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# PAUL THE APOSTLE OF GRACE

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Lessons 1 - 13

*TEACHER'S MANUAL*

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

# Paul, The Apostle Of Grace

Studies 1 - 13

## Teacher's Manual

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*Stephen Nemeth Lectures*

# ***THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD***

## **STUDY 1**

**Scripture Portion: Acts 20:24**

**Acts 20:24** - *....to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

Paul was returning from his third missionary journey. The boat on which he and his companions had taken passage stopped for a few days at Miletus. Ephesus, where Paul had labored for more than three years, was about thirty miles away.

He sent messengers to that city, calling the elders of the church to come to Miletus. It must have been with a feeling of joy that the elders responded to that call. How glad they would be to see their great leader again!

When they arrived at Miletus, Paul reminded them of his labor of love in their city. He pointed out some of the dangers that confronted them and exhorted them to be faithful and true.

He told them something of the experiences which he was about to face. He was on his way to Jerusalem, not knowing what would befall him there save that, in every city through which he passed, men, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, had said that bonds and afflictions awaited him.

Then he uttered the words of this text -

**Acts 20:24** - *.....to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

In this statement, we see something of the courage and spirit of devotion to his Lord which characterized the Apostle Paul. Not all the threats of evil men, not even the danger of death itself, could turn him back.

Agabus, a prophet, warned him -

**Acts 21:10-11** - *And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.*

*11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.*

His friends and companions begged him through their tears not to go to Jerusalem -

**Acts 21:12** - *And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.*

Paul replied -

**Acts 21:13** - *.....What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*

What was it that could put a spirit like that into the soul of this man?

In studying the life of Paul, we find many answers to this question.

He was, by nature, a man of courage and loyalty to the cause which he espoused. It was not in him to be halfhearted in anything which he undertook. "As much as in me is, I am ready," was the spirit in which he faced every task.

But, in the words of the text, the apostle points out the two things above all others which put this spirit of courage and loyalty into his soul.

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## 1. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A DIVINE MISSION.

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**Acts 20:24** - *.....to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

He carried with him the conviction that he was following the course which the Lord Jesus had marked out for him and was fulfilling the ministry which he had received from his divine Master.

When had Paul received that commission from his Lord?

Go back and read the story of his conversion as he himself told it when he stood before King Agrippa.

When that bright light from heaven shone around him and he fell on his face in the dust and heard the living Lord speaking to him, he cried out -

**Acts 26:15** - *.....Who art thou, Lord?.....*

The answer came back -

**Acts 26:15-18** - *.....I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.  
16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of*

*those things in the which I will appear unto thee;*

*17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,*

*18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,*

From that moment, Paul was conscious of a divinely given mission. He would be true to that mission whatever the cost.

Many times during his career, Paul referred to the fact that he had been divinely commissioned. From time to time we hear such declarations as these from his lips -

**Colossians 1:25** - *.....the dispensation of God which is given to me.....*

**1 Corinthians 9:16** - *.....woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

**1 Timothy 1:11** - *According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

When he was an old man and was held as a prisoner at Rome to be tried for his life, we hear him say -

**Philippians 3:12-14** - (ASV) - *.....I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that which also I was laid hold on my Christ Jesus.*

*13 Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before,*

*14 I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

If there is anything that will put zeal and courage into the soul of a man, it is the conviction that he has been called of God, for his task.

That is the explanation of the spirit of the Old Testament prophets. They felt in their souls that God had called them to go forth and speak for him.

And that is the explanation of the spirit of all the men and women who have wrought for God on this earth.

One Sunday evening, many years ago, in a little farmhouse on the western plains, a farmer was teaching his little daughter the words of Charles Wesley's hymn:

*A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify,  
Who gave His Son my soul to save, And fit it for the sky.*

When he came to the second stanza:

*To serve the present age, My calling to fulfill,  
O may it all my pow'rs engage, To do my Master's will!*

the father told his little girl that God had brought her into the world to fulfill that stanza. The child believed it and, as she grew up, she dedicated her life to a great cause.

She never faltered nor turned back no matter how strong the opposition because there burned in her soul the conviction that God had called her.

William Booth went down into the slums of East London and started a work for God that was to girdle the globe. In the face of opposition and persecution, he pressed on. When at last he was an old man and his eyesight had failed, he underwent an operation in the hope that his sight would be restored. But the operation was not a success. His sight was gone forever.

But, the old man girded his loins, turned his face to the future and gave voice to the great spirit of his soul in these words, "I've done my best for God with eyes, now I'll do my best without eyes."

When George Whitefield was starting out to the fields to preach what proved to be his last sermon, a friend said to him, "Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach."

"True, sir," he replied, but, turning aside, he looked up to heaven and prayed, "Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work, but not weary of Thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, then come home and die."

I could go on and give other illustrations of the truth, that, when a man or woman has the conviction that he is doing the work God gave him to do, there is a zeal and courage in his soul that all the forces of this world cannot destroy.

May God give to you and to me that conviction in the work we are trying to do in His name.

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## 2. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A GLORIOUS MESSAGE.

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**Acts 20:24** - .....*to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

Paul's message was the good news of the grace of God.

Notice that he didn't say "the gospel of the holiness of God".

To be sure, it is a gospel of divine holiness. Any gospel that minimizes the holiness of God is not the gospel of God. But a mere gospel of divine holiness would leave men in despair.

It is not "the gospel of the power of God". The gospel does have the power of God in it.

On one occasion Paul said -

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

A gospel without power would be a poor gospel. But a mere gospel of power would not bring much comfort and hope. It has not the wisdom of God in it, but a mere gospel of divine omniscience could never redeem a soul from sin.

The gospel which Paul was commissioned to preach was “the gospel of the grace of God”.

The word “grace” is one of the most baffling words of the Bible. No one English word can give the full meaning of the Greek word which is here translated “grace”. It occurs more than one hundred seventy times in the New Testament.

Sometimes it denotes “charm” or “loveliness”, sometimes it is translated “thanks” and sometimes “loving- kindness” or “good will”.

It was left for Paul to take the word and pour into it all the glory and power of the gospel.

Many efforts have been made to give a definition of “grace”.

Dr. J. H. Jowett defined it in this language: “Grace is holy love, but it is holy love in spontaneous movement, going out in eager quest toward the unholy and the unlovely, that, by the ministry of its own sacrifice, it might redeem the unholy and the unlovely into its own strength and beauty.”

And yet, Dr. Jowett realized how far short he had come in trying to define grace.

“One of my congregation went away into the western states. He wanted to send his minister some little idea of his enormous environment and of the character of the country.

“I remember there came by post one morning a letter with just these words enclosed - ‘A sample of my environment’. It was just the feather of a bird, a lovely, indescribably beautiful feather of a tropical bird. He wrote, ‘Just a sample of my environment.’ ”

I have often felt, when I have been trying to speak to my people about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when I have done my utmost and my best, I have only given them a feather, perhaps a beautiful thing, but still only the beginning of a continent of the beauty and glory that are hidden in that most marvelous word “grace”.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan says: “There is no word in the New Testament that more baffles the expositor than this word ‘grace’. Gather up the occasions in which it is found in the New Testament, read them in their context, then sit down in the presence of them and wonder, and worship.

Another has said: “Grace is more than pity with tearful eye; more than mercy with outstretched hand; it is an arm made bare - an omnipotent arm bared for a mighty task.”

Grace is something which has its origin in God's great heart of love, and is bestowed upon undeserving sinners.

Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas, in his book "Grace and Power", has given a fourfold characterization of grace:

It is God's mercy pitying.  
It is God's wisdom planning.  
It is God's power preparing.  
It is God's love providing.

Grace is contrasted with law.

John says -

**John 1:17** - *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

Law makes demands; grace bestows favors.

Law lays down a set of rules and says to men, "Do this"; grace comes to helpless men and says, "Take this".

Law offers men no help in obeying its precepts; grace offers to do for men that which they cannot do for themselves.

Law is something to be kept; grace is something that keeps.

A man was struggling with an appetite for strong drink. He tried to throw off the demon but could not. It brought him down again and again.

One day, a temperance worker came to him with the pledge and said, "Sign this and keep it."

The helpless man looked up and said, "It isn't something to keep that I need, it is something to keep me."

Law offers men something to be kept; grace offers something to keep them.

Law is the expression of divine righteousness; grace is the expression of divine love.

Law comes with the sternness of divine justice written on its face; grace comes with the kindly smile of divine love.

Law says, "Give the man what he deserves"; grace says, "Have mercy on the man."

Law condemns; grace saves.

The Law says -



**Romans 6:23a** - *For the wages of sin is death;.....*

grace says -

**Romans 6:23b** - *.....but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Law leads to despair; grace kindles hope.

Law shows men their sins; grace shows a remedy for sin.

Law reveals to men their condemnation; grace reveals redemption.

Law points back to Mt. Sinai with its thunders and lightnings; grace points to Calvary and its atoning Christ.

Law say, "Pay the debt"; grace says, "Christ has paid the debt for you.

***b. Grace is also contrasted with works.***

In speaking of salvation by grace, Paul says -

**Ephesians 2:9** - *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

He says again -

**Romans 11:6** - *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

Works seek to merit the favor of God; grace bestows the unmerited favor of God.

Works glorify man and magnify human effort; grace glorifies God and magnifies divine love.

Works lead to pride; grace leads to humility.

Works leave a chasm between God and man; grace spans the chasm.

The supreme manifestation of the grace of God is in the gift of His Son -

**John 3:16** - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Grace is the love of God going out to a lost world in the Person of His Son -

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

3. Grace not only brought Jesus Christ to the world, it led Him on to Calvary.

**Romans 5:8** - *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

The cross stands at the heart of divine grace. The gospel of the grace of God is the gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour. That is what Paul said about it.

**1 Corinthians 15:1-4** - *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;*

*2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

*3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

*4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

The gospel of the grace of God is the good news of salvation through a crucified and risen Saviour.

**1 Peter 4:10** - *.....the manifold grace of God.*

The literal translation is, “the many-colored grace of God”. A ray of light, falling on a prism, is broken up into many colors.

In like manner, the grace of God, shining through Jesus Christ, manifests itself in many ways. It bestows many gifts.

**Romans 12:6** - *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,*

In the pages that follow we shall endeavor to point out some characteristics of this gospel of divine grace.

# ***THE GOSPEL OF THE RICHES OF GRACE***

## **STUDY 2**

**Scripture Portions: Ephesians 1:7; 2:7**

Paul has been called “the apostle of grace”. He has more to say about grace than all the other New Testament writers. The word stands out in practically every letter he wrote.

Another word which Paul often used is “riches”. He speaks of -

**Romans 2:4** - .....*the riches of his goodness*.....

**Romans 9:23** - .....*the riches of his glory*.....

**Romans 11:33** - .....*the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*.....

**Ephesians 1:18** - .....*the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

and so forth.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul brings the two words together. He speaks of the riches of His grace -

**Ephesians 1:7** - *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

He says in -

**Ephesians 2:7** - *That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

First he speaks of “the riches of grace”. Then, as he goes on to tell what God has done for him and others in Christ Jesus, the magnitude of divine grace becomes more apparent. So he speaks of “the *exceeding* grace”.

It is not only “riches of grace” but “*exceeding* riches of grace” - riches so vast that finite minds cannot compute them.

Riches may consist of the quantity of a given thing, or the quality of it, or both. When we speak of material riches, we usually think of the abundance of material things.

A rich man is one who has much material wealth.

On the other hand, when we speak of rich milk, for example, we are not thinking of the

quantity of milk, but the quality of it.

***The grace of God is rich in both quantity and quality.*** There is an abundance of it. There is nothing else like it in all the earth.

Let us notice some things about -

**Ephesians 1:7** - *.....the riches of his grace;*

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**THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE ARE THE SOURCE OF SALVATION.**

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Paul says in -

**Ephesians 2:5** - *.....(by grace ye are saved;)*

and -

**Ephesians 2:8** - *For by grace are ye saved.....*

The gospel of saving grace will be discussed in another chapter, but “the exceeding riches of His grace” suggest several things.

1. God's grace is sufficient for all men.

The supply will never be exhausted. All the Christian men and women who have lived in the past have come to the storehouse of grace and have partaken of its bounty, yet the supply is not diminished.

All the millions who live on earth today may come to that storehouse and find abundance for each and all. So long as time shall last, there will be grace enough for all.

If men and women are not saved, it is not because there is any lack of divine grace.

