

GRACE

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Fall River, Massachusetts

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GRACE

CHAPTER ONE GOD'S AMAZING GIFT

What is grace? When asked that question, the first thing most Christians would say is “God’s unmerited favor,” or “a free gift.” And so it is – grace is a free gift of God’s own eternal life placed within us. Grace is the free gift of the inner life of Jesus Christ which is placed inside each person who accepts Him as Lord. Grace is God’s amazing gift of Himself to us.

Several centuries ago, a man named John Newton was living a wicked life as a ship owner involved in the African slave trade. Many Africans were brutalized or even killed on his ship. But one day, Newton heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and felt conviction in his heart at his own sin and evil. He repented and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord, quit the slave trade and became a minister. He also wrote a song that has remained powerful throughout the centuries, a song about the power that changed his life,

entitled “Amazing Grace.” Anyone who has ever listened to that song carefully has heard the essential message of what God’s grace is.

The reality of grace, God’s grace, is absolutely central to the whole subject of our life, our redemption, and our salvation. The very word “grace” means “gift.” The Greek word used in the New Testament for “grace” is the same word for “gift,” the word *charis*. One thinks of the word “charismatic.” The word “charismatic” refers to someone who has been given a free, unmerited, unearned gift by God, simply out of love. *Charis* has the sense of being the gift of a generous heart, a gift that makes the receiver of the gift charming and beautiful because of the exquisiteness of the gift. In common, everyday language, we think of the word “graceful” – someone who has charm and beauty beyond the ordinary – they are gifted.

We can also think of the Latin word for grace, *gratia* – thank you – for a gift. We have the word “gratuity,” something extra given to a waiter or servant. All these ideas contain the sense of a free gift, given simply from the generous heart of the giver. Closely linked to the idea of *charis* or grace is the notion that the Giver does not expect to be paid back for this gift. In fact, the gift is of such a high quality that the recipient does not have the resources to pay the Giver back even if they wanted to. So, we begin by seeing that grace is a free, unearned gift from the generous heart of God, a gift which makes us beautiful and is so costly, we couldn’t repay it.

In one sense, everything we have as human beings is a grace or gift from God – our life, our breath, every beat of our heart, our food, the very planet we live on. None of us brought ourselves into existence – it is only because of the loving, generous heart of Our Creator that we even exist. He created us because He had to put His love into action and He wanted us to live in a personal relationship with Him. In all things, it’s God who speaks the first word. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins... We love because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:10,19) God always takes the initiative whether in creation or redemption. God always has the first word (and God always has the last word also).

In the most specific sense, however, “grace” in the Bible refers to God’s act of freely redeeming mankind after man, of his own free will, chose to disobey God and he became trapped and enslaved in the law of sin and death (Romans 5:12-21). Grace is God freely choosing to reestablish the broken relationship with mankind and restoring man to eternal life, when man had chosen eternal death (Romans 6:23).

God Almighty sent His Son Jesus as the vessel of grace – the fountain of grace. God deposited His very own life in the man Jesus, who was not just a

man, but also divinity in human form. In this man Jesus, a very vital, intimate personal relationship with God the Father existed. After His death and resurrection, this inner life of Jesus became available, through His glory, to be placed inside of every human who would accept it by faith. *Grace is the gift of the inner life of Jesus being placed within us, so that what went on inside of Jesus can now go on inside of us.*

The Greek word for the life that was in Jesus (John 1:4) is *zoe*. *Zoe* is the very eternal life of God Himself (John 5:26 – John 6:57). It is this very *zoe* that man receives from God through faith in Jesus Christ (John 10:10; John 20:31). The new birth that Jesus spoke about in John, chapter 3 is the birth of *zoe*, or God's own life inside of us. When one is born again, they receive the grace of God's life, the inner life of Jesus.

Zoe is the very inner life that existed/exists in Jesus Christ. When we are born again, we feel a new intimacy with God the Father. Why? Because Jesus was intimate with the Father. We find it easier to love and forgive people. Why? Because Jesus loved and forgave people. We get hungry for the Word of God. Why? Because Jesus was devoted to the Word of God, and in fact was the Living Word of God. We have a heightened desire to do good and avoid evil. Why? Because Jesus walked in holiness and His life is now within us.

