no longer dominated by sin (Romans 6:14). That freedom makes it possible for us to serve. We are also priests in Christ (1 Peter 2:4, 5, 9; Ephesians 2:19-21). He can serve as a priest, offering spiritual sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1; Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:15=16). The first sacrifice is our body, and it is the basis of using our spiritual gift (Romans 12:3-6). The second sacrifice involves giving of our material possessions to meet the needs of other believers. We can also do good to others as a sacrifice (this can involve using one's spiritual gift), and verbally praise God's character so that we encourage others. Did you notice that each of those sacrifices are for the benefits of others. That's what a priest does; he serves as a go-between God and others. Each of these is a result of God's grace. In fact, one of the words used for gift is *charismata*, meaning a thing which is a result of grace.²²

God has even revealed how we should respond to these benefits from grace. Paul wrote, "If (since) you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, set your minds to things above, not things upon the earth, for you died and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-2). First we are to seek those things which we have in Christ. We don't seek Christ, but things. Once we find those things, we are to set our minds to those things. The word "set our minds to" means to restrict our thinking to a set of facts. We might even consider it a corral in which we confine our thinking. The truths of who we are in Christ form the corral. Our thoughts operate within that corral. In the context of Colossians, false teachers were promoting truths which had no substance (Colossians 2:18).²³ They suggested teachings they consider plausible (Colossians 2:8). Paul warned the Colossians to not live (walk) like this (2:6). They were to spend their time seeking these truths in Christ. Then they were to use these truths as a corral. The philosophical teachings of the false teachers would not fit within that corral but biblical truths would. What was true for those Colossians,

²² Result is indicated by the $\mu\alpha$ ending. *ibid*, 19.

²³ J.B. Lightfoot called this, "tripping the void." Colossians.

Getting Grace 19

almost 2,000 years ago, is still vital for us. This is all because of God's grace. By grace, God saves, provides, and then directs our lives.

The Other Side of In

In John 14, Jesus told His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit. He then went on and revealed that “in that day, you shall know that I am in the Father, and you are in Me, and I in you” (v. 20). We have looked at the “you in me” side of this relationship. Now we wish to look at the “I in you” side.

“I in you” involves the truth of regeneration. Just as the “you in me” relationship is the result of the Spirit’s work of baptism, so regeneration is initiated by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). By regeneration, the Holy Spirit joins us to each member of the Godhead. This union is affected in the believer’s spirit (cf 1 John 3:24;²⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:17; 1 John 3:9). God is spirit. This isn’t the Holy Spirit but the essence or substance of God (John 4:20). This substance belongs to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Regeneration results in a birth. That birth is in the human spirit. That which is born from the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). The result is that the believer joined to the Lord is one spirit (1 Corinthians 5:17). When an individual believes the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit joins God’s spirit to our spirit.

Since that essence belongs to all three members of the godhead (Father, Son, and Spirit), the believer is joined to and has a relationship to all three of Them. Each member then provides the believer with a benefit. The Son indwells the believer and gives to him eternal life (1 John 5:11-12). We don’t receive eternal life by God injecting us with eternal life. The life is in the Son and by His indwelling us, we share in that life. That life is related to grace, so that a believing husband and wife are heirs together of the grace which consists of life (1 Peter 3:7). Eternal life is a gracious gift from God (Romans 6:23). God the Father indwells believers (Ephesians 4:6).²⁵ By His indwelling the Father’s seed²⁶ is in the believer and this constitutes the believer a child of God.²⁷ This makes it possible for the believer to share in common in the kind of nature God has (2 Peter 1:3-4). This does not mean that the believer becomes a god. Rather the believer is enabled to live out some of God’s character. Finally, the Spirit Himself indwells the believer (Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Through His indwelling, He carries on several ministries in the believer’s life: sealing, teaching, leading, filling. He produces in the believer the fruit which is a human expression of God’s character. The results of these ministries is a Christlike, victorious life. When the believer refuses to mature and sins willfully,²⁸ he is treating the Spirit of grace arrogantly (Hebrews 10:26-29). These results of regeneration are tied to or characterized by God’s grace. None of the

²⁴ John used the preposition **ΕΚ** to indicate that the Spirit is the source of the Son’s indwelling.

²⁵ Some Greek texts omit the final words “in you all.” However, these words are important because they distinguish the Father’s relationship to believers from His relationship to the rest of creation.

²⁶ The Greek **σπερμα** that which a father contributes to a child’s conception, thereby imparting the father’s genes to the child.

²⁷ The believer is a child, not by adoption but by birth, i.e. the new birth.

²⁸ The verb **ἐνυβρίζω** can mean to speak, hence to insult or to act, hence to treat with arrogance. Since this is action, arrogance fits best.

Getting Grace 21

benefits can be forfeited or removed. We didn't earn them and we do not keep them by being deserving of them. They are result from God's grace.

Paul opened many of his letters, "Grace *is* to you."²⁹ This referred to one's position. Paul closed his letters, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *is* with you." In four of his letters, Paul clarified what he meant by adding "with your spirits." (Galatians 6:18; Philippians 4:23³⁰ ; Philemon 25 and 2 Timothy 4:22³¹). Remember that "spirit" is the part of the believer in which he has experienced regeneration. "With" is the preposition *meta*, describing a looser association than *sun*.³² Paul employed the looser idea of "with" because while all believers are regenerated, not all believers exercise the benefits of regeneration. The Galatian believers were trying to mature by their flesh instead of the work of the Spirit (Galatians 3:1-3). Paul wanted them to go on an mature by the Spirit's work. The Philippians had the potential do priestly service in their spirit, but some of them were struggling with the idea of serving their fellow believers (Philippians 3:3). Philemon had a potential problem with a fellow believer, and therefore, he might or might not use the benefits of regeneration to respond properly. Finally, Timothy was struggling with fear. He was afraid that if he boldly proclaimed the gospel like Paul, he would suffer Paul's fate of imprisonment and impending death. Therefore, each of these letters expressed that the benefits of regeneration are present, whether the believer avails himself of them or not.

The benefits of regeneration are the result of God's grace. The believer has eternal life. He is a child of God with the potential to share in the kind of nature God has. The indwelling Holy Spirit is able to take that life and energize the Father's seed. The result is a life which expresses God's grace.

The benefits of regeneration and the benefits of the Spirit's baptism are necessary for the Christian life. God works in the believer and produces desires within him (Philippians 2:13), but desire is not enough. Early in Paul's christian life, he had desires but didn't know how to do what he wanted (Romans 7:18). The solution was first revealed by Jesus Christ in John 15. He pictured believers as vine branches and Himself as the vine (v. 1). He informed them that they were capable of nothing, that is, nothing of worth, if they did not abide in Him (v. 5). They were to abide in Him and He would then abide in them (vv. 2-4). Jesus used abide³³ to mean more than to remain in a location. He used it to refer to remaining

²⁹ *χαρις υμιν* (Galatians 1:3, et al) is a verbless clause. A.T. Robertson indicated that the Indicative Mood of *eimi* is the most commonly implied copula. "Naturally this copula is not always considered necessary. It can be readily dispensed with when both subject and real predicate are present." "As a matter of fact the copula may be absent from any kind of sentence which is free from ambiguity, ..." A Grammar of the Greek New Testament In Light of Historical Research, (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1915) 395. "Is" is added for exactness though the passage is quite plain without it.

³⁰ The Byzantine text-form omits "your spirit" and is reflected in the Authorized Version.

³¹ Some Greek manuscripts omit "your spirit" in 2 Timothy 4:22.

³² See Samuel G. Green A Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, nd) 241, 250; and H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: MacMillan, 1955) 107, 111.

³³ The meaning of the word *μενω* is simply to stay or remain. The idea of ease or comfort must be determined by the context.

Getting Grace 22

comfortably, to being at ease. The believer is to be at ease in Christ; he is to remain comfortably in his position in Christ. When he does, Christ then remains at ease in him. Christ is always in the believer, but He is not always at ease or comfortable in the believer. Therefore, as we relate to who we are in Christ, Christ then lives out that life through, and the Spirit produce fruit through us. The “I in you and you in Me” relationship comes full circle. We can only live out Christ in us, as we are comfortable with who we are in Christ. Both are benefits of grace, and both are the basis for a life under grace.

Motivation for Living

Life is often about motivation. People get up in the morning and go to work because they are motivated by the need to earn a living. Some people work because they are motivated to pay for their play time, trips, or recreational equipment. The motivations are similar but there is a subtle difference between the need to eat and have adequate shelter and the wish for recreation. Prison or jail is a motivation, a motivation to avoid incarceration in either location. Therefore, both motivate people to a proper behavior. A parent's love and care for a child can motivate that child to a proper behavior. A child may wish to return the parent's love by living as a loved child. Again, the motivations are similar but there is a distinct difference between avoiding consequences and showing appreciation and love.

God has provided people motivation to live righteously. We'll limit our considerations to the motivation under Mosaic law and that under the present form of grace. We distinguish these two because Paul distinguished being under law from being under grace (Romans 6:14). John also distinguished the law from the grace (John 1:17).

Law Motivation

The Law, given through Moses, motivated the nation of Israel to obey. The motivation was the promise of blessings or curses. The blessings are summarized in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Those blessings consisted of benefits, good provisions³⁴ from God in the physical realm: a high position above other nations (1), healthy children (4), healthy crops (4), healthy calves, kids and lambs (offspring of livestock) (4), plenty of bread (5). God would provide them the ability to defeat their enemies (7). They would be successful in all their endeavors. Much of this would be accomplished by God providing them rain at the proper times so they could have healthy crops which resulted in healthy people and livestock. God also promised to protect them from the diseases common among the nations (Leviticus 26:14-16). This was a motivation to not only eat and be sheltered but also a motivation to enjoy the best God had for them.