**Isaiah 45:22** - *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

is the call of God. That call would be but mockery if there were not sufficient grace for all.

**Mark 16:15** - *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

is the command of the risen and living Lord. That command would be absurd if there were any possibility of divine grace failing.

There is an old story of a poor woman living in the slums of a great city, who made her first trip to the seashore. As she stood there and looked out over the vast ocean, tears gathered in her eyes and trickled down her face. Someone asked her why she was crying.

“Oh,” she said, “it is so wonderful to see something that there is enough of!”

The grace of God is like the ocean in its boundless supply. There is enough for all.

That must have been the thought in the mind of Faber when he wrote the words of that old hymn -

*There is a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea.  
There is a kindness in His justice,  
Which is more than liberty.*

2. God's grace is sufficient for all needs.

Not only may all men come to the storehouse of divine grace, but they may come with all their needs and have them supplied. There is no man who is beyond the saving power of divine grace. No matter how many, nor how great, are his sins, the riches of God's grace are sufficient for him.

God's call to all men is to come, regardless of the nature or number of their sins.

**Isaiah 1:18** - *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

That God was speaking of the worst possible sins is set forth in the words “red” and “scarlet”.

Dyeing experts tell us that red is the most difficult color with which they have to deal. They can take any other color and change it with comparative ease. Not so with red. They may change it for a while but, sooner or later, the crimson hue will begin to show.

When God speaks of sins as being red, He means that they are the worst sins of which a man may be guilty.

On the other hand, that the cleansing from these sins is thorough is shown by the expression “as white as snow”. Nothing with which man has any acquaintance can be whiter than snow.

Surely, the cleansing is complete in that sins that are red are made as white as snow. The riches of His grace ensure full salvation to all who will come.

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**THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE ARE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.**

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**Ephesians 1:6** - *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

**Ephesians 2:7** - *That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

All through this epistle we find these expressions: “in Christ”, “with Christ”, through “Christ”.

**Ephesians 1:3** - *.....who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

**Ephesians 2:5** - *.....quickened us together with Christ,.....*

**Ephesians 2:6** - *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

**Ephesians 2:10** - *.....created in Christ Jesus.....*

and so forth.

It is in Christ that men find salvation -

**Acts 4:12** - *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

It is in Christ that Christians win their victories -

**2 Corinthians 2:14** - *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,.....*

It is in Christ that Christians die, in Christ they are raised up, and with Christ they reign.

One becomes a partaker of the riches of His grace by coming into spiritual union with Christ.

In order that men might become partakers of those riches, the Son of God made a great sacrifice.

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

It was through the humiliation, suffering and death of Christ that the riches of His grace were opened to men. The door to that great storehouse was opened when the Son of God laid aside the glory which He had with the Father and came to earth in a body of flesh.

It was opened still wider when the sinless Man of Galilee went up and down the land ministering to the needs of men and speaking the words of eternal life.

It was thrown wide open when He went to the cross and gave His life for the sins of the world and came forth victorious over sin, death and the grave, and ascended to the right hand of God, where He ever lives to make intercession for us.

**Hebrews 7:25** - *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

Space does not permit a discussion of all the riches of His grace that are offered to men in Christ Jesus. There are the riches of pardon, the riches of justification, the riches of sanctification, the riches of eternal life. There are the riches of joy, the riches of power, the riches of glory.

We are -

**Romans 8:17** - *.....heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;.....*

How many people are living in spiritual poverty while the riches of His grace are open to them in Christ Jesus! Many times people live in physical poverty when they might be rich.

Out on the western plains, families have lived for years in poverty, only to discover that there were unlimited riches in the oil deposits under the surface of the ground on which they walked.

Men are dying in their sins while the riches of salvation are open to them in Christ Jesus.

Christians are living in defeat while the riches of power and victory are offered to them in Christ Jesus. They are living on the crumbs which fall from the table while the table of God's bounty is spread, and God is saying, -

**Luke 14:17** - *.....Come; for all things are now ready.*

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THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE ARE THE MEASURE OF REDEMPTION AND FORGIVENESS.

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**Ephesians 1:7** - *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

The word which is translated “redemption” carries with it the idea of paying a ransom to set men free. Slaves were often ransomed by the payment of a certain price.

In this passage, Paul speaks of men being set free from their sins by the payment of a ransom price on the part of Christ Jesus, and that ransom price is His own blood. There is no forgiveness of sin apart from that redemption.

**Hebrews 9:22** - *.....without shedding of blood is no remission.*

Through His own death, Christ made it possible for God to -

**Romans 3:26** - *.....be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

While there is no forgiveness apart from the blood of Christ, there is full and complete forgiveness through that blood for -

**1 John 1:7** - *.....the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

This forgiveness, made possible by the redemption of Christ, is -

**Ephesians 1:7** - *.....according to the riches of his grace;*

That guarantees a full and complete forgiveness.

If men were forgiven according to their own merits, they would be in hopelessness and despair. It is not character, nor good works, nor liberality, nor anything that man can do that insures forgiveness of sin. It is “according to the riches of His grace”.

That opens the door to any and all. There is none who needs to despair.

Since it is “according to the riches of His grace”, there is no cause for doubt or fear. The forgiveness of men is often according to the weakness of their own characters, the poverty of their own spirit.

But the forgiveness of God is “according to the riches of His grace”. When He forgives, He forgives fully.

**1 John 1:9** - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

This characterizes all of God’s dealings with His people. When a rich man gives according to his riches, he does not give sparingly. He gives bountifully.

And when God gives according to His riches of grace, He gives with a bountiful hand. Man is limited only by his willingness to receive.

**Matthew 9:29** - *.....According to your faith be it unto you.*



At the foot of the Judean hills, not far from the site of old Jericho, there is an oasis surrounded by desert sands. A fountain of pure water gushes from the hillside. There is an abundance for all who come. The amount one receives is limited only by the size of the vessel he brings.

So it is with the riches of God's grace. There is enough for all. Men and women are limited in their blessings only by their faith.

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#### **4. THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE ARE EXHIBITED IN REDEEMED MEN.**

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After telling of how God in Christ Jesus raises men from spiritual death and makes them sit with Him in heavenly places, He says -

**Ephesians 2:7** - *That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

From time to time, the different nations have exhibitions. The wonders of science, and discovery, and progress are brought together that men and women may come and gaze upon them. The purpose of these exhibitions is to show something of the riches of the nations.

Paul says that God is going to have an exhibition. He is going to show something of the riches of His grace by putting redeemed men and women on exhibition.

When is that divine exhibition to take place?

Paul said it was to take place in -

**Ephesians 2:7** - *That in the ages to come.....*

He must have referred first of all, to the future ages of Christian history.

Paul himself was a notable exhibit in God's display of the riches of His grace.

**1 Timothy 1:16** - *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

All through the centuries God has been holding up Paul and other redeemed men and women as exhibits of the riches of His grace.

Today, God lifts men and women out of sin, cleanses their hearts and lives, holds them before the world and says, "This is what God, through the riches of His grace in Christ

Jesus can do for a human life.”

But God’s greatest exhibition is yet to come. When this Christian age shall have come to an end and the dead in Christ shall have been raised, glorified, and gathered together in that place which He has prepared for them, then, before wondering angels, God will show -

**Ephesians 2:7** - *.....the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

What an exhibit that will be when men and women from all the ages and from all the races of men and from all the conditions of life, shall stand before His throne, redeemed in soul and body!

John got a glimpse of that exhibition of the riches of divine grace. He says -

**Revelation 7:9-10** - *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;  
10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

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5. THE RICHES OF GOD’S GRACE ARE REVEALED AND AFFIRMED IN THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL.

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The word “gospel” means “good news”. The gospel is the good news about the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus.

Paul says in -

**Ephesians 3:8** - *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

That is the message which our Lord has entrusted to His church.

There is enough of the riches of divine grace for all men to have all they need.

The reason there are so many millions living in spiritual poverty and dying without hope and without God is not because there is not enough of the riches of the grace for all, but because these riches have not been appropriated.

Of course, men cannot share these riches until they repent of their sins and turn to Jesus Christ.

It is also true that they cannot share them until they know about them.

That is the privilege which our Lord has given to His church. The obligation He has laid upon it, to tell the world about the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus.

Over nineteen hundred years ago, the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus were discovered. Yet, after nineteen centuries, millions of people in the world have never heard about Christ. Most of those who have heard, do not seem eager to share in His riches.

Sometimes we sing the lines in the old hymn -

*Lord, I care not for riches,  
Neither silver nor gold.*

By their attitude, millions on earth are saying, "Lord, I care not for the riches of grace in Christ Jesus."

Surely it is because they do not realize what those riches are.

In 1869, a little Dutch child picked up a shining pebble on the banks of the orange River in South Africa. She took it home and showed it to her mother. In the days that followed, it was used as a plaything about the house.

Finally, that pebble was sold for a pittance. It was taken to Europe, cut, polished and was sold for thousands of dollars.

If only that family had only realized what they had!

Today, the riches of divine grace are freely offered to men and women.

Many of them cast these riches aside as things that are worthless. One day they will realize that they are living and dying in spiritual poverty because they let slip from their hands the riches of divine grace in Christ Jesus.

# ***THE GOSPEL OF SAVING GRACE***

## **STUDY 3**

**Scripture Portion: Ephesians 2:8**

**Ephesians 2:8** - *For by grace are ye saved through faith;.....*

In this verse Paul amplifies a statement that he has made in -

**Ephesians 2:5** - *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

He was showing how God took those who were spiritually dead and raised them to life in Christ. He put in the parenthetical statement -

**Ephesians 2:5** - *.....(by grace ye are saved;)*

He now emphasizes that statement in -

**Ephesians 2:8-9** - *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

*9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

There are two words that occupy a large place in the pages of God's Word - sin and salvation.

In the Old Testament we have the story of human sin, beginning in the garden of Eden and spreading throughout the earth. But, all through that sordid story, there are promises and prophecies of a Saviour.

In the New Testament we have the story of the coming of that Saviour and the plan of salvation wrought out through Him.

Paul was the foremost interpreter of that divine plan. In the words of the text, he sets it forth in plain and vivid language.

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## **6. THE MEANING OF SALVATION.**

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**Ephesians 2:8** - *For by grace are ye saved through faith;.....*

What did Paul mean by this statement?

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan calls attention to the fact that Jesus never used the word except as applied to human life. We speak of saving property, but Jesus never did. He spoke

only of saving men.”

The word “salvation” literally means deliverance. It may refer to physical deliverance, or deliverance from physical danger. The latter is the significance which the word usually bears in the New Testament.

It is this spiritual deliverance which we have in mind when we speak of salvation.

Three things are implied.

A danger threatening.

Before men can be saved, they must realize that they are in danger. Jesus Christ spoke of them as being lost -

**Luke 19:10** - *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

Paul speaks of them as being spiritually dead -

**Ephesians 2:1** - *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:*

But the one word which is used all through the Bible to set forth the danger which confronts mankind is sin.

When the angel of the Lord came to Joseph and spoke to him about the Child which was to be born to Mary, he said -

**Matthew 1:21** - *.....thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

He saves from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, and the consequences of sin. Sin is something that stains the heart, ruins the life and damns the soul.

### ***b. A remedy provided.***

All through the ages men have sought a remedy for sin - something that would give their guilty consciences peace and impart to them a hope in the world to come. There is but one remedy, and that is the remedy which God has provided through the gift of His own Son.

**John 3:16** - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The remedy is in Christ.

**Acts 4:12** - *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

But, to go a step further, the remedy for sin is found in the blood of Christ.

**1 John 1:7** - *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

It was at the cross that Jesus wrought out salvation for sinful men. It was there that -

**2 Corinthians 5:21** - *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

3. A work accomplished.

Paul says -

**Ephesians 2:8** - *For by grace are ye saved .....*

The Greek word is in the perfect tense, which represents a completed work.

He didn't say "ye were saved", pointing back to an experience they had passed through sometime in the past, without any reference to their present standing.

He didn't say, "ye are being saved" representing salvation as a process that was going on.

Nor did he say, "ye shall be saved" representing salvation as something that is to be experienced at some future time.

There is a sense in which all these things are true. Salvation is a past experience for every saved person. There was a time when he repented of his sins and put his trust in Christ and was born again. We speak of the definite experience as salvation.

Salvation is also a present process. Day by day we are being saved, we are working out our own salvation, we are entering more and more into the fulness and power of it.