We see God's key revelation of His grace to us in many beautiful scriptures, such as:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- 2 Peter 1:2-4

Through grace, the free, abundant gift of God's own life, we are made partakers of the divine nature. We are made to share the very quality of God's own life and nature. It means we are meant to walk this earth in God's kind of power and authority (as Jesus did) and also in God's character and moral excellence (as Jesus did). We read a bold and astounding statement in Psalm 8:5-6: "Yet thou hast made him [man] a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty! Thou dost make him to rule over the

works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” Many older translations state “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,” but this is not the most accurate translation. The actual Hebrew word is *Elohim* – most exactly translated as the Creator.

The sense of the scripture in this Psalm of David is that God created men to be “little elohims” or “little creators” like Himself. Many theologians today do not want to accept this truth, but the accurate, exact sense of scripture is that God created men to be “little creators” like Himself, the “Big Creator.” This is consistent with the very origin of man when God, in Genesis 1:26-28 proclaimed His intention to make man in His own image and likeness and then gave man to rule over creation and be the possessor and steward of planet earth. What keeps us humble is that all our power, authority and moral excellence can exist in us only because of His free gift, so we live in continual dependence upon Him and His grace in our privileged position. God in Himself, however, needs no one else and depends upon no one else. That’s the difference.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

- John 1:12

We see the key to partaking of God’s own life is in accepting and receiving His Son Jesus as our Lord. We receive the right (King James translation says “power” – Greek is *exousia*) to become children, offspring, of the Almighty God. The life of God, His grace to us, is taken into ourselves by faith. In the New Testament, the word for faith is *pistis* (the noun) – the ability to reach into the invisible spiritual realm, take hold of a promise of God for ourselves, and bring it back into the visible, material world. John’s Gospel (in v. 12 and throughout) never uses the noun *pistis*, but always uses the verb *pistuen*, emphasizing the necessity of actively laying hold of the person of Jesus and taking Him into our heart spiritually with the intention of never letting go of Him and all that He is.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- John 1:14

We beheld Jesus. He dwelt among us. A strict literal translation is “God built a house in our neighborhood and this house, Jesus, was filled with glory and grace and truth. Jesus was *overflowing* with an abundance of divine life – He was *full* of grace. Jesus had an abundant, overflowing inner life with the Father.

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”

- John 1:16-17

Finally, John tells us that we ourselves receive of the very same fullness and abundance of Jesus’ inner life. It is of His FULNESS we have received GRACE upon GRACE. The clear sense of the scripture is that there is no possibility of shortage or stinginess on God’s part. The outpouring of God’s grace upon us submerges us in His infinite, unlimited generosity. “Grace upon grace” contains the idea of being surprised and swept away by a flash flood, by a sudden, overflowing of God’s generosity.

When we think of this phrase “grace upon grace,” we think of what happens during what we call “revival.” During a revival, multitudes of people are submerged and swept into a new intimacy with God and a new sharing of His life. We see it in the Book of Acts on the Day of Pentecost and thereafter. The Day of Pentecost was really “The First Revival.” In Acts 4:33 we see the great secret of the power in the early church – “abundant grace was upon them all.” The free gift of the inner life of Jesus had been poured out on them. And this inner life took authority over and changed the outer world.

The Apostle Paul had a deep awareness of the preciousness of grace. He began and ended every letter with the phrase “Grace and peace be to you.” Grace – the inner life of Jesus. Peace – the blessings of God through His Messiah. In today’s language, Paul would be saying, “May the life of Jesus be in you and the blessings of God be all around you.” Indeed, that would be a good salutation and closing statement that we could extend to all our fellow human beings today.

CHAPTER TWO

LIVE!

Grace, then, is essentially the free gift of the inner life of Jesus Christ which is placed inside the believer at the moment they accept the Risen Jesus as Lord and are born again. Even in the Old Testament, however, God had already revealed and established Himself as the God of grace. In Ezekiel, chapter 16, God reveals His grace toward Israel and Jerusalem as He tells how, when they were lying by the side of the road helpless, with no one caring and everyone passing by and ignoring them, God came up to them in their desperation and said one word, “LIVE!” and because He did, they came to life. God’s grace is the same to us – when we were helpless and dying and nobody cared, and life was passing us by, in fact life chewed us up and spit us out, God came to us and said one word: “LIVE!” and we came alive.

The clearest Old Testament statement of God’s grace is in Ezekiel 16:1-14. Here we read the word of God to Jerusalem and Judah at a time when they had severely backslidden and were ungrateful to God. Here, God’s prophetic word chastises and warns Jerusalem about coming judgment if they don’t repent. Also in the chapter, God recounts to them how He had given them so many of His blessings freely, simply as grace. We see God’s eternal pattern of grace and goodness, even back here in the Old Testament.