The Law also motivated Israel to obey by the threat of curses. The curses are summarized in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Many of the curses are simply the opposite of the blessings just listed (v. 25). Yet Jehovah God gave three times as much space to detailing the nature of the curses. Not only would Israel lack health and then die, but God portrayed their death as providing food for the birds (v. 26). God threatened to strike Israel with panicked madness,³⁵ blindness, and bewilderment (v. 28). Their sons

³⁴ The Hebrew root קָנָה is taken to originally mean "kneel." At first meaning to kneel before another with the desire to invoke a blessing (a benefit) it came to mean "blessing" itself. See William Gesenius. A Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 142-143.

³⁵ פָּנִיקָה expresses intense panic. Brown, Driver, and Briggs adds, "fig. of wild and helpless panic" A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (abridged) Based on A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, by F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907. Digitized and abridged as a part of the Princeton Theological Seminary Hebrew Lexicon Project under the direction of Dr. J. M. Roberts. This electronic adaptation ©2001 OakTree Software, Inc.

Getting Grace 24

and daughters would be given to non-Jewish people. They would stand and long for their children, but would not be able to do anything about it (vv. 32, 41). They would labor in their vineyards and fields, but others would come and eat the produce (vv. 33, 38-40, 42, 50-53). The severity of these curses can be seen in the statement, “The you shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the Lord your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy shall oppress you.” (v. 53). God would bring on them and their children, “extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting³⁶, and sicknesses grievous and lasting.” (Deuteronomy 28:59). This motivation is more than just motivation to avoid death and hardship but to avoid severe hardship, horrible illness, defeat in war, and even cannibalism.

So, what is the base motivation under Law? Fear. When God appeared to Israel to give them the Law, He told them not to fear at that time (Exodus 20:20). He wasn't there to destroy or harm them at that moment, so there was no reason to fear. However, He did appear so that His fear (the fear of Him) would be before³⁷ their faces. God was on the mountain and Israel could look up to the mountain and see the smoke and lightning (v. 18). They could hear the thunder and the trumpet. They were afraid. They wanted Moses to talk to God for them because they thought they would die if God spoke to them (v. 19). They were afraid of dying. That was God's goal, to leave His fear on their faces as a motivation to not sin.

About forty years later, Moses led the nation of Israel to the east side of the Jordan river (Deuteronomy 1:1). It was forty years and eleven months after Israel left Egypt (v. 2). This was a new generation of Israelites. Their parents and older siblings had died in the desert because they had refused to enter the land forty years earlier. Their parents had heard the law at Sinai. Their parents had seen the mountain and feared. However, they feared the people of the land more than they feared God or and more than they trusted God's ability to give them the land.

So, forty years later, to this new generation, Moses undertook to explain³⁸ this law (v. 5). After rehearsing their history, Moses quoted Jehovah's words to their parents, “Gather the people to me, and I will cause them to hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days they live on the earth, and they may teach their children.” (Deuteronomy 4:10). God's design for the new generation did not change. They too were to fear Jehovah their God (Deuteronomy 6:2, 13, 24; 8:6, et al). Jehovah required (asked) Israel to fear Him (Deuteronomy 10:12). The popular, “awesome” God idea is really that

³⁶ The words “lasting” translates the Hebrew verb **יָדָא**, to trust or be sure. Both are in the Niphal, here as a passive stem, indicating that God will make those conditions sure, and therefore, lasting.

³⁷ The preposition is **לְ** over, above, or on. In this case, over their faces.

³⁸ The Hebrew **פָּתַח** meant to dig. To explain involved, “to dig out the sense, and to set it forth when dug out,” Gesenius. p.

Getting Grace 25

God is a God to be feared (Deuteronomy 10:17).³⁹ The motivation to live in obedience to the law was fear of God.

Now we can understand what was meant by the phrase, “the fear of Jehovah was the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). Wisdom requires knowledge, so it is also true that “the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge” (Psalm 1:7). How did this work? If one feared Jehovah, that fear motivated him to obey the law. In order to obey the law, one had to know the law, so he could guard it and do it. This law, made up of commands, statutes, and judgments was Israel’s wisdom (Deuteronomy 4:6). So, the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom. Fear motivated them to learn the law so they could keep the law. The law was how they could know God. It contained the knowledge God want them to have. The motivation to know that law and to obey that law was fear: fear of death and fear of God.

The law had a twofold motivation. God promised Israel blessings and He promised them curses. They could be motivated to receive health and happiness in their land. They could also be motivated to avoid death, disease, and destruction. They were motivated to obey the law because they feared they might die and they feared God. Because God devoted more space to curses and warnings, we can safely conclude that for most of Israel, their motivation was primarily negative.

Grace Motivation

How does grace motivate believers to live? We’ve seen the benefits God provides us by His grace: regeneration and baptism. Now God calls us to live worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1). To walk worthy is to walk in balance with those benefits⁴⁰ or consistent with that calling. That calling is in Christ and was into one body (v. 4). To walk worthy would then involve a manner of life which reflects one’s position in Christ and one’s relationship to other saints in that one body. In Ephesians 5:1, believers are encouraged to become imitators of God as loved children. “Children” connects this with regeneration. “Imitators” [μιμητής] is not used in the New Testament of simply copying another’s actions. It is tied to truth to which one relates. The result is action which is like that of another. If Paul taught truth and then lived it, others could imitate his faith, not by copying the actions but by living the truth he taught.⁴¹ In these cases, God provided the believers a benefit by grace. He did not offer it to them in exchange for obedience or because of obedience. He gave them a position in Christ and made them His children. He

³⁹ The English Standard Version uses the noun “awesome” thirty-two times. Thirty-one occurrences translate some form of the פָּאָר. Most of these are Niphal participles, and indicate that Jehovah or His works are feared.

⁴⁰ ἄξιως - “Strictly “bringing into balance,” hence “equivalent” (e.g., Rom. 8:18), with such extensions as “being appropriate”. W. Foerster ‘axios in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, abridged by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 63. In the same article, he notes, “In many expressions a genitive or infinitive is put with ‘axios to denote the sphere of correspondence.” In Ephesians 4:1 “calling” is Genitive, κλήσεως.

⁴¹ The Thessalonians were imitators of their Jewish brothers who suffered in Judea. However, the Thessalonians had not met those brothers. They both lived truth which resulted in persecution. See 1 Thessalonians 2: 13-14.

then asked them to live in a manner consistent with that provision. That is grace motivation. Give and then encourage to live.

Victory

Grace motivation involves victory. Sin is not to be lord over us because we are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:14). We saw that one of the benefits God gives us in Christ, is that we are dead ones in Christ to the sin nature and living ones to God (Romans 6:3-4. 11). Since God provides these benefits to us by grace, then our response to that grace is not be enslaved to the sin *nature*. This is exactly the idea Paul stated, when he wrote,

20. “Now the law came in that the trespass might increase, but where the sin *nature* increased, the grace abounded all the more, 21. so that, as the sin *nature* reigned by means of the death, the grace also might reign through righteousness in view of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. 6:1 . What shall we say then? Should we continue in the sin *nature* that the grace may abound? 2. By no means! How can we who died to the sin *nature* still live in it? 3. Do you not know that all of us who have been put into Christ Jesus were put into His death? 4. We were buried therefore, with Him by *the* putting into His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised out from the dead ones through the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 5:20-6:4).

Let’s consider this passage phrase by phrase. In 5:20, Paul explained one of the reasons God gave the Law to Israel. It was intended to increase the number of offenses or trespasses⁴² against God. It did this by providing the sin nature more opportunities to be plainly seen. Paul expressed this idea a little differently in 7:13, when he wrote that the commandment caused the sin *nature* to be excessively sinful. It didn’t create the problem, but it brought the problem to light. It was in this context that God’s grace abounded. If one could plainly see how sinful he is, then it becomes more obvious that any benefits God might extend to him must come by grace. God certainly isn’t extending those benefits in response to the believer’s good works, for the sin *nature* is increasing in activity.

So, in 5:21, Paul looks back at the sin nature reigning. It was able to do so because of the death. Here Paul meant spiritual death. Spiritual death made it possible for the sin *nature* to reign in peoples’ lives. Now, grace reigns through righteousness in view of, or because of,⁴³ eternal life. Just as the sin *nature* had been able to reign by means of the spiritual death, now eternal life provides the basis of grace’s reign. Some translations have “unto eternal life” as though eternal life is the outcome of one’s works under grace. However, in 6:23, Paul clearly states that eternal life is the “gracious gift from God.”

⁴² While I find the NASB to be a very accurate translation, their choice of “transgression” to translate *παρὰ-πατῶμα* is unfortunate. Transgression is a better translation of *παρὰβασις* which they sometimes translate “transgression” (Galatians 3:19; 1 Timothy 2:14; Hebrews 2:2; 9:15), but in Romans “violation” and “breaking of the law.”

⁴³ This is a causal use of the preposition *εἰς*, for which see Brooks & Winbery. *Syntax*.

Getting Grace 27

This leads some believers to errantly conclude, “Well, if I get more grace when I offend God and my sin nature is excessively active, then I should spend a lot of time operating in my sin nature.⁴⁴” (Paraphrase of Romans 6:1). When the biblical doctrine of grace is taught, some believers never get past this point. They don’t hold on to see that there is more. They really miss the point of grace when they stop here and make this kind of conclusion. Thankfully, God is faithful, and though they make be stuck for a time, sometimes a long time, He will bring them along.