And salvation is also a future consummation. In another world we shall experience salvation in all of its completeness. We have been saved from the guilt of sin, we are being saved from the power of sin, we shall be saved from the very presence of sin.

To put it another way, we are saved from something, we are saved for something, and we are saved unto something. We are saved from sin, the guilt and power of sin. We are saved for good works. Paul says in -

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

In -

**Ephesians 2:9** - *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

he emphasizes the fact that we are not saved by good works. Here he tells us where good works do come in. We are saved for good works. We are saved unto a heavenly inheritance.

**1 Peter 1:4** - *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

All this is summed up in the words of the text , “you have been saved, you are saved now, and you shall be saved forever.” You stand before God as men and women saved for time and eternity. This is a blessed assurance for anyone to have - “I am saved forever!”

Such is the assurance offered to any and all who will repent of their sins and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. They can sing with feeling the words of the old hymn -

*‘Tis done, the great transaction’s done.  
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.*

Such an assurance does not make one careless concerning his manner of life. Rather, it leads him to a full dedication of all his powers to the Lord. It inspires that resolution of heart which was voiced by Hedley Vicars when he realized that he had been redeemed from sin through the blood of Christ.

“I will henceforth live as a man ought to live who has been redeemed at such a price.”

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## 7. THE SOURCE OF SALVATION.

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**Ephesians 2:8** - *For by grace are ye saved.....*

Salvation originated in the great loving heart of God and was wrought out through the atoning death of the Son of God.

In order to make clear what he meant by saying salvation is by grace, Paul adds some explanatory clauses.

**Ephesians 2:8** - *.....and that not of yourselves:.....*

Salvation is not a boon which God bestows because of any good which He sees in a man.

David describes what God sees when He looks down upon men -

**Psalms 53:2-3** - *God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.*

*3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Every man ought to be the best man he can be, but that will not save him. Salvation is not of self.

Dr. Edward Payson, one of the most saintly of men, as he lay dying, uttered these words: "Oh, how sovereign, how sovereign is the grace of God! I might be dragged through heaven and earth and hell, and I would be the same polluted, wretched sinner, unless God Himself should renew me and cleanse me."

When we see ourselves as we really are, we realize that there is nothing in us to commend us to God, and furnish any hope of salvation. Let those words of God, through his apostle, ever ring in our ears -

**Ephesians 2:8** - .....*not of yourselves*:.....

**Ephesians 2:9** - *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Men are not saved by their good works. Time and again is that truth emphasized in the Word of God.

**Galatians 2:16** - *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

**2 Timothy 1:9** - *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

**Titus 3:5** - *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

These passages of scripture do not discount good works, but deny most emphatically that men can be saved by them. God calls men to service. We are -

**Ephesians 2:10** - .....*created in Christ Jesus unto good works*,.....

We are not to work in order to be saved, but because we are saved. A person may spend his days in doing good, but that can never bring salvation to his soul. Salvation is not of works.

**Ephesians 2:8** - .....*it is the gift of God*:

This is a truth of such vital importance that it has been given a large place in the Word of God.

Back in the days of the Old Testament, when much stress was placed on keeping the law, the prophet sounded forth the message of a free salvation.



**Isaiah 55:1** - *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

In the New Testament, we find the truth stated in clear and unmistakable terms in passages like -

**Romans 6:23** - *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

This has been a hard truth for men to learn. They insist on trying to earn, or purchase, that which can be had only as a free gift.

It was a stern rebuke which Peter gave to Simon of Samaria when he tried to purchase the gift of God.

**Acts 8:20** - *But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.*

Salvation is not partly of God and partly of self. It is all of God and none of self.

It is not partly of grace and partly of works. It is all of grace and none of works.

**Romans 11:6** - *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*

To make salvation depend on works is to deny the very meaning of grace. The only way to get salvation is to ask for it, and accept it as a free gift from God.

Many people are not willing thus to humble themselves and become suppliants at God's throne of grace. They want to "pay their own way"; they want to do something, or give something, that will merit God's favor. They want, at least, to help God save themselves.

A drowning man sometimes prevents, by his own struggles and efforts, the saving work of a capable swimmer who has come to his rescue. It is hard for him to realize that the only thing for him to do is to keep still and let the other save him.

In like manner, a great many people are preventing the saving work of God in their souls because they insist on trying to help God.

Salvation is the free gift of God and can be obtained in no other way.

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## 8. THE CONDITION OF SALVATION.

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**Ephesians 2:8** - *For by grace are ye saved through faith;.....*

Some prefer to speak of faith as the channel of salvation. Whatever we may call it, it is the condition on which God bestows His free gift. Faith opens the door of the heart so that grace may come in. Dr. Robertson says, "Grace is God's part, faith is ours."

This faith, which is the condition of salvation, is more than intellectual assent to certain truths. That does not mean that this kind of faith is unimportant. A person must believe some truths before he can be saved. But that of itself does not bring salvation.

James says -

**James 2:19** - *.....the devils also believe, and tremble.*

The faith that brings salvation is heart faith.

**Romans 10:10** - *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Faith is both acceptance and surrender. Faith is accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and surrendering to Jesus Christ as Lord. It is not so much faith in a doctrine as it is faith in a Person.

**Acts 16:31** - *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

Paul said -

**2 Timothy 1:12** - *.....for I know whom I have believed,.....*

He did know what he believed, but he also knew Whom he believed. He had accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour and had surrendered to Jesus Christ as his Lord.

We must not lose sight of the fact that such a faith is always accompanied by repentance. A person cannot turn to Jesus Christ as Saviour until first he turns away from his sin.

Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had testified both to Jews and Greeks -

**Acts 20:21** - *Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Perhaps we have left the note of repentance too much out of our preaching. We have called on people to come and accept Christ as Saviour and have said all too little about repenting of their sins. It was our Lord Himself Who said -

**Luke 13:3** - *.....Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

It is this heart faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, accompanied by repentance of sin, that opens the door to the free gift of God

The story is told of an old sailor who had been converted and found joy in his salvation.

One day a comrade said to him, "I believe the Bible to be true, and every word of it to be from God. I know that I am a sinner and that I can be saved only through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. But how am I to be saved?"

The old sailor replied, "I do not know that I can tell you what it is or how to get it. But I can tell you some things it is not. It is not knocking off swearing and drinking, and such like. It is not reading the Bible and praying and being good. It is not anything you have done or can do.

It is believing and trusting to what Christ has done for you. It is forsaking your sins and looking for pardon from them and the salvation of your soul to Jesus Who died and shed His blood for sin."

The conversion of Dr. Andrew Fuller, one of the great preachers of England in a past generation, was on this wise. When he was a boy out on a farm, he became greatly interested in the salvation of his soul.

He went to church and listened to sermons, but they brought no relief. He read good books, but found no help. He watched Christians in their daily living and listened to their words, but still his own soul was in darkness.

When he was about ready to give up all hope, these words of Jesus came to him -

**Matthew 11:28** - *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

He said, "I must and I will. I trust my lost and sinful soul into His hands. Lord Jesus, I come, I come."

In that moment, the peace of God come into his soul.

Our forefathers perhaps laid too much emphasis on emotional religion. There are some people today who seem to think their religion is measured by the amount of noise they make.

But some of us have gone too far to the other extreme. We have left all emotion out and made of our religion a rather cold and formal thing. It is hard to realize how anyone can experience the saving grace of God without feeling the stirring of great emotions in his soul.

Billy Sunday used to tell, in his own inimitable way, the thrilling story of the sinking of the North German Lloyd steamer, the Elbe. The vessel went down in the North Sea. Only nineteen of those on board were saved. One of them was a man who lived in Cleveland, Ohio. As soon as he reached port, he sent a cablegram to his wife, which read - "The Elbe is lost. I am saved!"

When his wife received the message, she ran down the street, waving the cablegram above her head and crying out to her neighbors, "He's saved! He's saved!"

No one accused her of being too emotional. Rather, her friends joined her in her shouts of joy.

There is nothing which ought so to stir the deep emotions of the soul as the assurance that one is saved.

# ***THE GOSPEL OF ABOUNDING GRACE***

## **STUDY 4**

**Scripture Portion: Romans 5:20**

**Romans 5:20** - .....*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

There are two forces at work in the world - sin and grace. These two forces are personified and represented as kings sitting on their thrones -

**Romans 5:21** - *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

These two kings have waged a continuous warfare against each other, because they belong to entirely different realms. The devil placed sin on the throne, while God enthroned grace. Sin seeks to destroy, grace reaches out to save. Both are powerful monarchs, but grace is more powerful than sin.

**Romans 5:20** - .....*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

Three truths are set forth in the text.

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### **THE ABOUNDING REIGN OF SIN.**

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**Romans 5:20** - .....*where sin abounded,.....*

There can be no question about the abundance of sin in the world. No one can read the story of the human race without realizing that sin has abounded through all the centuries. And no one can look at the world today without realizing that sin still abounds.

This truth stands out when we consider the reign of sin from several angles.

Sin has abounded in the length of its reign.

It has been in the world from the early dawn of creation. Soon after God created the first man and woman, sin came in with its blighting touch. It has been in the world every since.

Its reign reaches from the garden of Eden on down to the present time. All through the long centuries of the world's history, sin has been at work. Certainly, in the length of its

reign, sin has abounded.

**b. Sin has abounded in the scope of its reign.**

Not only has it been in the world from the beginning of human history, it has touched every life. This is the emphatic message of the Bible concerning sin.

**Romans 3:23** - *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Not a single person has escaped sin's deadly touch. Of the multiplied millions who have lived on earth since the beginning of time, not one has been without sin. Some have been worse sinners than others, but, all have sinned.

4. Sin has abounded in the nature of its reign.

Not only has it been in the world from the beginning and touched every life, but it has touched with a blighting hand, bringing men down to degradation and death. It is the nature of sin to grow. It is not satisfied to come into the life and occupy one little corner. It grows and becomes stronger, until it masters the life.

As the human race grew and spread abroad in the earth, sin grew and became more malignant. The first man sinned by disobeying God. The son of the first man went a step further and stained his hands with his brother's blood. More and more did sin abound until -

**Genesis 6:5** - *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

So great had the sin of the race become that, with the exception of a single family, God swept it from the earth with a flood. More and more did sin abound until it revealed its heinous character in the crucifixion of the Son of God.

One look at a torn and bleeding world today reveals the terrible nature of sin.

The apostle tells us that sin was made to abound by the giving of the law.

**Romans 5:20** - *Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.....*

This statement, so far as the construction is concerned, may indicate the purpose of the giving of the law, or the result. There is a sense in which the giving of the law increased sin. Paul says in -

**Romans 7:8** - *But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.....*

The very fact that certain things were prohibited by law, created in him a desire to do those things. This may have been God's providential way of showing the necessity for a Redeemer and of preparing the way for His coming.

It is certainly true that the giving of the law resulted in revealing sin. Paul says in -

**Romans 7:7** - *.....I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

The giving of the law did not make coveting a sin; it revealed sin.

Go into a room where the curtains are drawn and the light is dim. The room appears to be clean. But, pull back the curtains and let the light come in and you will see that the floor and furniture are covered with dust. The light did not create the dust; it revealed it. The dust was already there.

The law not only revealed the presence of sin, but it revealed something of its terrible nature. The apostle says in -

**Romans 7:13** - *.....that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

The law set sin in its true relation to God and made men realize that sin is something against God.

What a monster sin is! Look at the names which God has given to it. It is called: trespass, transgression, iniquity, wickedness, guile, lawlessness. How did such a monster ever get upon the throne? This king is a usurper. It has no right to the throne which it occupies but got through trickery.

Go back to the story of the garden of Eden and you will find how sin succeeded in getting onto the throne. It slipped into power through subtlety and deceit. It made false representations as to its character and purpose and thus established itself upon the throne and began to reign.

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## **2. THE SUPERABOUNDING REIGN OF GRACE.**

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**Romans 5:20** - *.....grace did much more abound:*

Sin abounds in the world, but grace superabounds. This is shown by the triumphs of grace over sin. Grace is triumphant over sin in the individual life. Grace masters sin and drives it out of every life that comes under its power.

Paul himself was a living example of the superabounding grace of God. There was a time when his life was under mastery of sin, but the grace of God came in and broke the power of sin and set him free.

The New Testament is filled with examples of the victorious power of divine grace.