We read:

*1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
2 “Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations
3 and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, “Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.
4 “As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths.
5 “No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.
6 “When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you while you were in your blood, ‘Live!’”*

7 *“I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare.*

8 *“Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,” declares the Lord GOD.*

9 *“Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil.*

10 *“I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk.*

11 *“I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck.*

12 *“I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.*

13 *“Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.*

14 *“Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you,” declares the Lord GOD.*

Here we see the beautiful and tender passage of God calling and forming the Jewish nation and city of Jerusalem to be His own people as the vessel of redemption for this planet. After Adam’s sin broke man’s fellowship with God and sin and death entered this world, man still felt a need to reach out to God. The Apostle Paul, in chapter 1 of Romans, describes how fallen mankind devised all kinds of religion and idolatries to meet this religious need, but now restored fellowship with God. God, however, in His tender love and grace, formed a new people as His own, and out of this one particular nation would come one particular Jewish man named Jesus, Who was the Son of God. Through this nation and ultimately this one person Jesus, redemption would be made available to all the people of planet earth.

This people that God formed, Israel, received their high destiny purely through the grace of God, not through any merit of their own. In fact, God reminds Jerusalem, His chosen people that they were originally mideastern nomads without anything special about them. He compares them to a baby

just born, abandoned in a field, squirming in their own blood and placenta, with everyone ignoring them and passing them by in their need. But then God saw them and out of grace, compassion and mercy, said one word that made all the difference – *LIVE!*

The pronouncing of that one word sums up God's heart of grace and mercy from eternity past into eternity future: *LIVE!* It shows how God has a very special place in His heart when He sees that mercy, compassion and redemption are needed. And He always says *LIVE!* Because God's word never returns to Him void, but always accomplishes that which He sends it to do, life begins when God says *LIVE!* In the act of creation, God showed His grace when He said, "Let there be..." In the act of redemption, God shows His grace when he says *LIVE!*

As we continue in Ezekiel's passage we see how the full benefits of God's command to *LIVE!* unfolds in Jerusalem's life and history.

1. The abandoned baby lives and grows into a beautiful young woman, but she is still covered with her blood which is a symbol of the guilt from sin. God does three things. He enters into a marriage covenant and makes her His own. Then He washes off her blood which is a symbol of *justification* or God's gift of forgiveness of sin which would come through Jesus Christ. Then He anoints her with oil which represents *sanctification*, empowerment and the Baptism with the Holy Spirit which would come in the New Testament on Pentecost.

2. God clothes this young woman in beautiful clothing, puts a *crown* of authority on her head, and advances her to royalty. She then walks in perfect beauty because it is God's on beauty given to her by grace. This is a foreshadowing of the kingly position of authority we receive today through Jesus Christ and the covering we receive of God's own perfect righteousness through Jesus Christ.

We see the unmistakable parallel of God's pattern of grace in the Old Testament reproduced in the New Testament:

1. We can't help but see the pattern of Ezekiel 16 reproduced in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son (read Luke 15:11-32) who is lost in his sin, filthy and stinking. The loving father, nevertheless, accepts him when he returns, cleans him up, dresses him royally, and restores him.

2. We also have to think of the Apostle Paul's great teaching in grace in Ephesians, chapter 2 where Paul states that God's grace does a three-fold work in our lives: (a) It makes us alive [*LIVE!*]; (b) it raises us up with Him [gives us the covenant promises, washes us, anoints us], and (c) seats us with Christ in heavenly places [gives us the crown of authority and covering of perfect righteousness]. From Ephesians 2:1, 4-7 we read:

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ...

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Today, we know this beautiful statement of grace in Ezekiel 16 has found its fulfillment in the New Testament as God sent His Son Jesus of Nazareth to mankind as His word of grace to planet earth. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, God was saying to planet earth: *LIVE!* In John 1:4, we read that in Him (Jesus) was life (*zoe*) and the life was the light of men. In John 10:10, Jesus said that He had come that we might have life (*zoe*) and have it abundantly.

It's through Jesus that:

1. We enter into eternal life through the new birth.
2. We receive covenant rights and promises with God.
3. The blood guilt of our sins is washed away and we are justified.
4. We are anointed, empowered and sanctified.
5. We are clothed with a crown of spiritual authority.
6. We are clothed with perfect beauty – God's own righteousness.