Paul’s response to this faulty reasoning is, “May it never come to be!” We died with Christ. We were buried with Christ, and while he doesn’t state it as clearly here, we were raised with Christ and now sit at the Father’s right hand with Christ. Does one who has been so abundantly graced, and privileged as this, go and enslave himself again to the sin *nature*? No. He lives should go on in victory. He should live in that grace.

Does that happen automatically? Does the believer automatically have victory? Does salvation fix him so that he doesn’t sin and doesn’t operate in his sin nature? No. That’s the very reason Paul was writing these verses. Some were living like slaves, and he wanted them to stop. He was also warning others away from doing so. In Romans 6:11 Paul lists the first of two responses to our sin nature: logically count yourself to be a dead one to the sin *nature* and a living to God, **in Christ Jesus our Lord**. God counts these to be true of us, and we are to do the same. The second instruction is found in 6:13: don’t present your members to the sin *nature* as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourself to God as one who is alive and then your members as instruments for righteousness. Just being dead doesn’t do any good. A dead person may not respond to the sin nature, but a dead person can’t do anything righteous either. Therefore, the believer needs to remember that he is now a living one to God, and with that frame of mind, present himself to God.

Our Teacher

God’s grace teaches us (Titus 2:11-12). The word “teach” involves the whole process of raising a child.⁴⁵ Be cautious. Don’t pour into Paul’s statement everything about child rearing that comes to your mind. Paul was using a word his readers would have understood, but he also was attributing that process to grace. Grace changes the process tremendously from normal earthly child-rearing. We use a series of positives and negatives in raising children. We also use a lot of law. “Don’t touch that stove, it’s hot.” “Don’t hit your sister.” “Don’t spit your food out.” You know how it is. Every family has rules.

⁴⁴ The New International Version missed the point of verse 1 when they translated it, “go on sinning.” Sin is an articular noun and not a verb or participle. Additionally, Paul wasn’t speaking specifically of acts of sin but of operating within the sphere of one’s sin nature. The result would include sins among other acts of unrighteousness, such as trespasses (5:21).

⁴⁵ G. Abbott-Smith lists first, “to train children, hence, generally, to teach, instruct” A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 333.

Getting Grace 28

That's law. Wise parents also maintain consequences for breaches of that family law (if they don't it isn't law just advice to the kids). I say this because God does this differently, due to the nature of grace.

So what does grace teach us, in this child-rearing process? First, to say, no to ungodliness and worldly lusts (Titus 2:12). Why? Because they're inconsistent with grace. We've already seen some of the benefits of grace. Ungodliness and worldly lusts do not express eternal life or the new nature. They are also inconsistent with the position of one who has died to the sin *nature*, is alive to God and seated at God's right-hand in Christ. God focuses us on the positives, on the benefits He has given us by His grace. When we focus upon this great salvation God has given us, we can easily see how some activities don't fit. Additionally, when we begin to enjoy freedom from your sin *nature* and experience living out God's kind of life, ungodliness and worldly lusts begin to lose their luster.

Then grace teaches us to live sensibly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:12). Why? Because these are consistent with grace. The word sensibly is built from the root of the word "save" and another word meaning to restrict ones mind.⁴⁶ Together, the secular Greeks used the word of a sensible or safe attitude, treating the "save" idea as a reference to physical salvation. Paul could have been using this word in that sense, but because the believer has a spiritual dimension of salvation, I can't help but think that Paul had a larger definition in mind. It is consistent with grace to restrict one's mind to those things which are part of our salvation. It is consistent with grace to live out that salvation. Righteously describes the life characterized by righteous behavior. Godly describes the life as showing respect or honor for God by living out the salvation He has so graciously given us. One can only live this way because of the immense benefits from God.

Finally, grace teaches us to eagerly expect our Lord's soon appearing for us (Titus 2:13). We don't have everything God promised us. We have a great salvation, but the greatest portion of our salvation is yet future. When will we get it? When our Lord Jesus Christ appears for us. Both Jesus and Paul said that when He appears for us, He will take us to Himself, remove us from this world, and then take us to be where He is (John 14:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). When we see Him as He is, then we will be like Him (1 John 3:2). That's a future to be excited about.

As great as that future is, many believers are apprehensive about the future, and some are even afraid. This question about the future arises from the thought that we are earning our future. We even hear that taught. Indeed, the Old Testament believer did earn his future. We don't. When Jesus comes for us, He will bring⁴⁷ grace (1 Peter 1:13). Sometimes people wear a special girdle or belt because they have a hernia in their abdomen. The girdle helps support or holds together the muscle tissue so the individual can function without injury or pain. Christians sometimes have mental hernias. Adverse pressures

⁴⁶ The noun is φρηνη and the verb φρονηω. These two involve more than thinking but the restriction of the mind, the corraling in of thoughts and the filtering of other thoughts through that restricted mind.

⁴⁷ The verb is φερω to carry or bear. The phrase is literally, "hope perfectly upon the being carried to us grace."

Getting Grace 29

can cause us to mentally lose it. Our minds fall apart, and we act irrationally or outside of God's revealed will.

That was the problem Peter's readers had. They were undergoing a myriad of temptations, which were comparable to going through the fire (1 Peter 1:6-7). Peter encouraged them with their future, the end of their faith, the completion of their salvation (v. 9). While they were undergoing this fiery trial in the world, they didn't have to worry about facing a trial in the future, Jesus would bring them grace (4:12; 1:9). Jesus had promised believers that they would not enter into judgment (John 5:24). From a human perspective, we might judge some believers to have lived their Christian lives in a worthy manner. From God's perspective, Jesus will bring grace to us, because none of us will have merited our future. Not one of us will deserve it. If the most outstanding believers would still come short.⁴⁸ Aren't you glad God's grace isn't just for our past but also our present and our future!

Grace makes our hearts firm (Hebrews 13:9). Believers who try to live by law, are attempting to make themselves firm by observing a set of rules. The Hebrew Christians were trying to be firm by approaching a physical temple on earth (they still thought that was the proper way of coming to God, see Acts 21:22-26). But they had a better access to God in Christ (Hebrews 7:19). They thought they had to observe dietary rules to be firm (Hebrews 13:9). But they had a better altar than the one in Jerusalem. They thought they had to do law works (Hebrews 4:10). But they had a throne of grace where our works, our merits, don't apply (4:16). That throne provides us rest. We no longer must work to be worthy to approach God. Just these few examples remind us, that God motivates us to proper living by His grace not by law. God does not use the threat of judgment to get us to live the Christian life [see appendix on chastening].

Grace motivation does not involve the promise of blessings. God has already given us **all** spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). What else is there? Grace is the opposite of law. Law says, "Here is a blessing, obey and you will get it." God by His grace says, "Here is a blessing, I'm giving it to you, free and clear and it will not be taken away. Now go live like a blessed one."

⁴⁸ This appears to be Paul's thought in Romans 3:23. It is not just that the unsaved continue to come short with respect to God's opinion (glory), but those who are declared righteous freely also continue to come short. That's us.

Grace as a Way of Life

In Ephesians 3:2 Paul wrote of the “dispensation of the grace from God.” The word dispensation⁴⁹ is translated “stewardship”, “administration”, and even “commission” in various English Bibles. The Greek *oikonomia* [οἰκονομία] described the rule or principle by which a household received benefits. An owner of a house would appoint a steward or manager, an *oikonomos* [οἰκονόμος] is the masculine form of οἰκονομία]. The owner made available provisions for the household’s needs. The owner also established a set of principles by which the household could receive those provisions. For example under a law principle, the household would be required to obey that law in order to receive the provisions. This is what we saw in our last study. In order to receive the promised blessings under the Mosaic law, one had to obey the Mosaic law.

Now, back in Ephesians 3:2, we see that this grace system was given to Paul. Paul served in the role of steward. The principle by which the system operated was grace. The owner of the household is God. We are the household (cf Ephesians 2:19-22). God has benefits for this household. Some of those benefits are called blessings. We saw in Ephesians 1:3 that God has given to us **all** spiritual blessings. He hasn’t given us some but all. Those blessings are extended to us by God’s grace (Ephesians 1:6). What do we have to do to receive the provisions? Nothing. It is a grace system. The benefits can’t be earned. However, we have seen that we are encouraged to live as those who have graciously received these provisions from God. We don’t live to get or retain blessings, but to express our appreciation to God for those blessings.

John wrote that grace came to be by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). He contrasted Jesus to Moses. Moses was only an intermediary. God **gave** the law through Moses. Christ didn’t give grace. He caused it to exist.⁵⁰ We know that grace existed before Jesus Christ was born so in what sense did He cause grace to exist. The key is that both the words grace and truth have definite articles. Literally, John wrote, “the grace and the truth.” John meant a specific aspect of God’s grace and a specific truth. Grace in general had existed (we would presume) since Adam fell. John didn’t mean grace in general but the grace, a specific kind of grace. He was writing about the same grace Paul named in Ephesians 3:2. It is grace as a way of life. Recall Ephesians 2:8. That verse isn’t just about our past, in fact, it is primarily about our present. We are still saved by grace. We are in the state in which we are saved by grace through faith. God’s design for Christian living is that we are to live in light of grace. That is the grace which came into being with Jesus Christ.

⁴⁹ The AV, ASV, and NKJV translate this word “dispensation,” the NASB rev. 95 and ESV “stewardship,” the NIV and Darby “administration.”

⁵⁰ The verb used with Moses is *δίδωμι*, and the verb for Jesus is *γίνομαι*. G. Abbott-Smith listed as a first definition, “to come into being, be born, arise, come on.” p. 92. Some writers have attempted to present the law as a display of God’s grace. However, this is a deduction which does not have Scriptural support and fails to understand the purpose of the law.