Mary Magdalene had been under the power of seven demons -

**Mark 16:9** - *.....he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.*

One day she came in touch with Jesus and, through the grace of God in Christ, the power of the demons was broken and she became a devout follower of Christ.

The woman of Samaria was living in sin and was the servant of sin. But when she met Christ at Jacob's well, the grace of God came into her heart and changed her into a child of God, **John 4:3-42**.

In **Luke 19:1-10**, we read of Zaccheus who was a despised publican, but that day when Jesus came into his home, the grace of God got hold of his life and transformed it.

The Philippian jailer, in **Acts 16:23-34**, was a cruel, hardhearted sinner, but that wondrous night the grace of God flooded his heart and brought him to his knees before Christ.

The pages of Christian history furnish many examples of the transforming power of the grace of God.

Augustine gave himself to every vile sin and was held in bondage by sin's power. But one day he was brought under the power of divine grace and his life was cleansed. Sin had abounded in his life, but the grace of God did much more abound.

In his young manhood, John Bunyan was reckless and profane, completely under the domination of sin. But, when he was twenty-four years old, the grace of God got hold of his life and changed him into a devout Christian and sent him forth to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In the days of Joseph Parker, the great English preacher, there came an infidel into a mining town and gave an address in which he thought he had demolished all the arguments for the Bible and Christianity.

He concluded by saying, "Now I hope I have succeeded in explaining to you that the existence of Jesus Christ is a myth."

As he finished speaking, a miner, who had come in in his dirty, grimy clothes, stood up and said, "Sir, I am only a working man and don't know what you mean by the word 'myth', but can you explain me?"

"Three years ago, I had a miserable home. I neglected my wife and children. I cursed and swore. I drank up all my wages. Then someone came along and showed me the love of God in Christ Jesus and I gave my life to Him.

"And now, all is different. We have a happy home. I love my wife and children. I feel



better in every way. I have given up drink. A new power has taken possession of me since Christ came into my life.

“Sir, can you explain me?”

It is needless to say that the lecturer had no explanation to give.

But Paul gave the explanation in the words of the text -

**Romans 5:20** - .....*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

The power of divine grace is shown in the changes it has wrought in communities and nations.

More than one hundred years ago, one of the vilest spots on the face of the earth was the Fiji Islands. The very name of the islands was a synonym of all that was beastly and degrading. The vilest passions ran riot. The sick and aged were killed without pity or compassion. Widows were slain when their husbands died.

Cannibalism was there in its worst form. It was a part of their religion and every day saw feasts of human flesh. Captives in war and shipwrecked mariners, were cast into the oven, while grinning faces stood around and waited for the feast.

In 1885, two missionaries, with their wives, stepped onto the shores of these islands. Years of suffering and hardships followed. What could these four human beings do in the midst of all this sin and shame?

But - the Spirit of God was there.

In the course of time a revival broke out. The demon hearts of the inhabitants of these islands were touched by the power of divine grace and cleansed from sin. As the years passed, this work of grace deepened and spread until all the islands had come under the sway of the gospel. Cannibalism became a thing of the past. Lusts and passions were checked and purity began to reign.

Today there is not to be found a spot on the face of the earth more loyal to Jesus Christ and His kingdom. Where sin had abounded in all its horrors, grace, in all its glory, did much more abound.

All the triumphs of Christianity are the triumphs of divine grace.

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### 3. THE GLORIOUS RESULTS.

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These results are given in the contrast between death and life in -

**Romans 5:21** - *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Dr. Robertson suggests as a correct translation - “*That as sin set up its throne in death, even so might grace set up its throne through righteousness unto eternal life.*”

1. Sin reigns in death.

As someone has said, “His throne is set up in a graveyard.”

Dr. Sanday puts it this way, “Sin reigns, as it were, over a charnel house. The subjects of its empire are men as good as dead, dead in every sense of the word, dead morally and spiritually, therefore doomed to die physically.”

2. Sin, which reigns in the realm of death, ends in death.

**Romans 6:23** - *For the wages of sin is death;.....*

**James 1:15** - *.....and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

- (1) **Sin ends in physical death.**

**Romans 5:12** - *.....death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

If there had been no sin, there would have been no physical death. All the graveyards of earth are the result of sin. Mary, Queen of England, won for herself the title “Bloody Mary” because she put so many people to death.

The reign of sin in the world has been a bloody reign. Think of the millions of people who have been put to death by this cruel monarch.

- (2) **But the reign of sin issues also in eternal death.**

Men and women who are under the sway of sin are spiritually dead now. They are separated from God, the Source of spiritual life.

And this spiritual death, this separation from God and spiritual life here on earth, issues in eternal death in the world to come, eternal separation from God in the realm of the lost. How true it is that sin reigns in death!

- a. **Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.***

The reign of grace issues in eternal life, even as the reign of sin issues in eternal death. Eternal life is a present possession to every believing soul. The very moment one turns from sin and puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that very moment grace bestows upon

him eternal life.

**John 3:36** - *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life:.....*

Not “shall have at some future time” but has it now!

**d. *But eternal life is also a future consummation.***

It blossoms in all its fulness and glory in the world to come. It is like the lily bulb that is planted in the earth. It is down in the mire, but it has life and beauty in its soul. Out of its heart there comes forth a shoot that makes its way up toward the sunlight. Then, one day, it bursts into bloom in all its beauty.

Down here on earth, the believing soul is among the sordid things, but it has life and beauty within. One day that believing soul will blossom forth into eternal life in all its glory.

This divine grace, with all that it bestows, is offered to each and all, through the Lord Jesus Christ. The individual makes his own choice. Shall sin reign in his life, bringing death and destruction, or shall grace reign, bringing peace and joy and eternal life? That is the question which each one must answer for himself.

There is no case too hard for the grace of God. It matters not how much sin has abounded in the life, grace will much more abound, if given a chance.

Someone has described the work of grace in this way.

“I am thirsty,” says one. Grace says -

**Isaiah 55:1** - *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,.....*

“I am hungry,” says another. Grace says -

**Isaiah 55:2** - *.....eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

“I am poor, and have nothing with which to buy,” says one. Grace says -

**Isaiah 55:1** - *.....come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

“I am weary,” sighs the laborer in life’s field. Grace says -

**Matthew 11:28** - *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

“I am staggering under this heavy burden,” says the traveler on life’s highway. Grace says -

**Psalm 55:22** - *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee:.....*

“I am a guilty sinner,” cries some poor soul. Grace says -

**Isaiah 1:18** - *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

“I am bound and helpless under the power of sin,” cries a despairing soul.

Grace says -

**John 8:36** - *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

“I am old and helpless and my life on earth is nearly done,” says one. Grace says -

**John 14:1-3** - *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.  
2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.  
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

In the second part of his Pilgrim’s Progress, Bunyan describes the company of pilgrims as they come to the end of their long journey.

One by one they are summoned to cross the river that separates them from the Eternal City.

One day the summons came to Mr. Honest.

The messenger said to him, “Thou are commanded to be ready against this day to present thyself before the Lord at His Father’s house.”

In obedience to this summon, Mr. Honest went down to the brink of the river and started on his passage to the other side.

As he entered the waters, he turned and cried out to those who stood and watched his going, “Grace reigns!”

Thank God that, while -

**Romans 5:20** - .....*sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*

Thank God that, while -

**Romans 5:21** - *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And the glorious day is coming when sin will be forever driven from the throne and grace will reign in triumph!

# ***THE GOSPEL OF TRANSFORMING GRACE***

## **STUDY 5**

**Scripture Portion: 1 Corinthians 15:10**

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

There are many influences that enter into making a man what he is.

A man is what he is, in some respects, by heredity. There are certain physical characteristics and qualities of character that come to him through his ancestors.

A man is what he is, in some respects, by association and environment. These have a large part in determining his physical condition and in molding his character.

A man is what he is, in some respects, by training. He is a cultured, educated man, instead of an ignoramus, because of the training he has received and the effort he has put forth.

A man is what he is largely because of his own choices. God has given to every man the right to choose the way in which he will go.

The man yonder in prison, facing punishment for his crimes, is what he is because he chose to go in that direction.

But, above all the influences that enter into the making of a Christian man, is the grace of God. Apart from that grace, there can be no Christian man.

In this passage, Paul magnifies the grace of God by showing what that grace has accomplished in his own life.

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

He draws a sharp contrast between what he once was and what he is now.

It is a threefold contrast.

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**ONCE HE WAS A LOST SINNER; NOW HE IS A CHILD OF GOD.**

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Paul thinks of the years when he resisted the gospel and fought against Christ. Then the marvelous experience of the Damascus road came to him and his whole life was changed. His sins were all forgiven and he became a new creature in Christ.

In his writings, Paul describes this contrast between what he once was and now is, in various figures of speech. He speaks of it as death and life.

**Ephesians. 2:5-6** - *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

*6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

Once he was spiritually dead, now he is alive in Christ.

Again, he speaks of it as darkness and light. Once he was groping in spiritual darkness, now he is walking in spiritual light.

**1 Thessalonians 5:4-5** - *But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

*5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*

These are figures which Jesus Himself used in describing the change which comes to a man when he is converted.

**John 5:24** - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

**John 8:12** - *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

This wondrous change in a man is wrought by divine grace. As Paul thinks of what he once was, a lost sinner, and now is, a redeemed child of God, he cries out,

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *.....But by the grace of God I am what I am:.....*

It was not by the works of the law, but by the grace of God that he was saved.

So it is with every saved man. But for the grace of God, he would still be a lost sinner, groping in the darkness and writhing in spiritual death. Someone has well said, "The sufficiency of my merit is to know that my merit is not sufficient."

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## **2. ONCE HE WAS A SERVANT OF SIN; NOW HE IS A SAINT OF GOD.**

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Paul would have been the last man to claim sinless perfection for himself. He was not a saint in that respect. But, he was a saint in that his life was yielded to the Holy Spirit and he was daily growing in the grace and knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The grace of God is not only a grace that saves, but also a grace that sanctifies. Having, by grace, brought the believer out of death into life, out of darkness into light, God continues to work through grace for the perfecting of Christian character.

His grace not only saved Paul from his sins and transformed him into a child of God, but it continued to work in his life to produce the Christlike character and impart spiritual graces.

Paul tells about his experiences in reaching after the Christian ideal, in his letter to -

**Philippians 3:12-14** - *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

*13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,  
14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

He had come a long way since his experience on the Damascus road. Yet there were heights still ahead. And, while he had tried to do his best, he realized that it was the grace of God that had made him what he was. Well could he have sung the words of the old hymn -

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

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3. ONCE HE WAS A PERSECUTOR OF THE CHURCH; NOW HE IS AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST.

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Paul could never forget the fact that he had persecuted the church of Christ. That truth burned in his heart day after day. When Stephen was stoned, he stood by and looked with approval on the bloody deed.



Following that, he dedicated his life to the destruction of the church. Let him tell about it in his own words -

**Acts 26:9-11** - *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*

*10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.*

*11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.*

That is what he once was - a persecutor of the church. But now he is an apostle of Christ, carrying the gospel message all over the Roman Empire.

It was a transformation which had been wrought out by the grace of God.

**1 Corinthians 15:9-10** - *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

*10 But by the grace of God I am what I am:.....*

To be sure, he had given himself without reservation to the work of his Lord. He had presented his body -

**Romans 12:1** - *.....a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,.....*

In comparing his zeal with that of the other apostles, he says -

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *.....I laboured more abundantly than they all:.....*

But he hastens to say -

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *.....yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

All his efforts were nothing apart from the grace of God.

John Newton, the celebrated English preacher and hymn writer, realized that he was a trophy of divine grace.

A little while before his death, a brother minister came in to have breakfast with him. Family prayers followed the meal.

Mr. Newton's sight had almost failed and he was unable to read.

He sat and listened to his friend as he read **1 Corinthians 15**.

When -

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *But by the grace of God I am what I am:.....*

was read, Mr. Newton began to speak. "I am not what I ought to be. Ah! How imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor what is evil and I would cleave to what is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon, shall I put off, with mortality, all sin and imperfection.

"Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was, a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge -

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *But by the grace of God I am what I am:....."*

John Newton could say that with conviction and joy. What had he once been? When he was seven years of age, he lost his mother. A little later, he went to sea with his father and learned all the evil of the seaman's life. Still later, he was forced into the navy.

He deserted, but was caught and was stripped and beaten until the blood flowed from his wounds. He had now become a hardened infidel.