Everywhere Jesus went in His ministry He was, in reality, speaking one word: "LIVE!" To sinners like Matthew, Zaccheus, and Mary Magdalene, He said: "LIVE!" In setting the demon-possessed free, He said: "LIVE!" Even to the physically dead (Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus), He said, "LIVE!"

When Jesus was called upon to accept His sacrificial death on the cross to pay for the sins of mankind, He cried out on that cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46) He felt the loneliness and burden of separation from the Father. Then His dead body was placed in a tomb. He was lying in the blood He shed for our sins, seemingly rejected and forgotten by both God and man. But early on the morning of the Third Day, Easter Sunday, Almighty God came by His presence through the Holy Spirit before Jesus’ tomb and said: “LIVE!” and Jesus came forth from the tomb clothed in glory and kingly power forevermore as the One Who Lives. And because He lives, we also shall live through faith in Him (John 14:19).

What about *YOU* today? Are you walking in the supernatural life that God has made available to you? Have you heard God say, “LIVE!” to you or are you still lying by the side of the road with everyone passing by and not caring? Life itself seemingly wants to chew you up and spit you out. Repent and turn TO God and call upon Jesus to give you life and you WILL LIVE!

Remember the words of the great preacher Leonard Ravenhill, “Jesus didn’t come to make bad men good; He came to make dead men LIVE.”

CHAPTER THREE JUSTIFICATION

It is now time to look at the redeeming and forgiving side of grace which is known as justification. The central truth of Christianity is that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross to take the punishment we deserved because of our sins. He literally took our place on the cross. In the Charles Dickens’ novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, which many of us read back in high school, we see a story which takes place during the French Revolution. Two men looked exactly alike – a Frenchman named Charles Darné and an Englishman named Sidney Carter. Darné was arrested and sentenced to die by the guillotine during the French Reign of Terror. The last night before Darné’s scheduled execution, Sidney Carter came to the prison and said, “Quick, change clothes with me. I’ll assume your identity and you’ll assume mine, and I’ll take your place at the execution.” Sidney Carter sacrificed himself so Charles Darné could go free and live. That is what redemption and justification are like. All of us, because of our sins, were on a spiritual death row and deserved the punishment of hell, but Jesus came to us and said, “I’ll go to the cross and assume your identity so that you can go before god the Father and assume my identity and have eternal life.” And we read:

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21

What is justification? Justification is the act whereby a person is decreed to be free from guilt and declared to be “just” or legally correct in their standing before all claims of the law. A justified person is one against whom there is no claim of legal guilt or legal penalty due. Justification involves a legal verdict of acquittal in the face of all charges of sin and crime and penalties due as a demand of justice. When we speak of justification, we are speaking of the side of God’s grace that meets all the demands of the eternal court of justice, the forgiving side of grace. Some of our older Christian denominations call justification, the forgiving side of grace, by the name *actual grace* as opposed to the second side of grace, the empowering side of grace, named *sanctifying grace*, or sanctification. Justification gives a person a clean court record in heaven. Justification is the most important side of grace because, it is the part of God’s grace, so to speak, that gets us “into the ballpark” by giving us clear and right standing before God.

1. *We see in human life there is a universal need for every human being to be justified or forgiven and made righteous before God.* On the one hand, we have the debt of Adam’s sin in our life. Romans 5:12 tells us that sin, death, and unrighteousness entered the whole human race because of the sin of the first humans. Just as we inherit physical characteristics from our parents, we inherited a flawed and sinful spirit, or inner man, from our first parents. So, by virtue of our birth into a fallen human race, we are already separated from God. But beyond our inherited sinful nature, there are also our actual sins, our personal transgressions and iniquities for which we are responsible. In a court of law, this would be known as the “bill of particulars” against us, or the “certificate of death” against us. Romans 3:23 states that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. In Psalm 143:2 David wrote that no man is righteous in God’s eyes. In Romans 3:10-18 Paul tells us that left to ourselves we would use every human faculty and every part of our body in a way that rebels against God.

2. *We have no human way of making up or atoning for our sins.* Justification in the court of heaven cannot come about by balancing out our bad deeds against a number of good deeds. Justification cannot come about like balancing the old-fashioned two-sided scales (“...if we have three sins on

one side, we'll just do four good deeds for the other side..."). Romans 6:23 states that the wages of sin is death. The issue we face in justification is not the balancing of good acts against bad acts. The issue is restoring something that is dead by bringing it back to life. Isaiah 64:6 states that all our own righteousness is like filthy rags. Our own "good" acts done in our sinful nature is like trying to put a coat of wax on a dirty floor before cleaning the floor first. The basic problem has to be cleaned up first. The fact is, the penalty for all sin is death – something dead can only be brought back to life by the gift of life. Someone would have to give their life to pay for the penalty of sin so that life could be given to the one dead in sin. The person who was able to do that was Jesus Christ, the sinless Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world by giving His life to be placed in us, and takes upon Himself the death, punishment and wrath we deserved.