Getting Grace 31

When did Jesus Christ cause that grace to start? Not at His birth. Not at His earthly ministry. During His earthly ministry He was upholding the Law (Matthew 5:17; Romans 15:8). He upheld the Law until He died on the cross for our sin. When He rose again, or more precisely, a few days later, He initiated this new way of life. He became an end of law for righteousness for believers (Romans 10:4). God didn't give Israel the law through Moses at Moses' birth, nor at His fortieth birthday, but when Moses was about eighty years old. So, Christ's provision of this grace followed His death and resurrection.

Before we continue, we should recognize that Jesus did demonstrate this grace. When He became flesh (man), He was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). John wrote that they observed with great attention⁵¹ His glory. The glory was not a burst of light but the manner in which He lived His thirty some years on this earth. He glorified the Father by performing the works the Father gave Him to do (John 17:4). Grace and truth were visibly seen in His manner of life. By stating this at the beginning of the book, John didn't have to repeat throughout the book, "and this was grace", "...and this was grace again." When we read John, he expects us to see that grace and truth. When Jesus revealed Himself to a Samaritan woman, that was grace. He dealt with her in a manner that was not based upon any merit she may have had. When Jesus healed a nobleman's son, that was grace. When Jesus healed the lame man at the pool, that was grace. Jesus' words, "sin no more, so that nothing worse happen to you" likely indicates that the man's condition was due his own sin. However, Jesus never established grace as a way of life during that earthly ministry. He was demonstrating it by the manner in which He interacted with others.

One of the best examples of Jesus' grace is seen in the controversial passage of John 7:53-8:11.⁵² In this passage, a woman caught in the act of adultery was brought before Jesus. Her accusers wanted to place Jesus in a no-win situation. If He said she should be stoned, He would be against Romans law. If He said, let her go, He would have been guilty of not upholding Mosaic Law. Rather, Jesus told them, that if any were sinless, they should be the ones to throw the first stone. Her accusers left. Jesus asked the woman if any accused her. When she said none, He responded, "neither do I, go and sin no more." That's grace. "I don't' condemn you. So now go live like one who is free." That, by the way, is Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."⁵³ Such a judgment doesn't

⁵¹ The verb *θεάομαι* meant to look at or watch with careful attention.

⁵² This section is omitted in some early Greek manuscripts. However, without this passage, the struggle in chapter seven is left hanging. It is likely that it was omitted early in the text's history because some felt it might promote adultery.

⁵³ The Majority text has moved the words *τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα* "the ones not walking according to flesh but according to the Spirit" from the end of verse four, to the end of verse one. These words make sense in the former but contradict the the idea in verse one. This move appears to have been early in the text's history as there is no noted variation within the Majority tradition as represented in Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad. *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982.

encourage loose living. It encourages righteous living. It encourages us to live like ones set free and uncondemned. That's grace.

Paul wrote that this design, this way of life by grace was a mystery (Ephesians 3:9).⁵⁴ He defined a mystery three times in his writings. A mystery was a truth which was not revealed before the time God revealed it through Paul⁵⁵ (Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:4-5; Colossians 1:26). We might say that a mystery was a new truth at that time. It was new because God had kept it hidden upto that time. Therefore, this grace way of life came into existence through Christ, and He chose to explain this grace way of life through Paul.

The establishment of this grace way of life followed Christ's ascension when He became our position in heaven and our life here on earth. Christ had to sit down in the heavens. We have previously seen that our position in Christ is a result of grace. However, we could not have that position if that position did not exist. We could not be seated in Christ, until Christ was seated. We couldn't be crucified with Christ unless He has been crucified. We couldn't be made alive and raised with Christ unless He has been made alive and raised. Our way of life is directly connected to the benefits from God's grace. Until those benefits were provided, that grace way of life could not be established.

God chose to use Paul. He made Paul the steward, or the one who dispensed the provisions, and explained how the household was to operate. Paul wrote that God had given the stewardship to him for the benefit of other believers (Ephesians 3:2). It was not given to Paul for Paul alone, any more than a manager is placed over another's business for the manager's sake. Paul was responsible for initially revealing the truths related to life by grace. Through Paul, God revealed to us, "Seek the things above ... set your mind on things above" (Colossians 3:1-2). Through Paul we have, "Logically count yourself to be a dead one to the sin *nature* but a living one to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). Through Paul we read, "walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:2). Paul was responsible for explaining that we can only live this Christian life by spiritually (mentally) relating to the benefits we have in Christ.

Paul was the steward. He was the one God placed to initially reveal how this grace works. However, Paul did not do this alone. He recognized that the church was built on a foundation laid by the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). He recognized that while the Lord had revealed several new truths (mysteries) to him, the Holy Spirit had revealed those same truths by using the apostles and prophets

⁵⁴ There is a textual problem in which the TR reads *κοινωνία*, "fellowship" rather than *οἰκονομία*, and is reflected in the A.V. The support for the latter is broad including the Majority text. See Hodge and Farstad, *op cit*, p. 586.

⁵⁵ This is true of the mysteries in Paul's letters. Christ also revealed some mysteries (cf Matthew 13) and John wrote of some mysteries in Revelation (Revelation 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7). Life by grace, however, was one of the Pauline mysteries.

Getting Grace 33

(Ephesians 3:4-5).⁵⁶ Since Paul was the steward, God used him to initiate the revelation of those truths. Once the truths had been initially revealed by Paul, the others apostles and prophets were led by the Spirit to reveal these truths.

In practical terms, we should expect to find revelation regarding this grace way of life in the New Testament letters (epistles). We don't find this way of life revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. We don't find it revealed in the Gospels.⁵⁷ This grace way of life is explained chiefly in the letters of Paul with some important additions in the other letters. The restriction of these teachings to the New Testament letters⁵⁸ is evidence that this way of life was new at the time the Church was beginning. It is interesting that nearly 2,000 years later, many believers are still wrestling with this matter of grace. Yet, whether we understand God's design or are still trying to live by a merit/law system, we are under grace and it does not alter God's gracious provisions for each believer. If it could, then God's grace wouldn't be grace.

⁵⁶ In both of these verses, "prophets" refers to the New Testament prophets not the Old Testament prophets (cp Ephesians 4:11).

⁵⁷ John recorded some statements by Jesus that regard our position. However, John's record does not include details or the manner of life which results.

⁵⁸ This does not mean that grace can not be found in Old Testament Scriptures. We can find many examples of God's grace in the lives of His people, however, there is a distinction between the extension of grace at times and grace as a way of life. This is the distinction we are attempting to see.

So What Does It Take to Live By Grace?

We have two requirements for learning a practical truth. We must first learn the facts. Then we must live out those truths as we have opportunity. The facts are found in God's Word. God has revealed all we need to know. As with any truth we might practice or live, it is necessary we begin with the **objective revelation** in God's Word. Objective revelation is the framework through which we evaluate our experiences. A group of people who have the same experience may each offer a different explanation (interpretation). Each might see the experience as something different and each might consider the reason or the why to be different. Thankfully we are not left to a subjective interpretation of our experience. God's Word reveals what happens. We not only start with objective revelation, we continually evaluate the situation in light of God's Word.

Once we have objective revelation, we then practice that revelation as we have opportunity. For example, once we have learned what a Satanic attack is, and how to put on the armor of God so that we can resist him, we need an opportunity to apply or use those truths. If Satan is not attacking us, then we don't apply those truths. We must exercise discernment regarding our circumstances so that we can use the proper truths at the proper time. It is necessary to practice these truths in order to know them as God intends. God does not wish for us to simply have a head full of facts. His design is that those truths become part of our experience. We learn to live the truths God has taught us. There is a difference between knowing and rehearsing the facts regarding a Satanic attack, and the use of the armor of God and practicing those truths. The level of understanding begins to rise as we use what we know.

Therefore, to understand grace, we begin with God's Word. We have seen some of God's revelation regarding His grace. With that revelation in hand, we can begin to consider our experiences. We can apply those truths, we can live in light of what we know. As a result, we get to know grace on a new level. We then continue to refer to Scripture to be certain our evaluation is accurate.

The Practice of Grace

We've seen some of the facts of grace. Now let's look at the practice of grace. We'll first note that grace was something believers were to practice or in which they were to operate. Since Paul was the steward, it is not surprising that the first mention of life by grace comes from Paul. Having announced the gospel in Antioch of Pisidia⁵⁹ some people followed Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:43). Those who followed were believers, following being evidence of their faith. Verses 14 through the first part of verse 43 record the events in the synagogue on one Sabbath day. Verse 44 is the next Sabbath day. The last part of verse 43 "speaking to them, urging them to continue in the grace of God", happened in between the two Sabbaths. Urge [A.V. "persuade"] is an Imperfect verb, meaning this was not a brief charge to them but an ongoing activity. This is what Paul and Barnabas were doing during the six days between the Sabbaths.

⁵⁹ Located in then Asia (minor), today known as central Turkey.

Getting Grace 35

The participle “speaking” indicates this urging was involved in their talk with these followers. They were teaching these new believers about grace. In order for them to continue in that grace, they had to know something about it. Paul and Barnabas could tell them to do so, but that would be no good if they didn’t know what it is. So this is the first evidence of believers living by grace.

Leaving Antioch, Paul and Barnabas traveled to Iconium (14:1). Having evangelized both Jews and Greeks, Paul spent a considerable time speaking boldly on the basis⁶⁰ of the Lord (v. 3). The Lord was giving testimony based upon the word about His grace. The expression, “word of His grace”⁶¹ occurs one other time in Acts 20:32, when Paul was speaking with the Ephesians elders. In that passage Paul committed the elders to God and the word about His grace, for it⁶² was able to build them up and provide them an inheritance. Therefore, it is consistent that Paul was speaking the same word in Iconium. He was teaching those who believed about God’s grace.