He fell in with African slave traders. He went on from bad to worse, until he himself was sold as a slave. It was a Negro woman who bought him. She gloried in her power over him. She made him depend for his food on the crusts she tossed under the table.

He had fallen to the depths of human degradation. And yet, the grace of God found him, saved him, made of him one of the great ministers of Christ and a writer of hymns that have stirred the hearts of men the world over.

Truly he could say, "I am what I am!" No wonder he wrote the words of that old hymn -

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

From this experience of Paul's we find that, when one realizes what the grace of God has done for him, there is a fourfold reaction in his soul.

A feeling of humility.

Paul says in -

**1 Corinthians 15:9** - *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

How can we harmonize these words with those which Paul uttered a little later?

**2 Corinthians 11:5** - *For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.*

On that occasion, Paul was thinking about his apostleship which was being called into question by his enemies. He was defending himself against their false accusations.

But on this occasion, he is thinking of his apostleship in his relation to God and he says, "I am not meet to be called an apostle. I am not worthy of this high and holy office."

When one remembers that it is the grace of God that has made him what he is, there is no place for pride in his achievements. Gipsy Smith, Sr., was one of the most successful evangelists of his day. Great crowds had thronged the halls where he spoke. Multitudes were won to Christ under his ministry.

There must have come to him many times the temptation to become a little proud of what he had done. But he had a very effective safeguard against such a temptation. On his study table in his home, he kept an old knife which his father used when he was a roving gipsy.

He said, "When I return from a great campaign, I pick up this old knife and say to myself, 'if it were not for the grace of God, I would still be using this as a wandering gipsy.'"

All the glory for spiritual achievement must go to God, for it is the grace of God that has made such achievements possible.

In warning the Christians at Corinth against the sin of being -

**1 Corinthians 4:6** - *.....puffed up for one against another.*

Paul says -

**1 Corinthians 4:7** - *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

Every remembrance of what the grace of God has done for us ought to bring us to our knees in humility.

**b. A sense of obligation.**

Paul says -

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *.....and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all:.....*

He realized that this grace which had made him what he was, laid upon him the obligation to dedicate his life and his all to the service of God. Instead of being puffed up with pride because of what he was, he felt the responsibility that such gifts of divine grace imposed upon him.

God bestows His gifts of divine grace upon men that they may use those gifts in the service of God. The greater the gifts, the greater the obligations. There is a stewardship of divine grace.

Peter says -

**1 Peter 4:10** - *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

A good Christian minister startled his hearers one day by saying, “God has never given me anything!”

While the congregation wondered at the strange statement, the minister added, “He has loaned me what I have to use in His service.”

And that is true of very one of us. We are all stewards of the manifold grace of God. God will hold us responsible for the use we make of it.

3. A consciousness of dependence.

Paul says -

**1 Corinthians 15:10** - *.....yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

He had given himself without reservation to the work to which his Lord had called him. But, he realized that it was not his efforts, but the grace of God that had brought results. It was the grace of God created within him the desire to serve. And it was the grace of God that made his efforts fruitful.

The Christian life is a partnership between man and God. Man works, but his work is made effectual by the grace of God.

Character is built and work is accomplished as the individual and the grace of God work together, or as the grace of God works in and through the individual.

The same is true of groups working together as churches or as larger bodies. It is the grace of God that makes their work effectual. No movement can ever reform humanity, or transform society, that tries to work apart from the grace of God.

**Zechariah 4:6** - *.....Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*

When Gideon and his three hundred faithful followers went forth against the host of

Midian, the cry that was on their lips was -

**Judges 7:18** - .....*The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.*

It was not the sword of the Lord by itself, nor the sword of Gideon by itself, but the sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon working together.

That must ever be the battle cry of the church of God -

**Judges 7:18** - .....*The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.*

God and His people working together.

4. An assurance of victory.

If men were dependent on their own efforts, well might they give way to despair.

But when they remember that the grace of God is with them, they can go on in the confidence of ultimate victory.

There may be temporary defeats, or what seem to be defeats, but there is victory ahead.

Dr. Lyman Abbott gave this beautiful parable: "I picked an acorn from the ground and held it to my ear. This is what it said to me: 'By and by the birds will come and build their nests in me. By and by the cattle will rest under my shade. By and by I will furnish warmth for the home in the pleasant fire. By and by I will be shelter from the storm to those who have gone under my roof. By and by I will be strong ribs of the great vessel. The tempest will beat against me in vain, while I carry men across the sea.'"

"Oh, foolish little acorn," said I, "wilt thou do all this?"

And the acorn replied, "Yes, God and I!"

"Oh little man of Tarsus, wilt thou go forth and plant the cross of Christ in Asia and Europe?"

"Yes," comes back the answer, "God and I."

"Oh little band of Christians, wilt thou go forth and bring the mighty Roman Empire to its knees before Christ?"

Back comes the answer, "Yes, God and we."

“Oh church of the living God, wilt thou go forth and win the lost multitudes on earth to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Wilt thou put down the hosts of wickedness and establish righteousness and justice in the earth? Wilt thou take a warring world and mold it into a great brotherhood?”

May there come back a might, triumphant shout, “Yes, God and we!”

# ***THE GOSPEL OF SUSTAINING GRACE***

## **STUDY 6**

**Scripture Portion: 2 Corinthians 12:9**

**2 Corinthians 12:9** - .....*My grace is sufficient for thee:.....*

In this chapter, Paul tells of one of the great experiences of his life. We wish he might have been led to tell us more about it. There are many unanswered questions that rise up in our minds as we read the story. But he has told us enough to set forth the blessed truth of the sufficiency of divine grace. That truth is set, like a gem, in the heart of the apostle's experience.

Let us look at it.

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### **1. THE APOSTLE'S AFFLICTION.**

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Many of the Lord's servants have been great sufferers. They have done their work in the midst of physical pain.

Dr. Robert Hall, the illustrious English minister, never saw a well day. Near the close of his life, he said that he could remember few hours when he had not been in pain amounting to agony.

Paul had his affliction. He tells us several things about it.

The nature of it.

He speaks of it as -

**2 Corinthians 12:7** - .....*a thorn in the flesh,.....*

What that was nobody knows. Various interpretations have been suggested. Some have said it referred to temptations which were continually confronting him and against which he had to fight.

Others have thought it referred to his adversaries who were harassing him on every side, doing all within their power to hinder his work, even to inflicting bodily pain.

Others have contended that it was some disease of the mind, similar to epilepsy which came upon him from time to time and made him gloomy and despondent.

Still others have said that, by the thorn in the flesh, Paul meant some deep-seated disease which caused him constant pain.

The latter seems to be the most likely explanation. This seems to be borne out by the words which Paul used -

**2 Corinthians 12:7** - .....*a thorn in the flesh*,.....

It was not “a thorn in the mind” or “a thorn in the heart” but “a thorn in the flesh”. It was something in his body which caused physical pain.

This thought is further confirmed by the name he gave to it, “a thorn”. That is a good description of some of the bodily ills to which man has fallen heir. At times, every movement of the body is accompanied by a sensation like the pricking of a thorn or the thrust of a sharp stick.

Paul gives some further intimation as to the nature of his affliction -

**Galatians 4:13-14** - *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.*

*14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*

These words would seem to indicate that the affliction was something rather loathsome, something that detracted from his personal appearance. That it might have been some eye trouble is suggested in -

**Galatians 4:15** - *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*

Whatever may have been the affliction, it was something painful, something which caused the apostle a great deal of trouble.

### ***b. The source of it.***

Paul called it -

**2 Corinthians 12:7** - .....*the messenger of Satan to buffet me*,.....

Did he mean to say that sickness is of the evil one and that God has nothing to do with it? There are those who preach that doctrine. But it is a doctrine which belittles God.

Above all stands God and every power must bend before Him

In speaking of the sickness of David’s child, the inspired writer said -



**2 Samuel 12:15** - .....*And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.*

It is true that, in the case of Job, the author said -

**Job 2:7** - *So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.*

but he did it only after God had given him permission to do so. Satan was powerless to afflict Job until God gave His permission.

Paul called his affliction -

**2 Corinthians 12:7** - .....*the messenger of Satan.....*

because Satan used it to tempt him to turn away from God just as he tempted Job to -

**Job. 2:9** - .....*curse God, and die.*

There are not many people who have not met Satan in their afflictions. He tempts them to doubt God, to lose faith in God, to cease to love God.

Some such temptation must have come to Paul. Everywhere he went, Satan stood before him, using this affliction to buffet him, to slap him in the face.

3. The purpose of it.

Paul said -

**2 Corinthians 12:7** - *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh,.....*

The affliction was sent upon the apostle to keep him humble before God.

Every affliction comes with a purpose of God behind it and in it. It does not come by chance. God has a purpose to accomplish through it. Sometimes people are able to discern the purpose of God in their afflictions as soon as those afflictions come. They recognize in them the hand of God seeking to work out a definite end.

But this is not always true. Sometimes they do not see the purpose of God in them until long afterward. It may remain a mystery to them until that day when they shall know even as also they are known.

Paul came to see the purpose of God in his affliction. It was given to him to keep him humble in the midst of all his marvelous experiences of grace. There had been one experience especially which might have tempted him to spiritual pride. He had been -

**2 Corinthians 12:4** - *caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is*

*not lawful for a man to utter.*

**2 Corinthians 12: 7** - *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*

God cannot use one who is spiritually proud.

There is a beautiful and true old Scottish proverb which says, "Pride and grace ne'er dwell in one place." Another has said, "Pride is a flower which grows in the devil's garden.

It was the wisest of all men who said -

**Proverbs 16:18** - *Pride goeth before destruction,.....*

If Paul was to be used of God in a great way, he must be kept humble. For that purpose there was given to him -

**2 Corinthians 12:7** - *.....a thorn in the flesh,.....*

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## 2. THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER.

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**2 Corinthians 12:8** - *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

Paul was sincere in his prayer. He doubtless felt that the thorn in the flesh was a hindrance to him in his work. He would be able to do so much more and do it so much better, if only this affliction would depart from him. And so he prayed that it might be taken away.

Many have felt, as did Paul, concerning their afflictions. They have looked upon them as a handicap, keeping them from doing their best service, and have prayed for their removal.

Paul's prayer was characterized by earnestness and persistence. He says -

**2 Corinthians 12:8** - *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

He put his heart and soul into his petition. He besought the Lord. He called upon Him most earnestly. And he didn't call once and then stop. He besought the Lord three times. He didn't call once then give up and say, "The Lord does not answer my prayer." He prayed three times.

Those prayers must have touched the sympathetic heart of Christ. He remembered how He had gone into the darkest shadows of the garden that terrible night when He felt the

weight of the world's sin resting upon Him, and prayed three times that the cup might be taken away.

His great heart must have been moved with compassion as He listened to the prayer of Paul which arose three times out of a burning soul.

Why did Paul go to Christ with his affliction? Why didn't he go to Luke, the beloved physician, who was his companion? Doubtless he had gone to him more than once. Often he must have found comfort and ease from his pain through the tender care of this Christian physician. But he realized that healing power must come from God. The physician could use his knowledge and skill, but only God could heal.

People have gone to two extremes in seeking relief from their physical infirmities. Some have gone to physicians and have left the Lord out entirely. They have depended entirely on the physician's skill.

Others have gone to the Lord and have left the physicians out. They have looked to the Lord to heal them without any human means.

There is a happy medium - use what means God has put at our disposal, then ask His blessings.

When I get sick, I want a physician. When I get well, I thank God for raising me up. It is none the less the work of God because He used human means to accomplish it.

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### 3. THE LORD'S ANSWER.

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**2 Corinthians 12:9** - *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

Sometimes when people call upon God for certain things and He does not give them the things they ask for, they think their prayers are unanswered. But, there is no such thing as an unanswered prayer.

A great many so-called prayers go unanswered because they are not real prayers.

God always answers true prayer. That does not mean that He always gives the thing for which prayer is made. An earthly father does not give his child everything he asks for. Sometimes he says, "No, it is not best for you to have that."

In like manner, God sometimes answers prayer by saying "No" to His child.

The Lord answered Paul's prayer, but His answer was, "No. Paul, I shall not take away the thorn in the flesh, but My grace is sufficient for thee. I will not remove the thorn, but

I will give thee power to endure it and will make a blessing out of it.”

The grace of God is sufficient for every need of the Christian. One of the most precious promises in the Word of God is found in -

**Philippians 4:19** - *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Paul had found divine grace sufficient for every need of his life. And so has every child of God who has tried it.