I remember, about ten years ago, seeing a newspaper picture of a young woman theology student at the annual convention of one of the major theologically liberal denominations. She held up a placard which read, "THERE IS NO NEED FOR A DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION." I just shook my head in sorrow and said, "God have mercy on the people she ministers to" and "God have mercy on her and straighten her out from her error." There is a NECESSITY for justification. A God Who is loving and merciful but Who also is TRUE has to be JUST. There must be right and wrong. That which is wrong must be punished or all or reality is just a joke. If there is no justice, no right or wrong, then anything goes. But that is not true, even in worldly society. We have law and penalties to preserve order and prevent chaos. This is even more true and necessary in the presence of an absolutely Holy and absolutely Righteous God.

3. A God Who is Holy, Righteous, and Just is also Loving and Merciful and made provision for us to be justified. He sent His only begotten Son into this world to pay the price for our sins. This Son Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience. Then He was falsely accused and condemned to death as a criminal by the evil men of this world. But on the cross, He freely offered His suffering and death as an innocent sacrifice to pay for those who are guilty – and that's all of us. Almighty God accepted His offer and placed on Jesus the spiritual guilt, punishment, and wrath that we deserved. Not only did Jesus suffer physical pain, shame, and emotional loneliness on the cross, but He also suffered the loneliness of separation from God and the wrath of God. While on the cross, Jesus actually experienced the real honor of hell in His human spirit. But this sacrifice met all the demands of justice.

How are we justified?

1. *We are justified by Jesus' blood (Romans 5:9).*

Hebrews 9:22 states that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Jesus freely gave His blood, His life, to atone for mankind's sins. There is a long history of blood sacrifice in the Old Testament, but basically, since life is in the blood, the sacrifice of blood is the way to give life to that which is dead.

2. *We are justified and reconciled through the cross (Colossians 2:13-14).*

On the cross, Jesus the innocent one, suffered as a criminal before God and man, and freely offered Himself (that's the value of His sacrifice) to pay for our sins – not by legal fiction, but by real, existential suffering. On that cross the certificate of debt was marked “paid in full.” John 19:30 states, “It is finished.” The Greek word for finished is *tetelestai* – “mission completed,” “purpose accomplished.” It was used as a shout of victory in ancient times.

3. *We are justified through Jesus' resurrection (Romans 4:25).*

Jesus was raised from the dead for our justification. The resurrection was God's seal of approval on the life of Jesus which He had given for our sake. Now peace and reconciliation between God and man was possible. By raising Jesus from the dead, God was saying He accepted Jesus' sacrifice as payment for the total sin debt of humanity (1 John 2:2). Now, it was up to men, on their part, to accept Jesus' sacrifice as payment for their sin debt to complete the process of reconciliation to God.

4. *Lastly, we are justified by faith in what Jesus did for us to pay for our sins.*

This begins with repentance when we admit our sinfulness and turn to God. Then by faith (the Greek word is *PISTIS*), we reach into the invisible spiritual world and take hold of a real but invisible promise of God as our own and we living it back into the visible material world. Our justification, our clean court record in heaven comes to us that very way – we reach out with the hand of our inner man and take hold of the person of Jesus and His righteousness and bring it back into our heart, our inner man, with an *active* holding on to Jesus with the intention that we'll never let go of Him. Then, the power of His life enters our spirit and changes us into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The result is that our sins are forgiven and our record in

heaven is clean. Our sins are gone because we are covered with and given Jesus' righteousness.

As I heard one preacher say, "When I was justified, it was *just as if I'd* never sinned!"

CHAPTER FOUR EMPOWERING GRACE

The next aspect of grace we should look at is the "empowering" side of grace which Jesus purchased for us and which He defined in the New Covenant He established for us as He prayed what is known as "The High Priestly Prayer" in John's Gospel, chapter 17. Empowering grace reminds us that God's grace is greater than any sin we commit or any problem we face.