After Paul had been teaching about this grace for some time,⁶³ he and Barnabas returned to Antioch in Syria. This Antiochian church had sent them out, entrusted to God’s grace (Acts 14:26). While there, men from Judea arrived and taught the brothers that it was necessary to be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1). This was not a question about initial salvation. Acts 15:5 reveals it to be a question about this word of God’s grace which Paul and Barnabas had been preaching. It was a question of whether a believer could go on to maturity by grace alone, or whether it was also necessary that these Gentile believers be circumcised and obey the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to settle this matter (Galatians 2:1). They didn’t go to ascertain whether they were correct. They went to receive an agreement from the other apostles so that their teaching ministry would not be undermined. In Galatians 2:2 Paul expressed their purpose, “unless I am running in vain or had run.” The word “vain” is κενός, to be empty of content.⁶⁴ Paul was concerned that after all he taught and continued to teach, the teaching would be empty if this addition to grace were allowed. If believers are taught to live by grace then attempt to add obedience to the law, it empties the content of grace. Remember Romans 11:6, it can’t be both law and grace.

Peter was one of the apostles in attendance at that meeting (Acts 15:7-11). Peter had heard them announce the things God had accomplished (v. 4). Something in Paul’s report gave rise to the continued

⁶⁰ Luke used ἐπὶ as the foundation or basis of Paul’s bold words.

⁶¹ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

⁶² I take the participle τῷ δυναμένῳ to refer to λόγος as the nearest antecedent.

⁶³ David Smith attempted a detailed chronology of Paul’s life. He suggested that Paul was in Antioch of Pisidia from early August to the end of October AD 47, in Iconium from November to early summer of AD 48, in Lystra until late August, and Derbe from September to midwinter. See *Life and Letters of St. Paul*. New York: George H. Doran Company, nd. 645ff (esp. 649). This is simply a suggestion but does demonstrate that these were not overnight visits in these cities.

⁶⁴ G. Abbott-Smith. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1948, p. 244. “k. of its quality..”

Getting Grace 36

debate in verse 5. Paul had communicated this good news [gospel] about life by God's grace (Galatians 2:2).⁶⁵ Peter responded to this message. He heard something and understood that this life by grace would also be true for the Jewish believers. He said, "But we believe, through the grace from the Lord Jesus *we will* be saved according to the same manner as those also." (Acts 15:11). Peter saw that the Jews would also live by grace.

The freedom and liberty

Grace frees the believer from sin. We saw that God by grace counts the believer to have died and been raised with Christ. The believer died to the sin *nature*.⁶⁶ The believer is now to logically count himself to be a dead one to the sin *nature* but a living one to God in Christ (Romans 6:11). God by grace counts that true of us, and we are instructed to do the same. Why? Because this is how God has chosen to provide the believer victory over his sin *nature*. The believer can have this victory because he is under grace (v. 14).

Grace frees the believer to serve. The goal of freedom from the sin nature is not just to avoid being bad. Neither is this freedom from law intended to provide the flesh a basis⁶⁷ of operation (Galatians 5:13). Freedom allows us to serve others and God (Galatians 5:13; Romans 6:22). When we serve God in this manner, we have fruit because⁶⁸ we have been set apart, and the end is eternal life. We can manifest eternal life in our daily living. Love and service are two expressions of grace and eternal life.

Freedom is in Christ (Galatians 2:4). Christ freed us so that we could be free (Galatians 5:1). Paul warned the Galatian christian not to put themselves under the yoke of law again. Since he is not operating in his position in Christ where God has graced him, Paul pictures it is as falling from that grace, because Christ doesn't benefit⁶⁹ him anything (v. 2). The benefits Christ accomplished were not so that we could return to law. All he has to do is let go of the law and get back to living by grace in Christ. In fact, Paul went so far as to say, that the believer who attempts to be righteous by law has fallen from grace (v. 4). This can not be an unsaved person, for he has not been in grace. This can not be a loss of salvation for that is contrary to the very nature of grace. This is a believer who is operating in his flesh, attempting to live righteously. This is present tense justification not initial. When the believer makes such an attempt, he (the believer) is rendered idle away from Christ (v. 4). The verb means to render idle, or null and void. The believer who tries to live by his own flesh and does not relate to his position in Christ where

⁶⁵ Paul did not mean the gospel for initial salvation. Compare Peter's message to Cornelius and Paul's message in Antioch. They both proclaimed Christ's death, resurrection and forgiveness by faith (Acts 10:39-43; 13:28-30, 38-39).

⁶⁶ Paul simply wrote "the sin" ἡ αμαρτία. We add the word nature to describe this principle.

⁶⁷ αφορμη from απο + ορμη, the latter being a violent movement, hence an opportunity for an attack. Abbott-Smith. op cit. 72.

⁶⁸ I take this as a causal εις, that which is done "in view of" not "with a view to." For more info see Dale R. Spurbeck. THE CAUSAL USE OF THE GREEK PREPOSITION ΕΙΣ IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT. A paper presented at the 1997 Theological Forum on Contemporary Issues.

⁶⁹ This is translation of ωφελήσει "to help, benefit, do good, profit." Abbott-Smith. op cit. 491.

Getting Grace 37

he has been graced, is ineffective. He may be busy in his flesh. He might even be a pastor studying hard, polishing his work and presenting truths to believers, but done in his flesh, it is ineffective. He might be a deacon attending to his duties in the church, or any other believer carrying out service, but doing so in his own flesh.⁷⁰

Our Past (Accomplishments) and Grace

We saw in the last half of Romans 6 that a believer who lives by grace is able to serve in righteousness. Such a believer does acts of righteousness, produced by the Holy Spirit. How does the Biblical definition of grace affect this situation? Paul explained his way of looking at the past. He wrote the Philippians about both his past and present. His past involved works he had done before he was saved. These were works done in his flesh. Such works were considered good by mankind, especially Paul's fellow Jews (Philippians 3:4-6). Paul learned to look at those things as loss, to write them off rather than to keep track of them. But Paul didn't do this only with the works he did before he was saved. In Philippians 3:8, he said he counted⁷¹ all things to be loss because of the excellency of the experiential knowledge of Christ Jesus. He found it much better to really know Christ than to rest on his past experiences. This was Paul operating by grace without calling it grace.⁷²

Counting the past to be loss, Paul made it his goal to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness (Philippians 3:9). His own righteousness would have its source in the Law. Paul had been a believer for close to thirty years when he wrote Philippians. "Not having my own righteousness" does not refer to an even thirty years earlier. Paul was writing about his Christian experience. Paul was not living his Christian life by law or a law principle. That would have resulted in a righteousness from law. Paul wanted a righteousness which comes through faith (3:9; cf Galatians 5:3). Paul lived his daily life by faith. He directed faith at God's promises for daily living.

Let's remember Ephesians 2:8, our salvation, past and present is by grace through faith. Therefore, when Paul lived through faith in the promises related to Christ. He was living by grace. All this led Paul to an important principle; look ahead. Faith involves things hoped for and a thing hoped for is not seen (Hebrews 11:1; Romans 8:24). Therefore, to live by faith one must look forward not backward. Paul wrote, "but one thing first, forgetting⁷³ things behind then stretching out for the things ahead." (Philippians 3:13). This is a common challenge for us as Christians, to look ahead at what God has planned for us. We are tempted to look at the past. Some Christians are stuck in the past. Some only look at their initial salvation. They may be saved fifty years but only know how to look back at the moment they

⁷⁰ These people are believers. The legalism of which Paul was concerned was not unsaved people trying to please God but of believers trying to please God and men by their own efforts.

⁷¹ ηγεομαι comes from αγω to lead. It involves the idea of leading the mind to a conclusion or a way of thinking.

⁷² Paul uses χαρις two times in Philippians and the verb χαριζομαι two times, one time of Christ not us.

⁷³ Literally, to let something escape one's attention.

Getting Grace 38

believed. They have been graced by God but are not living through faith by God's grace. Some Christians have grown and accomplished things for God (like Paul) but now look back at those accomplishments and can't seem to look forward. We may appreciate how God by His grace has worked in our past but grace encourages us to look ahead.

Every day, God calls us to relate to our position in Christ, to remember and think about the benefits we have now because today we are in Christ. We are sitting at the Father's right hand in Christ. We are priests in Christ and members of the body in Christ. Paul knew that God called him upward in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). This was daily but may have been even moment by moment. God called Paul to think on the benefits of grace in Christ. This is what God set before Paul and Paul left the past behind and focused on this call in Christ (by grace). Learning grace requires us to look ahead not back.

One's Calling and Grace

Most people are inclined to look at the famous, to gravitate toward the powerful and prestigious. The Corinthian Church struggled with an inner church popularity contest. Some of the believers were impressed by nobility (people born to prominent families). Some liked really smart people, scholars, while others liked the powerful (1 Corinthians 1:20-26). Paul told them to look at their calling, that is what they were like when God called them to salvation. God had not called many wise (scholars) to salvation, neither many powerful or well born. He had called some, but since calling to salvation is by grace, God didn't call them because of who they were.

This is also an important lesson for us. It is easy to focus on who we are as people in the world. Some people are, by birth, more inclined to intelligence, some are more powerful and some are from prominent families. It is important to leave these things behind, like Paul, to count them loss. God doesn't want us to boast in our flesh (1 Corinthians 1:29). We are not to focus on who we are by birth, human efforts and accomplishments. Paul pointed the Corinthians to who they are in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus has become for us righteous, sanctification, and redemption (v. 30). Each of these are benefits in Christ (cf 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7). These are benefits of grace and shared by all saints, not limited to a special few. So Paul instructed them, "Let the one boasting boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:31). Some might want to boast in the worldly standing and accomplishments, for these might make them stand above others. Every believer can boast in his position in Christ, because God by grace has given all believers the same position. Learning grace requires that we focus on God's provisions not our natural strengths (or weaknesses).