Is it comfort in the hour of sorrow? Is it help in time of trouble? Is it strength in the hour of temptation? Is it power to win victories in the field of service? Is it peace and assurance in the hour of death?

**2 Corinthians 12:9** - *.....My grace is sufficient for thee:.....*

Mr. Spurgeon said that, one evening as he rode home from a very heavy day's work, he was tired and depressed. Things seemed to be going wrong on every side. But, as he rode along, the words of this text flashed across his mind -

**2 Corinthians 12: 9** - *.....My grace is sufficient for thee:.....*

Then, as he thought of the rich and full meaning of the words, he said to himself, “Why, I should think it is!” With that, he burst out laughing. His unbelief and fears seemed so absurd in the light of that text.

It was like a little fish in the Thames River, fearful lest it should drink the river dry, and father Thames said, “Drink away, little fish, my stream is sufficient for you.”

Or, like a little mouse in the granaries of Egypt during the seven years of famine, afraid that it would die of famine, and Joseph said, “Cheer up, little mouse, my granaries are sufficient for you.”

Or, like a man on the mountain, saying to himself, “I fear that I shall exhaust all the oxygen in the atmosphere,” and the heavens cried out, “Breathe away, O man, fill your lungs, my atmosphere is sufficient for you.”

Mr. Spurgeon said, there he was, depressed and afraid lest all things would go wrong and his work would fail, while God was saying to him, "Go on, O man, and fear not - My grace is sufficient for you."

Catherine Booth, wife of the founder of the Salvation Army, learned this text when she was a child. As she grew to womanhood, she claimed its promise for herself. In all the experiences of life, she clung to it with implicit faith. In the hour of death, it gave peace to her soul. The words of the text were enlarged and hung as a motto in her home.

When she lay on her deathbed, those standing near her saw her lips moving as if she were trying to speak. Her strength was not sufficient. Then, with what little strength she had left, she lifted her finger and pointed to the motto.

The good woman had lived in the power of that text, now she was dying in the comfort of it. In a few moments, she breathed her last, her immortal spirit took its flight to God while the finger on her pale hand still pointed to the text -

**2 Corinthians 12:9** - .....*My grace is sufficient for thee*:.....

*When, sin-stricken, burdened and weary,  
From bondage I longed to be free,  
There came to my heart the sweet message:  
"My grace is sufficient for thee."*

*Though tempted and sadly discouraged,  
My soul to this refuge would flee,  
And rest in the blessed assurance:  
"My grace is sufficient for thee."*

*My bark maybe tossed by the tempest  
That sweeps o'er the turbulent sea -  
A rainbow illumines the darkness -  
"My grace is sufficient for thee."*

*O Lord, I would press on with courage,  
Though rugged the pathway may be,  
Sustained and upheld by the promise,  
"My grace is sufficient for thee."*

*Soon, soon, will the warfare be over,  
My Lord face to face I shall see,  
And prove as I dwell in His presence:  
"His grace was sufficient for me."*

In explanation of this statement of the sufficiency of divine grace, the Lord said -

**2 Corinthians 12:9** - .....*my strength is made perfect in weakness*.....

Human weakness gives divine grace a chance to show its power.

D. L. Moody had little education. The realization of his own weakness drove him to God and the grace of God worked through him in a mighty way.

Many men who have had physical infirmities, have accomplished more for God than others who had sound bodies, because their weakness gave the grace of God a chance in their lives.

Dr. R. T. Vann, who had no hands and only the stub of one arm, accomplished a great deal more than some of the rest of us who have two good hands, and perhaps more than he would have accomplished if he had not lost his hands, because his infirmity gave the grace of God a chance to show its power.

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#### 4. THE APOSTLE'S EXULTATION.

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When the full significance of the words of his Lord dawned him, Paul said -

**2 Corinthians 12:9b-10** - .....*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

*10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

There are several ways of facing afflictions. One may rebel against them, or he may submit to them in stoical silence, or he may whine and complain about them, or he may bow his head in reverent resignation, or he may, like Paul, rejoice in them as he sees the grace of God working through them.

In his book, *Christ And Human Suffering*, E. Stanley Jones says: "I once went into the garden of Gethsemane, there to spend the night in prayer, centering my whole meditation on what I thought was the heart and substance of the Gethsemane incident -

**Luke 22:42** - .....*not my will, but thine, be done.*

"I expected to come away chastened, submissive, surrendered. But, in those silent hours, I found my thoughts shifting to the words of Jesus to the sleepy disciples -

**Matthew 26:46** - *Rise, let us be going:.....*

"let us be going to meet the betrayal, the rejection, the accusations, the spittle, the cross.

“The will of God was to be done, not by acquiescence but by activity - it was to be done by taking hold of the whole miserable business and turning it into a triumph of the love of God.

“I came away from Gethsemane, not depressed into submission, as I thought I would be, but with a battle cry sounding in my heart.

“Gethsemane meant to me no longer a sign, a tear, a submission, but the call to arise and be going to meet everything, even the very worst that could happen to me, and turn it into a testimony of the love of God.”

That is what Paul did with his -

**2 Corinthians 12:7** - .....*a thorn in the flesh*,.....

He laid hold of it and turned it into a testimony of the love and power of God.

So may we do with our afflictions, as the grace of God floods our lives.

# ***THE GOSPEL OF PREVENTATIVE GRACE***

## **STUDY 7**

**Scripture Portion: Jude 24**

**Jude 24** - *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

In theology, preventative grace refers to that grace which operates on the human heart and will before conversion. That is a very important phase of the work of divine grace. But I am using the term here in the sense of preventative grace.

The book of **Jude**, which consists of just one chapter, is filled with warnings against the dangers which confronted Christian people, especially the dangers from false teachers. Jude exhorts these Christians to whom he is writing, to keep themselves in the love of God by continuous prayer and daily growth in grace.

He closes his message with a doxology, pointing them to One who is able to keep them in all the experiences of life and to bring them safely to their eternal home with joy unspeakable. This One is none other than God our Saviour, to Whom all glory and majesty and dominion and power are to be ascribed - the One eternal God.

When we look at the world around us, with all of its wickedness and sin, we are tempted to lose heart. When we look at ourselves, with all our faults and weaknesses, we are ready to give up in despair. But when we look up to the eternal and omnipotent God, who is our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, we take courage and press on.

There are two great words suggested by this text - *preservation* and *presentation*.

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### **5. DIVINE PRESERVATION.**

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**Jude 24** - *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

The Revised Version reads, “*Now unto that who is able to guard you from stumbling.*”

The pathway of the Christian life is not always smooth. There are stumbling stones, slippery places, and pitfalls along the way. Let no one think that, when he becomes a Christian, he will have an easy time, that there will be no more battles to be fought.

The devil is ever trying to bring about the downfall of Christian men and women. You remember how desperately he tried to bring Jesus down before temptation. If he didn't



let Jesus alone, you may rest assured that he will not let you and me rest in peace.

He places stumbling stones all along the way. We have all stumbled, some of us have fallen. Some have fallen harder and have gone down deeper into sin than others, but all of us have stumbled.

We rejoice that we have a God Who is able and willing to lift us up when we fall, to catch us when we stumble. That was the assurance which the psalmist had when he wrote -

**Psalm 37:23** - *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

David was speaking out of his own experience when he wrote those words. He had fallen, and had fallen hard. He had gone deep into sin. But he was not utterly cast down. He tells about it in -

**Psalm 40:2** - *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

He had gone down to the depths, but God had reached down His great hand of love and had lifted him up.

Thank God for His love and power that lift up His children when they fall. How hopeless we would be without that assurance!

But the words of the text promise something better than that. Jude tells us that God is not only able to lift us up when we stumble and fall, but He is -

**Jude 24** - *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

We rejoice that He is able to lift us up when we fall and to wipe away the stains, heal the hurts, but we rejoice more in the assurance that He is able to keep us from falling and getting hurt.

I can imagine Peter and John getting together after Pentecost and talking about their experiences.

I can hear Peter say,

“O, John, what a wonderful Saviour we have! How marvelous is His grace! When I forsook Him in the hour of His suffering, and denied Him when He needed a friend, He did not cast me off.

“After His resurrection, He came and sought me and restored me to a place by His side. When I stumbled and fell before the power of temptation, He lifted me up and set my feet upon the rock.

“O, John, what a Saviour He is!”

And I can hear John as he answers,

“Yes, Peter, that was a marvelous manifestation of His grace. But He did more than that for me. He undergirded me with His power in those testing times and kept me from falling.!”

One day, a company of men were telling about God’s great mercy in preserving their lives when the boat on which they were crossing a lake was wrecked. The boat had gone upon a rock and a great hole was made in its side. It was beginning to sink.

These men cast themselves into the water and struggled to keep from going down. After a while, they were rescued. Now they were rejoicing in God’s mercy that had spared them.

A Christian man, who had listened to their story, said, “God did a more wonderful thing than that for me.”

They looked at him in astonishment. They had never heard of any narrow escape which he had. They asked him what it was that God had done for him that was more wonderful than what He had done for them.

He replied, “I crossed the lake in a boat, and it was not wrecked.”

God had saved those men out of a wreck, but He had done something more wonderful for this man. He had kept him from having a wreck.

When shipwreck comes into our lives and we go upon the rocks, we rejoice that we have a God Who is able to reach down and lift us out of the wreckage and ruin. But it is a far greater cause for rejoicing that God is able to keep us from having a wreck. He is able to keep us from falling.

There is an old fable about a company of saints who got together in heaven and were telling one another about God’s goodness in saving them.

One told of how he had been a drunkard and had lost everything he had. He was just a drunken sot, without ambition, without pride, and without friends. But God found him and, by His grace, saved him.

Another said he had been a moral reprobate. He had been guilty of almost every sin. He had been dishonest, untruthful, impure. But God, in His infinite grace, had saved him.

Others told of what vile sinners they had been and how God had redeemed them. Every one thought his experience revealed a greater manifestation of divine grace than did the experiences of any other.

But, when they had finished, one who had been silently listening to their remarkable stories, said, "I can tell you something more wonderful about the grace and mercy of God than anything you have told."

These men knew how this man had lived on earth. They knew that he had become a Christian when he was a boy and had lived a consistent Christian life until the day of his death.

So they said to him, "Pray tell us what experiences you have had that show greater divine grace and mercy."

And the man replied, "Why, God saved me before I went so far into sin as you men went."

God had saved them after they had fallen deep into sin, but God had saved this man before he had fallen so low.

It is good to be raised up from severe sickness, but it is infinitely better to be saved from getting sick. It is cause for rejoicing when our lives are spared in some terrible accident, but it is a much greater cause for rejoicing when we are kept from having an accident.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude and thanksgiving when we remember that we have a God Who is able and willing to lift us up and cleanse our lives when we fall into sin. But it is a far greater cause for gratitude and thanksgiving to know that we have a God Who is able and willing to keep us from falling.

But, if we are to experience this preventative grace of God, we must stay close to Him. We must hold on to His great hand.

A little child was walking with his father along a rough and slippery way. The father wanted to hold the child's hand and keep him from falling. But the child thought he could get along without any help.

In a few minutes, he slipped and fell, injuring his knee and soiling his cloths. He began to cry and to call to his father to help him. The father came and reached down his strong hand and lifted him up and wiped away the dirt. The two then walked on hand in hand.

It was good that the father was there to lift up the child when he fell, but it would have been much better if the child had taken his father's hand in the beginning. Then he would not have fallen.

Many of us are like that child.

We break away from God and think we can walk along the pathway of life in our own strength. But we do not go far before we slip and fall and cry for help.

We have a loving Father Who hears our cries and reaches down His hand of love and lifts us up and wipes away the stains. Thank God for that. But, it would have been much better if we had stayed close to Him all along the way. Then we would have been kept from falling.

It was just here that Peter got into trouble. He boasted to the Lord of his own sufficiency, of his ability to stand in the hour of temptation.

**Mark 14:29-31** - *But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.*

*30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.*

*31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.*

But it wasn't long until he was deep in sin, denying his Lord and emphasizing his denial with curses.

**Mark 14:66-71** - *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:*

*67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.*

*68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.*

*69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.*

*70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaeen, and thy speech agreeth thereto.*

*71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.*

When he realized what he had done, he went out and wept bitterly.