Through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. The Lord and Christ, the grace or very life of God Himself is made available to us. Through justification we receive forgiveness of sins and we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's the forgiving side of grace. But if we just stop there, we miss so much of what Jesus did for us – He made available to us the power to become sons of God and to walk in God's very own creative power while on this earth and even into eternity. This is the empowering side of grace. Some of the older Christian denominations call this sanctifying grace. Whatever we call it, the reality is that when God's own life is placed in us, it empowers us to walk in holiness and creative power.

On the night before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus Christ entered into a specific definition of seven benefits, or seven aspects, of this empowering grace when He went to God the Father on our behalf in what is known as the High Priestly Prayer in John 17. Turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 17, and you can follow along in this study.

1. *John 17:1-3 – The very first thing Jesus obtains for us is life.* He purchases for us a participation in God's own divine life. As we've seen, the word for life is *zoe*. It is eternal life. Eternal life refers not just to the length or quantity, but also to the quality of life. *Zoe* is the kind of life that death cannot touch or destroy. As 2 Peter 1:3-4 states, it is a life that partakes of the divine nature and contains within it everything that pertains to life and godliness. It is the very same inner life that Jesus had inside Himself and it is the life that He enjoyed with the Father from eternity past as the second person of the Trinity. The very first part of our empowerment depends on

our possessing eternal life, or *zoe*. *Zoe* is the only life that will endure forever. Jesus came to earth so we could have *zoe* abundantly (John 10:10). Possession of this *zoe* is ours when we come to know God the Father and Jesus through faith – when we grab onto the person of Jesus in our heart, we also grab onto His quality of life (John 1:12).

2. *John 17:11 – Jesus empowers us by giving us heart (spirit) intimacy with Himself and the Father.* The very first consequence of *zoe* within us produces a deep, interpersonal intimacy with Jesus in His heart and mind and with God the Father in His heart and mind. In fact, the intimacy between a believer and God and His Son is even more close and deep than the most intimate marriage or human friendship. Our intimacy with God is of the exact same quality as Jesus’ intimacy with the Father because it is the life of Jesus within us. We come to know God as Father, or “Abba.” We enjoy the same “Abba experience” of God that Jesus had in His human consciousness while on earth. Paul states this truth in Romans 8:14-18. Jesus can even extend this intimacy to exist among Christians with each other, for we are all one with this same Christ. Jesus desires that all real Christians would have a real interpersonal intimacy with each other in love and harmony. Of course, this is only a goal partially fulfilled because of our “flesh.” This intimacy of the Body of Christ will only be fully realized in heaven. Nevertheless, here on earth, by grace we can achieve a measure of this intimacy with each other if we really want it.

Our intimacy with God empowers us because we can always effectively know God’s specific will and wisdom for our lives.

3. *John 17:13 – Jesus empowers us by giving us His own joy.* When we study the Fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), we see that joy is the inner delight that comes from knowing that God loves us and values us. Jesus values us so much, He was willing to die for us. Nehemiah 8:10 tells us the joy of the Lord is our strength. The joy of the Lord heals our shame, our hurts, our inferiority complexes and depression. Joy is the normal state of affairs in the Kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). Jesus, through the gift of grace, first lays the foundation of our empowerment by working on us in our inner man. We first get God’s own inner life, then the same intimacy of Jesus with God, and finally the JOY that results from intimacy, which is STRENGTH.

4. *John 17:14-15 – Jesus goes from our inner man and now empowers us in our outer circumstances.* Jesus prays for special protection for His disciples

as they perform God's will for their life. Jesus' own life was under the very special protection of God the Father at all times. How often do we read that some people wanted to harm Jesus but they couldn't because "His time had not yet come." The life of God within us through grace guarantees that each of us who believe in Jesus will be empowered with a special protection enabling us to fulfill God's plan and destiny for us. We see in the Gospels (in the life of Jesus) and in the Book of Acts (in the lives of the apostles and disciples) that God delivered those who belong to Jesus from many dangers, toils and snares and furthermore, all believers, through the gift of grace, have Divine protection and defense against anyone or anything that would try to stop them from fulfilling God's will.

5. *John 17:16-21 – The fifth benefit of empowering grace is that we are a sanctified, or set apart people.* Jesus was a "set apart" person. He was not part of the world value system which is a slave to the law of sin and death. Jesus was sanctified or "set apart" as a vessel for a new way of life – a life which contained God's value system and God's answers to life's issues. Jesus always walked in this state of sanctification and being set apart so He could give us the power to be "set apart" as a free gift to us. We could have within us His very own sanctification when His Spirit became one with ours. What especially sets us apart is our obedience to the Word of God. John 17:17 states we are sanctified in God's truth; His Word is truth. We are different because we don't follow the world system; we follow the way of the Word of God and this brings about a new way of living in the midst of a dying world – and the success of our "set-apartness" proves to the world that Jesus IS Lord.