Grand Experiences and Grace

Sometimes believers have an experience in which they might boast. In 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Paul recalled an experience he had fourteen years earlier. Why did Paul mention how long ago he had this experience? Because the Corinthian saints had known Paul about five years and had never heard about this experience? Many saints have a remarkable experience and their fellow believers hear about it for

years. Paul only related it at this time because of unbelieving men.⁷⁴ He wished to cut off the opportunity from these men, for they wanted an opportunity to be found like Paul (2 Corinthians 11:2). By relating this experience, Paul pointed out how he was different from the boasting unbelievers.

So why had Paul kept silent about this experience? Because a messenger from Satan beat up Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7). The result of the beating left Paul with “a thorn in the flesh.” This thorn in the flesh really bothered Paul, so he asked the Lord three times to remove (2 Corinthians 12:8). The Lord’s reply, “My grace is sufficient⁷⁵ for you, for my power is matured in weakness.” (v. 9). God’s grace can be eclipsed by our popularity, our grand experiences, or as in 1 Corinthians 1, our natural strengths. Three requests by Paul demonstrated how frustrated he was. Paul learned that God’s grace stand out best when he was weak, when he did not rely on his natural abilities and didn’t rehearse his incredible experiences. Rather, Paul learned to boast in his weaknesses. Learning grace means letting go of the outstanding.

Grace and Failure - Romans 7

Loser. That word makes us uncomfortable. Most people hope that word is never connected with their name. Failure, defeated, miserable, and pitiable are all descriptions people would like to avoid. We like success. It is built in to us to win, to come out on top. In fact fallen human nature wants to win at any cost.⁷⁶ Failure in Christian living is even more serious.

Failure has different meanings depending on circumstances. When failure is used of a student, it means he doesn’t know all he should, of a business venture, that it couldn’t last, of a structure, that it couldn’t stand. When failure is used of a citizen under a legal system, it implies his ability or unwillingness to obey the Law. Failure has consequences; a student may have to repeat a class, a proprietor may become bankrupt, a building may be bulldozed, a citizen fined, jailed, or in the extreme, executed. Failure, defeat and losing have consequences. Miserable and pitiable describe those who have failed, are defeated, or have lost.

The Mosaic law had consequences for failure. When an Israelite failed to keep the law, he experienced consequences. Sometimes he had to offer sacrifices (), makes restitution and sometimes give his own life. Because of the consequences, Paul called the law a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7, 9). Paul was raised under the system. He was a pharisee, well trained in the law and knew well the consequences of failure. Since Paul was “righteous according to the Law” he had experiences some of those consequences, he had made the righteous responses because of his unrighteous actions.

⁷⁴ Paul called them ministers of Satan who masquerade as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:15). They did proclaim a Jesus like Paul’s Jesus, though Paul did not talk about Jesus in that way (v. 4). They also preached a different gospel and promoted a different Spirit.

⁷⁵ -- αρκει

⁷⁶ This is zeal in the negative sense. Galatians 5:20 translates this “emulations” and modern translations “jealousy.” ζηλος is zeal and the negative form of zeal drives us to succeed without regard to cost or outcome. If it hurts others, we don’t care. If we must compromise, that’s OK. That is negative zeal and is a work of the flesh.

Getting Grace 40

As a zealous religious Jew, Paul knew the discipline it took to obey law. When Paul wrote “a ministry of death” and “a ministry of condemnation” he was speaking from experience.

It was with that background Paul experienced failure. He recorded that experience in Romans 7. Romans 7 is a record of a believer’s struggle, Paul’s struggle.⁷⁷ Note Paul’s change through the remainder of the chapter from second person to first. Paul recounts the “I” and “me” experience. This was personal. Paul knew it well. Paul had been alive separated from law (Romans 7:8). An unsaved man was never “alive.” Paul said the sin *nature* revived⁷⁸ meaning it had been dead for a period of time. This sin principle is not dead in an unsaved person but rules over them (Romans 5:21). Paul was divided as a believer. In his spirit, he served a law, a principle related to God., but in his flesh he served a law or principle of sin. Romans 7 was Paul’s experience as a believer. This experience was not Paul was writing but may have been during his 7-10 quiet years in Tarsus. It was in that time Paul learned to practice what the Lord Jesus had taught him.

The Problem of the Sin Nature

Paul became aware of an internal problem through his failure. Paul learned he had a sin principle or sin nature. he referred to it several times in Romans 7 but twice he clearly located it within himself. “But no longer am I producing it (i.e. sin), but the indwelling sin in me.” (vv. 17, 20). Paul was not trying to free himself of blame. He wasn’t identifying this sin as another entity within him. It was the bent part of his human nature, that part which awaits salvation. He wasn’t throwing the blame, but was coming to understand why his struggle was so persistent, why he was so frustrated.

Paul explained the reason for the struggle and what law could not do and what God’s grace taught him. Some could draw the wrong conclusion regarding the Law, it is not sin (Romans 7:7-13). Paul wanted this clear. It was through the Law that Paul learned about his sin nature (v. 7). For example, he learned about coveting from the Law. When Paul coveted contrary to the law his sin nature became plainly visible (v. 7). The fault was in his sin nature, which took advantage of the situation (v.8). Through the incitement of the Law, Paul’s sin nature produced all kinds of coveting (v. 8). Paul remembered the time in his life, following his initial salvation when he experienced freedom from his sin nature because he wasn’t living by law (vv. 8-9, see above). It was when Paul turned back to the law, and attempted to live by law that his struggle began. Paul found that the commandment which was life was now death (v. 10). Now that he was saved he saw a whole new purpose in the law.

⁷⁷ F.F. Bruce pointed out that taking this autobiographically was no longer popular among Bible interpreters, “But it is the most natural way to understand this section, and the arguments against it are not conclusive. Paul of course, did not think of his own experience as unique; he describes it here because it is true in a greater or lesser degree of the human race. Romans in the Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1963, p. 148. On page 152, he again states, “This unequal struggle against ‘the law of sin which is in my members’ (as Paul calls it) has been the real experience of too many Christians for us to state confidently that Paul cannot be speaking autobiographically here - and in the present tense too.

⁷⁸ $\alpha\nu\zeta\alpha\omega$ - to live again.

Getting Grace 41

He reminded the Romans that that the law was not sin, rather Paul's sin nature used the law to lead him astray (Romans 7:11). It convinced Paul he could successfully live by law and please God. Then it killed Paul (v. 11). The law itself was holy, it was set apart and could have set Israel apart from the nations by making them different (v. 12). Since the law is made of commandments, Paul pointed out three qualities of those commandments. The commandment was holy (v. 12). The commandment was righteous (v. 12). It forbid unrighteous activity. The commandment was good (v. 12). It served its purpose. It proved what God wished, that man can't do everything God asks (cf Exodus 19:8). It was also good because it provided a blessing for obedience which made people happy. Therefore, while the commandment was holy, righteous and good, Paul's sin nature was corrupt and led him astray by that commandment.

Neither was the law death (Romans 7:13). The law brought to light or made plainly visible the corrupt sin nature (v. 13). The sin nature was responsible for the death. The sin nature became abundantly sinful through the commandment. To claim that the law was at fault would be similar to blaming a piece of medical equipment for making a cancer visible. The equipment didn't produce the cancer and the law didn't produce sin. One reason God gave Israel the law was to show people their fallen sinful nature.

So Paul concluded that his sin nature was the problem (Romans 7:14-24). The law is spiritual (v. 14). Spiritual means it pertains to spirit. It appealed to man's spirit, to his rationale. It appealed to what made logical sense. However, Paul's problem was that he was carnal (v. 14b). Carnal means "fleshly." Paul characterized himself as operating in flesh. In fact, Paul said he was sold⁷⁹ like a slave under the sin nature. He was back in Romans 6:12-13, allowing the sin nature to reign like a king in his life, while he was presenting his members to the sin nature.

The Sin Nature Now

Beginning in verse 14 and continuing to verse 25 Paul switches from a look back to a look at the present.⁸⁰ The remainder of the chapter could be a vivid recounting of his past experience, but it is also possible that Paul's struggle, though not as pronounced, was still ongoing. Christian experience would certainly agree with this. Even the most mature believer does struggle from time to time, even sometimes entering into an extended struggle. The Christian life is not mastered so that the believer enters into perfect or final victory (cf 1 John 2:1-2, "we").

Paul then explained what being carnal (fleshly) looks like in one's life. He used his own life as the example. He wasn't able practice what he wanted but did what he hated (Romans 7:15). So He agreed

⁷⁹ From *πιπρασκω* to sell, to conduct commerce.

⁸⁰ In verses 7-12 Paul used 13 Aorist verbs and participles and one Imperfect and only one Present participle. In the remainder of the chapter, he used 34 Present verbs, participles and infinitives, one Perfect, one Pluperfect, and one Future. It could be argued that the Present tenses are intended as Historic Presents, a Present used of a past event for vividness. However, it seems more consistent that Paul was looking at his ongoing situation.

Getting Grace 42

with the law as it showed him his sin nature (v. 16). He was unable to deny that he had a sin nature. That sin *nature* dwelt in him and the Law could not free him (vv. 17-21). Paul identified this situation as a law, a principle, like the law of gravity (vv. 21-22).⁸¹ The law or principle was that evil was always present with him when he wanted to do good. However, he saw another law (principle) which was fighting like a soldier against the principle of his mind (v. 23). It was a conflict. It was Paul's conflict. It is the conflict every believe will meet sometime in his christian life.