**Mark 14:72** - *And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.*

A little later, the risen Lord came to him in love and mercy and restored him.

**Mark 16:7** - *But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter.....*

**John 21:15-17** - *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

*16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith*

*unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

How much better it would have been if he had stayed close to his Master, instead of following Him afar! Then he would not have fallen.

God uses various means to prevent His children from falling. Sometimes it is necessary for Him to lay a heavy hand upon them.

There is a beautiful story concerning an Italian painter. He was working on a fresco in the lofty dome of a cathedral, standing on a platform which was more than a hundred feet from the floor. He paused to look at this work.

Thinking only of his art, he kept stepping back in order to get a better view. He had reached the edge of the platform when a fellow artist saw him and realized his danger. This friend took a brushful of paint and struck it across the face of the figure on which the artist was working, thus ruining the labor of many days.

The painter sprang forward with a cry of rage and thus was saved from plunging to the floor below.

In like manner, God sometimes has to spoil the plans of His children in order to keep them from falling.

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## 6. DIVINE PRESENTATION.

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**Jude 24** - *.....and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

Again, the Revised Version gives a different reading: *“And to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy.”*

“Without blemish” is the expression used concerning the animals which were brought to the altar for sacrifice. They must be without blemish so far as their bodies were concerned.

In this, they typified Jesus Christ, Who was the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world.

In His spiritual nature, He was, as Peter speaks of Him -

**1 Peter 1:19** - .....*as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

And so, when He presents His people before the presence of His glory, they are going to be like Him, without blemish.

Paul declares this truth more than once.

**Colossians 1:21-22** - *And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*

*22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*

**Ephesians 5:25-27** - *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;*

*26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*

*27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Sometimes visitors are presented before royalty in other lands. The person who presents them is very careful that they shall be properly clothed for the occasion and trained in conduct, that the presentation may be without error.

The day is coming when Christian men and women are to be presented before the presence of the King eternal. Thank God, we have One Who is able to present us without blemish in that day.

But how can He do it?

**Romans 3:23** - *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Again and again we have fallen and stained our lives. How can He present us without blemish -

**Ephesians 5:27** - *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

The answer is found in His Word -

**1 John 1:7** - *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

**Revelation 7:14** - *And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

Christian men and women are to be presented before the presence of His glory without blemish, because they have been redeemed and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

There is a beautiful legend concerning Michelangelo, the great Italian painter. As he worked on a great painting, he became conscious of his inability to complete it as it should be. As he contemplated his work, he became discouraged, grew weary and fell asleep.

While he slept, an angel came, took the brush which had fallen from the hand of the sleeping artist and completed the picture. After a while, the painter awoke and took up his brush to finish his task.

When he lifted his eyes, he saw the picture in all its beauty -

painted fairer  
Far than any picture of his making,  
In the past, with tint and touch divine,  
And a light of God above it breaking.

When we look at our failures and sins, we feel discouraged and ready to give up in despair. But there is a divine hand at work in our lives, and, when we open our eyes in that other land, we shall find that He has wiped away all the stains and made us into His glorious likeness.

Jude says He will -

**Jude 24b** - .....*present* you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

“Exceeding joy!” Joy on the part of Whom?

It will be joy to God the Father to see men and women redeemed from their sins and presented before Him without blemish.

It will be joy in the heart of Jesus.

The author of **Hebrews**, in describing the work of Jesus says -

**Hebrews 12:2b** - .....*who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

What joy was that? No mortal knows the full answer to that question, but, surely, it will consist, in part, of presenting redeemed men and women -

**Jude 24** - ..... *present* you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

It will be joy among the angels who have been -

**Hebrews 1:14** - .....*ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

But the reference in the text is primarily to the joy of those who shall be presented -

**Jude 24** - .....*faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

It will be the joy of getting safe home at last. They have been pilgrims on earth. The way has been long and rough. They have grown tired and weary. Dangers have beset them on every hand. But now, the journey is over and they are safe home.

It will be the joy of being free from the presence and power of sin. Here on earth they have been beset by temptations. Every turn in life's pathway has brought them face to face with the evil one. Time and again they have fallen before his subtle power and their lives have been stained and soiled.

But now they are presented before the presence of His glory without blemish. Every stain has been removed. All sin has been left behind. Never again will they have to face the temptations of earth. They are forever free from the power of sin and from the presence of sin.

It will be the joy of seeing their loved ones again. They have seen the companions of earth come to the end of the way and disappear into the shadows of the valley. They have returned from the cemetery to homes that are desolate and shrouded in gloom. But, in that day, broken ties of earth will be knit together again, never more to be broken.

It will be the joy of David holding his baby boy in his arms again.

It will be the joy of fellowship with the saints.

As we read the stories of the patriarchs and saints of old, we find ourselves wishing that we might have seen them and heard them tell of their wonderful experiences. In that day we shall see them and know the joy of eternal fellowship with them.

It will be the joy of seeing their Lord. They have read again and again the story of His blessed life on earth. They have listened to the gospel story of His redeeming love. Their hearts have been stirred within them. They have experienced His presence and power in their lives. Again and again they have longed to see His face. One day that longing will be satisfied.

**Revelation 1:7** - *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*



**1 John 3:2** - *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

# ***THE GOSPEL OF PROVIDENTIAL GRACE***

## **STUDY 8**

**Scripture Portion: Romans 8:28**

**Romans 8:28** - *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

The grace of God grows richer and richer all along the Christian way. We have found that it is a grace that saves, a grace that sustains, a grace that not only lifts us up when we fall, but is also able to keep us from falling.

In this verse, Paul tells us it is a grace that lays hold of all the experiences of life and makes them channels of blessings for God's people. Surely there can be no greater promise than that.

Let us examine it.

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### **THE NATURE OF THE PROMISE.**

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**Romans 8:28** - *.....all things work together for good.....*

God does not promise that all things work together for the pleasure of His people. Nor does He promise that all things will work together to give His people the things they want. A great many times the things we want are not the things that are good for us. God Himself is to be the Judge of what is good.

He is interested, not in giving pleasure, but in building character. He is looking, not to the passing experiences of earth, but to the ultimate good.

The faithful father, in dealing with his child, does not give the child all the things he wants. He must act according to his wider experience and more mature wisdom. Sometimes the things he does may seem to the child far from good. But the father is thinking, not about the pleasures of the moment, but about the ultimate good of his child.

The true physician does not seek, first of all, to produce in his patient a pleasing sensation. Sometimes he must give bitter medicines. Sometimes he must make the pain even more severe. But he is looking to the ultimate good, the restoration of health and strength to the body.

God's promise is that -

**Romans 8:28** - .....*all things work together for good*.....

for His people. He is the faithful Father Who must decide on what is good for His children. He is the great Physician Who must be the Judge of what is good for those whom He treats.

We may not always understand it, but we must have faith to leave it to His wisdom.

My grandfather was a rather skillful worker in wood. I used to hear my father tell about standing by the bench and watching him as he worked on some delicate piece. As he cut here, and trimmed there, my father would say to himself, "My, he is going to ruin it!" But, after a while, he realized that it always came out right and he ceased to worry and left it in his father's care.

Our Father is the Master Workman in building lives and in shaping character. As we watch Him work, it sometimes seems to us that He is making a mistake. It isn't the way we would do it. But it always comes out right, so we will cease to worry and leave it in His hands.

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## **2. THE SCOPE OF THE PROMISE.**

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**Romans 8:28** - .....*all things work together for good*.....

We can readily see how *some* things work together for our good. But the promise reaches out and includes *all* the experiences of life. Sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, joy and sorrow, life and death - all work together for good to the children of God.

The apostle states the same truth in -

**1 Corinthians 3:21-23** - *Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; 22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

When Moses was recounting to the children of Israel some of the experiences through which they had passed, he reminded them of the time when Balak had sent for Balaam, that strange prophet from the east, that he might pronounce a curse upon Israel.

**Numbers 22:4b-6** - .....*And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.*

*5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide*

*over against me:*

*6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.*

Moses said -

**Deuteronomy 23:5** - *Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.*

God has a way of doing that for His people. He takes things that are intended for a curse and turns them into a blessing.

Paul asks a question in -

**Romans 8:35** - *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Then he answers the question in a shout of triumph -

**Romans 8:37** - *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

Paul is saying, “Our God not only gives us victory over the dark experiences of life, but He changes these experiences into channels of blessings.”

That does not mean that the people of God are to sit down and make no effort to change the evil things of life.

It does not honor God for His people to sit quietly by and say: “It is the Lord’s will. He will make it all work out good for us. There is an overruling providence that has charge of all these things.”

God will hold us responsible if we do not do all within our power to change evil conditions.

If certain conditions are causing sickness and death, it will not honor God for His people to stand by the open grave and piously say, “Thy will be done,” so long as they make no effort to change those conditions.

If certain conditions are bringing poverty and suffering, it will not honor God for His people to stand by and say -

**Romans 8:28** - .....*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

so long as they allow those conditions to go unchallenged.

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### 3. THE LIMITATION OF THE PROMISE.

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**Romans 8:28** - .....*to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

The promise is not that all things work together for good to all men. It is limited to them that love God and are called according to His purpose of grace. The human and divine sides of Christian experience are brought together here.

**Romans 8:28** - .....*to them that love God,.....*

That is the human side.

**Romans 8:28** - .....*to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

That is the divine side.

Perhaps the reverse order is more correct. God calls, man responds to that call with the faith and love of his heart. It is only to these people that the promise applies.

The inference might be drawn that all things work together for evil to those who are on the outside of the gracious purpose of God.

If all things are working together for good to them that love God, who knows but that all things are working together for evil to them that do not love God? We leave that with God.

But we do know that the only persons who are included in the promise that all things work together for good, are the people who love God.

That promise does not contain a single word of comfort for the person who has rejected God and spurned His love.

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### 4. THE EXPLANATION OF THE PROMISE.

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The next verse opens with the little word -

**Romans 8:29** - *For.....*

That means that what follows is given in explanation of that which has gone before.

**Romans 8:28-30** - *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

*29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

*30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Here we have the golden links in God's chain of redeeming grace. It is well for us to remember that God is not limited by time as we are. He is the great -

**Exodus 3:14** - *.....I AM THAT I AM:.....*

Moses, to whom God revealed Himself as the great "I Am", said -

**Psalms 90:4** - *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*

And Peter said -

**2 Peter 3:8** - *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

With God all time is one eternal now. His purpose of grace reaches back into an eternal past and is consummated in an eternal future.

Let us look at the golden links in this chain.

**Romans 8:29** - *For whom he did foreknow,.....*

This word carries with it more than mere knowledge beforehand. There is a vast difference between knowing about and knowing.

Foreknowing carries with it the idea of choice.

When Paul says that God foreknew some people, he means more than mere knowledge about them beforehand. He means that God set His mark upon them.

**Romans 8:29** - *.....he also did predestinate..... (or foreordain).*

Not only did He set His mark upon those who are to be His children, but He appointed beforehand, a special destiny for them. They were -

**Romans 8:29** - *.....to be conformed to the image of his Son.....*

**1 John 3:2** - *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

**Romans 8:30** - *.....them he also called:.....*

He had placed His mark upon them and had determined what their destiny should be. Then, when the time came, He issued His call to them. That means an effectual call, a call that is to be answered. Thus man enters into God's purpose of grace.

**Romans 8:30** - *.....them he also justified:.....*

To justify does not mean to make just, as the derivation of the word signifies, but to declare just. Before, the individual was under condemnation because of his sins. But Christ bore his sins for him so that, now, the believer stands before God justified and is treated as one who has not sinned.

**Romans 8:30** - *.....them he also glorified.*

While the verb is in the past tense representing it as a past transaction, this glorification points forward to the happy consummation of the Christian's experience in the life to come.

Thus we have the whole sweep of God's dealings with His people, reaching from an eternal past on into an eternal future.

It is like the sculptor walking among the stones that lie in the quarry. He selects one for his use and puts his mark upon it. He determines, as he marks it, what he will make out of it. He will fashion that stone into the image of an angel.

He goes on his way and completes the work he has on hand. Then he comes for the stone upon which he has set his mark and carries it to his studio.

He sets to work on it. The hammer and chisel are brought into use. The fragments of stone begin to fly. After a while the outline of an angel begins to appear. Day after day he works until the final stroke is made. Then he polishes it and sets it up - a perfect image of an angel.

This is a poor illustration of truths that are beyond human minds to grasp. God looked from eternity upon the children of men and chose those that were to be His and determined to make them into the image of His Son.