6. *John 17:22-23 – Jesus prays that we will be empowered by the gift of God's own glory indwelling us.* Here Jesus is talking about the power of God to perform the works of God, the healings and miracles which confirm the Word of God. The Old Testament Hebrew had two words for glory – *shekinah*, or the abiding life presence of God's glory, and *kabod*, or the glory of God in action to do mighty deeds and miracles on behalf of His people. In the New Testament there is only one Greek word, *doxa*, which is used for both. Jesus had the glory, the power, the *kabod* of the Father to do mighty works. Jesus now states that part of the empowerment of His New Covenant grace to us is the glory of God within us to perform mighty works, the same works as Jesus and in fact, even GREATER WORKS (John 14:12-14) because Jesus Himself is now at the Father's right hand working on our behalf.

7. *John 17:24* – Finally, the last part of Jesus’ gift of empowering grace is that when our lives on earth have ended and when the history of this planet has ended, we will be with Him forever in a new heaven and a new earth. The ultimate give of God’s grace goes beyond just strength in this lifetime. Grace culminates in the ultimate gift of living forever with the Father and the Son in a perfect mode of life, just knowing that once we see Jesus face to face, we’ll never leave His presence again. Our ultimate destiny and fulfillment are not on this earth but in eternity with Jesus.

But in the meantime, He has empowered us with His glory, given us authority in His name, and given us His promises and the Word of God as a grace, a gift to make us more than conquerors in this life.

In reality, Jesus, through empowering grace has restored us to the image and likeness of God that Adam originally possessed but lost through sin.

Our great promise of empowerment is well stated by the Apostle Peter: “...the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” (1 Peter 5:10)

CHAPTER FIVE GRACE FACT SHEET

In this last chapter, we are going to list several facts, truths and benefits about grace. As we list these biblical facts about grace, we must keep in mind what we have already seen – that grace is the gift of the very inner life of Jesus, in fact, the very life of God Himself that is given to us as a gift which we receive by faith. This grace has a forgiving and cleansing side, known as justification, and an empowering side which is listed in John 17, the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. So, as we go through the following facts, we must always keep in mind what we have already seen. Let’s go now to our “Grace Fact Sheet”:

FACT #1 – Grace reveals that God is a good God who created humans and then redeemed them simply out of the goodness of His heart. God is a good God who does good things for people out of the goodness of His heart (James 1:17).

FACT #2 – We draw from and enjoy the fruits and benefits of God’s goodness toward us by placing our faith and trust in Him. Ephesians 2:8 states we are saved by grace, by the gift of God’s life, through faith – in

other words, by placing our trust in Him because He is worthy to be believed and trusted. And as we believe, we see His promises come to pass.

FACT #3 – Grace introduces us and reveals to us a new way of living we never could have thought of on our own. We receive a **NEW LIFE** and a **NEW DESTINY** and a **NEW MEANS** to achieve that destiny (2 Corinthians 5:17).

FACT #4 – Grace reveals to us that God wants salvation in the fullest sense for every human being that has ever lived, is living, or will live. That salvation includes righteousness, healing, happiness, wholeness, fulfillment, and eternal life (1 Timothy 2:4).

FACT #5 – God spoke to this world once and for all through His Son Jesus Christ, telling us He loved us even to the point of giving His Son for us and that Jesus Himself loved us even to the point of giving His life to purchase our right to salvation, if we will accept the gift of God (John 1:12; John 3:16).

FACT #6 – Grace shows that God loves us freely – and Jesus loves us freely, not of necessity. The Father and Jesus exercise their free choice toward us in love. When their inner life is placed within us. It introduces the element of freedom in our own response to the Father, to Jesus, to others. We no longer respond to God in religious fear but in grace-filled freedom (Luke 1:74).

FACT #7 – God’s grace has the power to override and wipe out our mistakes. As one professor once taught – “Grace means that God writes straight on our crooked lines.” Our best human efforts always fall short, but God’s grace writes over our efforts in bold lettering so that in the end we only see God’s work, not our flawed efforts. Abraham, Moses, David all had flaws, but God’s grace overrode their failures and we only see the mighty things God did through them.