From a human perspective, that conflict appeared hopeless. Paul always ended up losing and becoming a captive of the sin nature (v. 23b). The result left Paul a wretched man in a body of sin (v. 24). All he could do was cry out for a rescue (v. 24). That is a miserable situation in which many Christians have found themselves. However, here is the good part, it is a step toward learning grace.

Paul recognized God's grace in all this struggle and failure (Romans 7:25). In verse 25, the word grace is translated "thanks" in almost all our English versions.⁸² The phrase can be rendered, "But grace *is* by God."⁸³ The chapter division causes a mental disconnect with Romans 8:1. Paul realized that the conflict would be resolved by the proper use of his mind.

No Condemnation

Paul realized there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (8:1).⁸⁴ This was a whole new experience for Paul. Paul knew that under law, failure brought condemnation (cf 2 Corinthians 3:7-9). Remember that Paul called the law a ministry of condemnation and death. However, God by His grace counts us to be in Christ. In Christ there is no condemnation! Since that position in Christ is by God's grace, the believer is not able to do anything which would cause God to remove benefits from the believer. Therefore, "no condemnation to those who are in Christ" is a consistent absolutely dependable promise, for it depends wholly on God.

So, what was Paul's experience? We don't have to guess, we know Paul lived and served for many years following his failure outlined in Romans 7. If his Romans 7 experience ended in the mid 40's, Paul

⁸¹ The different senses in which νομος is used must be carefully distinguished. First, there is the comprehensive law of my being, which includes the two antagonistic principles (ver. 21 ευρισκω τον νομον). Then these two principles are considered and described from an objective and a subjective standpoint. The good principle is called objectively, 'the law of God' (ver. 22 τω νομω του θεου), subjectively 'the law of my mind, of my rational nature' (ver. 23 τω νομω του νοου μου); the wrong principle is termed objectively 'the law of sin' (ver. 23 τω νομω της αμαρτιας), subjectively 'the law in my limbs' (ver. 23 τω οντι εν τοις μελεσιν μου). John Barber Lightfoot, Notes on the Epistles to Paul, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, 304.

⁸² Some lexicographers believe "thanks" is within the semantic domain of χαρις. I believe this conclusion has resulted from not understanding the use of χαρις in several passages. Because the common definition or idea of grace doesn't seem to fit, translators and lexicographers have gravitated toward a the nearest definition which seemed to fit, that of ευχαριστια.

⁸³ This is a verbless clause χάρις τῷ θεῷ. It occurs three other times and in each case is a statement of God's grace connected to an accomplishment from grace (Romans 6:17; 2 Corinthians 8:16; 9:15).

⁸⁴ The textual problem of Romans 8:1 involves the transposition of words from verse 4 to the end of verse 1. The shorter reading is harder. The Church's history demonstrates people are more inclined to add requirements than to remove.

served another 25 years. What did Paul learn? He learned he wasn't condemned. He didn't learn that as a fact but in his experience. He had the fact but now he found it was true. By failing, and surviving, by not being condemned by God, Paul began to learn the importance of his position in Christ. What God said about him in Christ was true. God was teaching Paul grace in Paul's daily life.

Freedom

Knowing that there is no condemnation, Paul found a principle pertaining to the Spirit's work which resulted in freedom (Romans 8:2). He knew that law couldn't free him from this cycle of sin and frustration. He had tried to live by law and it didn't work because it wasn't meant to produce freedom. Law was weak (v. 3). It didn't have enough incentive to free from his powerful sin nature. The Spirit does! In fact the righteous results of law⁸⁵ were fulfilled by people who walked according to the Spirit (v. 4). This is not commandment keeping. The kind of righteousness that resulted from law could now be produced without law through a work of the Holy Spirit. God could produce righteousness without law (vv. 4-11).

How did the Spirit do this? First look back at the end of Romans 7. Paul could serve the principle related to God with his mind. This is what he was learning by grace. What God had given him in Christ was valuable, it wasn't pie in the sky. It wasn't some worthless standing because it was only imputed. It was valuable. It was a key facet in walking by the Spirit.

The freedom and righteousness result from walking by the Spirit (Romans 8:2, 4). Paul then explained how one walks by the Spirit in the following verses. "The ones being according to the flesh, set their minds to the things from the flesh and the ones *being* according to the Spirit, the things from the Spirit (v. 5). First, "the ones being"⁸⁶ is a participle referring to the previous sentence, "walking according to." Therefore, being is related to the walking. Second, "according to"⁸⁷ involves the standard by which a thing is measured. These two groups are operating or walking by two distinct principles, one by the standard of the Spirit and the other by the standard of the flesh. Third, "set their minds to" involves the act of restricting one's mind. The standard or measure to which one restricts his mind, is or are "the things from..." Specifically, in this case, those things are a set of thoughts. For example, one who restricts his mind to things from the Spirit, forms a framework or corral with those things. Thoughts which do not fit within that framework are excluded. Therefore, the believer who is walking by the standard of the flesh takes a set of truths from his flesh, frames his mind to those facts and does not entertain other truths. If he is thinking and restricting his thinking to things from the flesh, it follows that his actions will

⁸⁵ This is not lawkeeping. The kind of results, the obedience, etc. is what Paul meant.

⁸⁶ οἱ ὄντες - Present Active Participle.

⁸⁷ κατά - according to. This preposition means to be down against and hence developed the idea of measuring or the standard by which a thing is measured.

be from his flesh. The same is true of the believer walking by the Spirit. Simply, walking involves the proper use, the proper restricting of the mind.

How did this mental activity free Paul? How did he learn grace through this? Focusing on law made him focus on the negative, the don'ts, and as a result on his flesh: idolatry, hostility to parents, adultery, murder, and coveting. Since he was restricting his mind to those things, it was natural that the outcome would be works of the flesh. No wonder, Paul was frustrated. In this way, the law really was good at bring one's sin nature to light. However, by realizing that his position in Christ did have positive effects; God didn't condemn Paul, he learned to mentally relate to those truths. Since those truths from the Spirit are about our position in Christ and those truths are by God's grace, then this involved relating to God's grace. By focusing on this gracious position in Christ, the believer lives in light of it. The believer lives by grace.

What does it take to learn grace in this case? It takes failure. Apparently significant failure. It takes failure accompanied by God's uncondemning grace. We'd probably like to avoid this but in order for us to really get grace, it seems we have to experience it, and we experience it by seeing up close and personal how God treats us when we fail. However with the realization of grace, the believer then relates to the benefits of God's grace. Learning grace takes failure, and God continuing to be gracious.⁸⁸

This is how we learn grace. God teaches us from Scripture the facts about grace. He teaches us what He has given us by His grace. He then has to wean us from the idea that good works produce rewards and disobedience results in condemnation. He allows us to fail and fail and fail and fail and fail and ... until we realize that we aren't condemned, until we see that nothing has or will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Then we can begin to truly grow and know God!

Peter and Grace

Finally, faulty definitions can mess us up. 1 Peter addresses a faulty definition of grace. However, before Peter wrote that letter he had to learn how grace works. Peter's first exposure to grace as a way of life was when Paul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem in Acts 15. We previously noted Peter's interest in Paul's report. At that time, Peter recognized the Law as a yoke, a burden which they (the Jews) and their fathers couldn't bear. Peter's recommendation was not to burden these disciples (He knew they were believers) with extras rules for their Christian lives. Peter grasped something of grace.

When that Jerusalem council ended, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch in Caesarea (Acts 15:30-35). Paul tells us that Peter came to Antioch for a visit (Galatians 2:11). For a while, Peter lived by

⁸⁸ Paul elaborates in Romans 8 just how much God is on our side. He wished the Romans to realize just how gracious God has been too us. Paul concluded that nothing can successfully be against us, since God is for us (Romans 8:31)! God didn't spare His Son (v. 32). He declares us righteous and therefore, won't bring a charge against us (v. 33; see 2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ Jesus won't condemn us (v. 34). Why? Because He died for us; He was raised for us; He is at God's right hand for us; He is interceding for us. Paul then concluded that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (v. 39). This is grace! This is not law! Under grace, nothing can cut us off! NOTHING!

grace. He ate with Gentiles, something a good Jew under law would never do (v. 12). However, Peter became a hypocrite when some Jews from Jerusalem showed up. He withdrew from the Gentile tables and ate only with the Jews (v. 13). Paul was so irate at this event that he moved across the floor and spoke to Peter in strong terms.⁸⁹ His actions not only were wrong for himself but it set a bad example for others. Even Barnabas was caught in the hypocrisy. Consistent with New Testament discipline, Paul addressed Peter because Peter's actions affected other believers.

The grace is seen in Paul's statement to Peter, "If you, a Jew, existing in a Gentile⁹⁰ manner, and are not living in a Jewish manner..." (v. 14). Peter had not been living like a Jew, because he had heard Paul and realized that law keeping, which was part of the Jewish way of life, was no longer what God desired for His people. "Existing in a Gentile manner" does not mean that Peter was living out the works of the flesh (1 Peter 4:3). It simply meant he was living like the Gentile believer in Antioch. If you recall, the debate that led Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem was whether those gentile believers should become law-keepers. Paul taught them to live by grace. So, if Peter were living in the manner the Gentile believers of Antioch were living, he was living, in some degree, by grace.

Except for a reference to Peter in 1 Corinthians, we do not hear of him again until he writes his two letters towards the end of his life.⁹¹ He was well acquainted with Paul's letters and referred to them in 2 Peter 3:15-16. He knew that some of the things which Paul wrote are difficult. Unlearned believers or unstable believers can twist Paul's words, resulting in their own ruin. Peter was writing about the message of grace but does not call it grace until verse 18. He avoided it, because that was the very word the false teachers were misusing and perverting (cf Jude 4). Those teachers thought that this grace meant "easy living" or allowed for believers to live immorally. Jude wrote of the same men, saying they transformed grace into unrestrained sexual immorality⁹² (cf 2 Peter 2:15-19). Peter described grace in terms of God being longsuffering (2 Peter 3:15). It is longsuffering with struggling, ignorant, and even disobedient believers, which leads to salvation. This is growth salvation, maturing. As we saw with Paul in Romans 7, there is no condemnation and God uses our failure to teach us about this grace. That longsuffering doesn't lead us to dive into unrestrained sin. When the believer really gets a hold of this longsuf-

⁸⁹ Paul said Peter was to be blamed. *καταγινώσκω* means, "to find fault with, blame... to accuse, condemn" Joseph Henry Thayer. *New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1979, p.330. Condemn might be a little strong, especially in light of what we have seen, but the sense of a strong denunciation or blame is clear.

⁹⁰ *ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς* is the phrase, the first word being a Present Active Participle which in this context describes the manner in which one exists, living or being within a specific set of circumstances. See Thayer, op cit. p. 638. The second is an adverbial form of the word Gentile, modifying the former in regard to manner, or how one existed or was being.

⁹¹ 1 Peter is likely written about 65 AD and 2 Peter 67-68 AD.

⁹² *ἀσέλγεια*

fering, this grace, he can go and “grow by means of the grace and **full experiential knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Grace towards others

Once we have learned grace (it is an ongoing process), we are not only to live by it in our own lives but we are to extend that grace to fellow believers. This is indicated by the Greek verb *χαρίζομαι*. The *ιζω* ending is causative, and the meaning is to cause grace toward.⁹³ In the Ephesians’ conflict, Paul encouraged them to be “gracious” with yourselves⁹⁴ (Ephesians 4:32). “Forgive” in many English Bibles is this verb. The English translation only hits one facet of this word’s meaning. It is broader than forgiveness. It involves many facets of grace. In the context of Christians who have been graced by God in the One who is loved (1:7), it involves the believer relating, for his benefit, to the results God’s grace.

Once a believer has extended this grace to himself, he can then extend it to his fellow believers. So we find Colossians 3:13 “bearing⁹⁵ with one another and being gracious with yourselves, if one has a complaint against another. Even as the Lord dealt graviously with you, in this same way, you also.” We have seen that with one’s self, one needs to focus on the positive benefits of God’s grace not on the negatives, not on the don’t’s or failures. So, much division among believers results from neglecting to focus on who we are together in Christ, on the grace that God extends not just to “me” but to “us.”

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to exercise or cause grace towards a brother in 2 Corinthians 2:7, 10. We don’t know who this brother is, though many have conjectured it is the brother of 1 Corinthians 5.⁹⁶ Whoever it may have been, the exhortation is to now treat the brother with grace. “Excommunication” (if that term is even legitimate) is never to be a longterm solution, something many believers have forgotten in living by grace. Later in the same letter, Paul asked the Corinthian saints to deal graciously with him (12:13). He had served among them without taking any remuneration. He didn’t burden them. The Corinthians were then turned against Paul by false apostles, who claimed Paul had evil motives in not taking anything from them. It was for this, which Paul asked to be treated with grace.

Conclusion

So, what does it take to learn how to live by grace? It starts with Gods’ Word. We must learn the facts about grace. We start with a biblical definition of grace. We then move on to find how God has applied salvation to us by means of grace. We then compile a list (mental or on paper) of the benefits God

⁹³ Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 2:12 demonstrate that this word involves more than forgiveness, but also provision. The AV, ASV, and NASB translate it “freely give”, Darby “grant”, the NIV and ESV “graciously give.” The latter probably providing the best sense. Colossians 2:13 appears to be clearly a statement of forgiveness.

⁹⁴ Most English bibles translate this pronoun (*ἑαυτου*) as though it were reciprocal (*ἀλλήλων*). This is to one’s self.

⁹⁵ Of putting up, *ἀνέχομαι*.

⁹⁶ Paul stated that the punishment *ἐπιτιμία* (a punishment inflicted for what one deserved, hence this term is derived from *τιμία* the value of thing) was sufficient from (*υπο*) the many (v. 6).

Getting Grace 47

has provided us by His grace. One can not understand grace without the solid concrete revelation of that grace in God's Word.

We then are able to consider the lives, and the actions of believers in Scripture. We saw Paul and Peter learn grace in their practice. That is important because it provides us a divine interpretation of our experience. Our experiences will mirror theirs. We are not left to surmise, or even to make an intelligent guess about our experience. We turn to the pages of Scripture and find out what is happening. Why did Paul record at length his experience in Romans 7? Because, God knew that most if not all of us believers would go through the same experience. With Romans 7 in hand, we are able to put our finger on the issue. We are able to say that is what's happening. We interpret our experience in light of Scripture not the reverse.

Having learned the objective facts of grace, we then face some real challenges in learning to live out God's grace. We need to learn that liberty is for service. We are freed from law and the sin nature. We are freed so we can serve. We need to leave the past accomplishments behind. We'll never live by grace if we're resting on our the past works. We need to leave behind our earthly standing. Maybe we're a somebody from the world's point of view. Who cares! Living by grace does not involve our being somebodies. We need to leave behind our extraordinary experiences. It isn't the grand things we've gone through that involve grace. God's grace is seen when we are weak. This of course leads us to the hardest part of this Christian experience, failure. It is hard to learn grace without failing first. A fellow believer once told me that every believer will have his own Romans 7. I disagreed. Now, I agree. We don't want to fail and it runs contrary to practically everything we're taught in popular Christendom, but it so important that God lets us reach the end of ourselves. We need to see that there is nothing good in us (Romans 7:18). If anything good comes out, it is because of God's work.

This is the process of learning grace: objective truth - practice - abandoning the past, the status and spectacular - failing. No, it doesn't end with failure. Failure leads us to know that we are not condemned! We are graced in Christ! When we learn to appreciate that grace in our experience, when we can direct that grace to ourselves, we can in turn direct that grace to others. In that environment, we really can grow by grace.

Getting Grace 48

How does chastening fit in the grace system? What purpose does it serve. The word “chasten” translates the Greek $\piαιδευω$ meaning to train or raise a child. It involves positives and negatives (cp Titus 2:11-13). Sometimes both are in view and sometimes only one side is in view, context must determine the word meaning. The negative or disciplinary side of this work is tied to God’s love not His grace (Hebrews 12:6). Grace indicates that which is not deserved. When a believer sins and receives discipline, that discipline is deserved, therefore, God exercises His love toward them. He does what is best for them.

The Scriptures record some acts of discipline. God killed Ananias and Sapharia for lying in Acts 5:1-11). God had brought degrees of sickness and even death on some of the Corinthian saints (1 Corinthians 11:30). Churches and individuals were responsible to enact this type of discipline. The Corinthians were told to put an immoral brother out of their assembly (1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 13). The Ephesian Church was to rebuke sinning elders before their assembly (1 Timothy 5:19-20). Since we have been considering grace, how does this fit?

It is interesting to note who is disciplined in the Church and why? Ananias and Sapharia experienced discipline because they lied to God before the Church. The Corinthians who were sick and others who had died had shared in communion while maintaining a divided spirit toward their fellow saints. Communion is about a fellowship in Christ body and blood, as members of the body of Christ, and as those who share in the new covenant. Yet the Corinthians had split over men, holding loyalty to certain of their teacher-leaders (in this case apostles). Some Corinthians were more concerned with justice than their public testimony, and had pursued legal matters before the the unsaved. Some Corinthians were more concerned with their liberties than with the spiritual health of fellow saints, and had caused fellow believers to sin. The immoral brother appears to have flaunted his lifestyle in the Church. His fellow believers had become puffed up. Their tolerant pride spread like a leaven and was affecting most of the assembly. The elders who were to be rebuked were pastors, leaders of the assembly. People were to follow their way of life as those men lived what they taught. In each instance, the discipline was a response to actions which were affecting or potentially affecting a local assembly. The discipline was enacted to stop the spread of negative activity.

Even when the used, discipline was ultimately designed to be corrective not simply punitive. God didn’t design discipline as the dominant motivation for Christian living. Each case found in the Church involved such a degree of stubbornness on the part of the one sinning that God resorted to discipline. John encouraged saints to ask for a brother that was sinning a sin not unto death (1 John 5:17). A brother could sin a sin unto death and another brother was not to make a request about it. The latter word request is different than $\alphaιτεω$, to ask. The word $\epsilonρωταω$ involved a request or question among equals. Christ addresses the Father in this latter method. He is able to ask as an equal. We are not Christ and do not have the authority to ask God to intervene with a brother sinning a sin unto death. Such a request would

Getting Grace 49

be a request for death. We are not to make that request. What is the difference between a sin unto death and one not unto death? It was something that John's readers could have understood. Sin is anartharous, therefore, it is a quality of sin, not a specific act, as some might to identify in a list of mortal sins. In the context of 1 John it would appear to be sin which issues from a persistent, lack of love for one's brothers. The believer who does not love His brothers, is remaining at ease in the realm of death (1 John 3:14). Since he remains in that realm and from that lack of love sins against his brother, he is liable. This agrees with the other examples of discipline involving one's relationship to fellow believers.

Therefore, the discipline is used when the believer will not be turned by God's grace. A common question believers ask at this point is, "How long does God wait?" God doesn't tell us. God is longsuffering and very gracious. Had God told us how long He would wait, it could have functioned like law and motivated people by fear. Believers would know they could go just this far and then they would have to stop or be disciplined. This is not God's design. God knows the heart of each saint and what is best for each saint. He knows when a heart has become so calloused that it will not respond to His grace.