FACT #8 – Jesus is the **NUCLEUS** of God’s plan of salvation. Everything God does in grace comes **ONLY** through His Son Jesus. The resurrection was God’s “**AMEN**” to the life of Jesus and His seal of approval on Jesus. Just as a nucleus holds an atom together, Jesus holds God’s plan of salvation and grace together. Just as a nucleus supplies energy to an atom, Jesus possesses all the divine energy to fulfill God’s plan of grace toward man.

FACT #9 – Jesus was God’ human face – and that face was the Good Shepherd who looks for the wandering and lost sheep so that not even one human needs to be lost.

FACT #10 – Jesus’ life and destiny was under the special care and protection of God the Father to guarantee its fulfillment. As we saw in the High Priestly Prayer (John 17), God’s grace guarantees us the very same protection if our life and works is linked to Jesus.

FACT #11 – Grace, through the resurrection of Jesus, proves how powerless those are who feel they have to use violence, or even murder to maintain power. The harder they fight, the more quickly and definitively they lose. When they killed Jesus, it only took three days for Him to rise in glory FOREVER.

FACT #12 – Grace enables every human being who desires so, to partake of the very spiritual intimacy that Jesus shared with the Father (John 14:21,23).

FACT #13 – Grace manifests God’s desire to renew this earth according to the life pattern of Jesus – a desire that will be fulfilled in the millennium or future 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ on earth.

FACT #14 – Grace also manifests God’s ultimate goal of bringing this earth and redeemed mankind into the condition of eternal, everlasting fulfillment in a glorified state of existence at the end of what we call time, or history (Revelation, chapters 21 and 22).

FACT #15 – Grace is the doorway to *strength over sin and helplessness*, the doorway to *permanence over instability*, the doorway to *cheerfulness over fear and anxiety*, and the doorway to a *brand new creation and destiny* (Revelation 2:17).

FACT #16 – Receiving the free gift of God’s grace, or life, puts us under an imperative to pass this grace on to others. Grace is more than words, it is a revelation of love. Jesus only spoke about love a few times in His ministry, but *everything Jesus did* was love in action.

FACT #17 – The church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be the community of grace. The church is supposed to be a city on a hill and a shining light to a

world of darkness. The church is the candle in the window on a dark and stormy night that offers a place of refuge and redemption from the pain and suffering of the world.

FACT #18 – The value of Jesus’ gift and what it cost Him keeps us “in line” and keeps us on “the straight and narrow” road. The VALUE of His gift and NOT the fear or burden of the law “keeps us in line.”

FACT #19 – Grace produces a new innocence in us and the possibility of a transformed world around us. The first man Adam was created in innocence in a garden and he lost it through sin. Jesus Christ, the new man, the last Adam, rose from the dead in a garden and brought us a new innocence which can transform our world, our job, our family, our home, and our church.

FACT #20 – Grace established Jesus as the new mercy seat. In the Old Testament, God commanded Moses to build an altar. (Read Exodus 25:17-22.) At the top of the altar would be the mercy seat where the blood of sacrifices would be sprinkled to propitiate or satisfy God’s demand for justice. There were to be two golden angels, one at each end of the mercy seat. God promised Moses, He would 1) meet him at the mercy seat and 2) tell Moses all He wanted Moses to know about Him (Exodus 25:22).

In John 20:11-18, when Mary Magdalene looked into the tomb, she saw the place where Jesus’ body had been and there was an angel at either end of the slab, just like the Old Testament mercy seat. Mary Magdalene turned around and met the living, risen Jesus.

Jesus has become the new mercy seat where sin is forgiven and 1) God meets us in Jesus and 2) God tells us everything we need to know about Him in Jesus.

As we close this book on grace, I want to say to you, the reader, today, that if you need God’s life in you, if you need to personally meet and know God, you can do it this very moment by asking the Source of God’s grace, His Son Jesus, to live in your heart by praying this prayer from your heart:

“Dear Lord, I realize I am a sinner and that You died for me so I can have my sins forgiven and live forever because Your life will be in me. Lord, I repent of my sin and ask You to come live in my heart, save me, and let me have intimacy with You and the Father for now and all eternity. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Amen.”

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We invite you to send any prayer requests you might have for prayer at our chapel prayer meetings. Send to:

Christ's Chapel
PO Box 3182
Fall River, MA 02722

Also write to be put on our mailing list to receive periodic letters. Let us know specifically if you'd like to receive the Daily Devotional.