When the time comes, He calls them and saves them. Day after day He works out the image of Christ in them. At last, the work is finished and He sets them forth, glorified in the image of His Son.

Paul's argument is that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose, because it is all according to an eternal plan.

The experiences of life, some of which seem hard, are but the hammer strokes of God by which He is carving out the image of Christ in the lives of His people.

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### 3. THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROMISE.

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**Romans 8:28** - *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

There is the note of absolute certainty about it. Some people think there can be no certainty in the realm of religion; that the best we can do is to trust and hope. But Paul said there were some things that he knew and that every Christian may know.

The truth of this promise was one of them.

There has probably never been a man who suffered more trials and afflictions than the man who wrote the words of this text. Almost every conceivable form of suffering was his. It was not for a season and then rest and peace, but on and on to the end of the way. Yet, standing in the very thick of it all, he said -

**Romans 8:28** - *.....we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,.....*

But Paul, how do you know it?

1. He knew it from experience.

He had seen it work out in his own life. Experiences that had seemed dark and mysterious had turned out to be blessings.

He tells about one of these experiences written while he was in prison at Rome.

Many bitter experiences had led up to this imprisonment.

Yet, he wrote to his Philippian friends -

**Philippians 1:12** - *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;*

Then he told of the triumphs of the gospel there in Rome which had come through his imprisonment. Men had been saved in the very household of Caesar.



**Philippians 4:22** - *All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.*

Many have come to this feeling of certainty through experience.

When Jacob's sons returned from their second journey to Egypt in search of food and told their aged father that they would not be permitted to go to Egypt again unless they took their younger brother, Benjamin, with them, the old man's heart sank within him.

**Genesis 43:1-5** - *And the famine was sore in the land.*

*2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.*

*3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.*

*4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food:*

*5 But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.*

Joseph had disappeared years before and nothing had ever been heard from him.

**Genesis 42:36** - *.... Joseph is not.....,*

Simeon had been kept as a hostage in Egypt -

**Genesis 42:24** - *.....took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.*

Now, when they told him they could not return to Egypt unless Benjamin accompanied them, Jacob gave expression to the distress of his soul in these words -

**Genesis 42:36** - *.....Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.*

It was, indeed, a dark hour for the old man. It looked as if all things were working together for his distress. But, a little later, he found that all these things were working together for his good. Benjamin was safe, Simeon was released, and Joseph was alive and ruling over Egypt.

Soon the old man was on his way to Egypt to see his long lost son and to spend the rest of his days in peace and plenty.

2. He knew it by faith.

Paul, perhaps, went through life without understanding how some of his experiences were working good for him, but what he did not understand, he accepted by faith, faith in the character of God and faith in the promises of God.

Not until we stand on the other side, where -

**1 Corinthians 13:12** - *.....I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

will we understand how some of the experiences of earth were working together for our good.

So it is with the experiences of life for the child of God. When he views those experiences from the earthly side, they look dark and threatening and he flees from them in fear. But when he climbs to the heights of glory and sees those experiences in the light of God's love, they are transformed.

As Christian men and women stand on this side of God's great loom of life, and see the threads that go into the making of character and the molding of destiny, they notice that, while most of the threads are white, here and there are dark threads. They wonder why the dark threads are there.

Why aren't they all white? Why are not all the days bright days? Why are the dark days and the unhappy experiences mingled with the bright days and the happy experiences? The questions remain unanswered on earth.

But, in that day, when Christian men and women stand on the other side of life's loom they will see that God, in His infinite grace, has used the dark threads to weave flowers into the life on the other side.

Such is the promise of the gospel of providential grace.

With a promise like that, we will go on unafraid. We will press through the clouds and shadows to the sunlight on the other side.

# ***THE GOSPEL OF THE THRONE OF GRACE***

## **STUDY 9**

**Scripture Portion: Hebrews 4:16 (ASV)**

**Hebrews 4:16** - *Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need.*

The word 'throne' suggests royalty. A throne is the place where a king sits and reigns. It is the symbol of royal authority, and dignity, and power.

The throne about which the inspired writer is speaking in this verse is the throne of God, the place where God sits and reigns, the symbol of God's authority, and dignity, and power.

It is called -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *.....the throne of grace.....*

Other terms are used in the Bible to describe the throne of God.

**Psalm 89:14** - *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

**Psalm 47:8** - *God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.*

Christ spoke of it as -

**Matthew 25:31** - *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:*

Here it is spoken of as -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *.....the throne of grace.....*

the throne where grace is dispensed.

There would be little encouragement to men to come to a throne of justice and judgment. They would all stand condemned before that throne.

Neither would they be drawn to a throne of holiness. That would only convict them of their own sinfulness.

When Isaiah -

**Isaiah 6:1** - .....*saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

and heard the seraphim crying one to another, saying -

**Isaiah 6:3** - .....*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*

he cried out in his distress, -

**Isaiah 6:5** - .....*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

A mere throne of glory would not attract men. They would stand off in wonder and awe. But when the writer speaks of -

**Hebrews 4:16** - .....*the throne of grace.....*

the throne where divine love reigns and where divine grace is dispensed, hope and assurance rise in the hearts even of sinful men.

Some interpret 'the throne of grace' as referring to the mercy seat above the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish temple. To that mercy seat -

**Hebrews 9:7** - .....*went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:*

Perhaps the author did have that in mind when he wrote about the throne of grace.

When Christ died on the cross, the veil of the Temple which shut off the Holy of Holies was -

**Matthew 27:51** - .....*rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

thus signifying that the way into the presence of God was open to all men and was no longer confined to the high priest; was open all the time and not just once a year.

Whatever symbolism may have been in the mind of the writer, the throne of grace evidently refers to the very presence of God. Access to the throne of grace means access into the very presence of God.

Let us look at the words of the text. Three truths stand out.

**Hebrews 4:16** - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may*

*obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

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#### 4. THE CALL TO PRAYER.

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We are thinking of prayer in the larger sense of fellowship with God. Unfortunately, we have come to associate prayer almost entirely with asking God for something, but true prayer is fellowship with God.

We are exhorted to -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *.....come boldly unto the throne of grace,.....*

Not many people are permitted to draw near to the throne of an earthly ruler. That is a privilege that belongs to a favored few.

The vast majority must stand off in the distance. The way that leads up close to the throne is closed to them.

But all people, regardless of their station in life, are invited to draw near unto the throne of God, to come into closest fellowship with Him.

Sometimes we think of God as being far away. We picture Him as sitting on a throne far off in the distant heavens, too far away for us to have fellowship with Him.

In his message to the Athenians, Paul described the nature of the true God. He said -

**Acts 17:27b-28** - *.....he be not far from every one of us:  
28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being;.....*

That is the glorious message of the gospel.

Finite men may draw near to an infinite God. Sinful men may have fellowship with a holy God. We do not have to stand off in the distance and cry unto Him.

Not only are we invited to come to the throne of grace, but we are urged to come boldly.

**Hebrews 4:16** - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,.....*

Certainly, as some seem to think, this does not mean to rush into God's presence with rude familiarity. Reverence must ever characterize one's approach to God.

What does it mean to draw near to the throne of grace with boldness?

It means to come without slavish fear.

God does not want men to come trembling into His presence as if He were some monster waiting to inflict punishment upon them. His throne is a throne of grace, a throne of love.

The story is told of an emperor who counted his clemency disparaged when anyone delivered a petition to him with shaking hand, as if he doubted his favor.

So God would have men come boldly to His throne of grace.

It means to come with faith and confidence.

When Queen Esther started into the presence of king Ahasuerus, it was with a feeling of doubt and fear. She said -

**Esther 4:16** - *Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.*

She didn't know what the outcome would be.

But the Christian has no doubts as he approaches the throne of grace. The golden scepter is always extended to him. He has the promise of God which cannot fail.

**James 1:5-7** - *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

*6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

*7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

If any of you lack anything, ask of God, nothing doubting.

**c. *It means to come often into His presence.***

If we have gone to a friend for a favor and that favor has been granted, we hesitate to go back for more. But, in our approach to God, there is to be no such hesitation. We may come many times a day.

**James 1:5** - *.....God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;.....*

The literal translations is, "*Does not cast it into your teeth.*"

He does not say, "I bestowed one favor upon you and now you are back for more." He invites men to come as often as they will.

3. It means to come at any time.

God has no office hours.

When we wish to see some great man, we have to wait until an appointed time. Or, we may have to wait because someone else is ahead of us.

But, in our approach to the throne of grace, the way is always open. We may come day or night. And - we are not crowded out because someone else is there.

God will receive all who come.

This is the call to prayer -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *.....that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

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## 5. THE BENEFITS OF PRAYER.

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Who can name all the benefits of prayer? Who can count all the blessings that may be received at the throne of grace?

Dr. A. C. Dixon once said, “When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do. When we rely upon education, we get what education can do. When we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. When we rely upon money, we get what money can do.

“Nor am I disposed to undervalue any of these things in their proper place. But, when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do!”

One day, after Kagawa had spoken to a crowd, various questions were put to him. Presently a young man said, “Tell me, won’t you, what is the secret of your life?”

Kagawa did not hesitate in his answer, and that answer was one word, “Prayer!”

That word gives the explanation of many great lives.

The author of **Hebrews** sums up the benefits of prayer in this brief statement -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *.....that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

How much is included in those two brief statements!

Dr. Maclaren says, “The one expresses the heart of God, the other expresses the hand of God.”

When the sinner comes to the throne of grace, God opens His great heart and bestows His

mercy upon him.

When the suppliant comes to the throne in his helplessness, God opens His bountiful hand and supplies all his needs.

Here, then, are the two benefits of prayer.

1. "That we may receive mercy."

The only hope of sinful men lies in the mercy of God. We rejoice in having a God Who is just. Never will any man be treated with injustice when he approaches God.

But it is not justice that sinful man needs, it is mercy. God's mercy never fails.

Many descriptive words are found in the Bible setting forth the quality of divine mercy.

It is described as being -

great -

**Numbers 14:18** - *The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy,.....*

**Psalms 145:8** - *The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.*

**Luke 1:58** - *.....Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.*

rich -

**Ephesians 2:4** - *But God, who is rich in mercy,.....*

manifold -

**1 Peter 4:10** - *..... as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

plenteous -

**Psalms 86:5** - *For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*

**Psalms 86:15** - *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.*

**Psalms 103:8** - *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*

abundant -



**1 Peter 1:3** - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

sure -

**Isaiah 55:3** - *.....even the sure mercies of David.*

**Acts 13:34** - *.....the sure mercies of David.*

everlasting -

**Psalms 100:5** - *For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting;.....*

tender -

**Luke 1:78** - *Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,*

**James 5:11** - *.....the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

We have a God whose nature it is to pardon. When one comes to His throne of grace with that age-old cry on his lips -

**Luke 18:13** - *.....God be merciful to me a sinner.*

he is never turned away.

**Psalms 103:10-11** - *He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

*11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*

It was the mercy of God that sent Jesus Christ to earth. It was the mercy of God that led Jesus to the cross where He laid down His life as a ransom for sin.

It was the mercy of God that gave the Holy Spirit to the world. That mercy of God is still manifested to the children of men.

It is the mercy of God that spares those who have sinned against Him. It is the mercy of God that opens the door of salvation to penitent and believing souls.

It is the mercy of God that underlies all His dealings with His people.

2. That we “may find grace to help in time of need.”

Dr. Robertson suggests, “Well timed help” or “Help in the nick of time”.

The grace to help us does not come until the need for that help arises.

Often we feel weak as we think of the coming of some trying experience and do not see how we can pass through it. But when the experience comes, we find grace to help us.

Many people have looked forward with a feeling of dread to the time of death, but when death has come, they have faced it with a smile.

All of us are needy creatures. We have physical needs. We have spiritual needs. Conscious of our helplessness in the face of these needs, we come to the throne of grace. We never come in vain. We find that great promise to be true -

**Philippians 4:19** - *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

He doesn't promise to give us all the things we want, but all the things that He, in His wisdom and love, knows we have need of.

That does not mean that we are not to do all within our own power to supply our needs. God never encourages laziness.

**2 Thessalonians 3:10** - *.....that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

He has not promised to do for men that which He has made possible for them to do for themselves. When they have reached the limits of their resources and turn in their helplessness to God, He supplies their needs.

The church had done its best, and had failed. Then, in their helplessness, they went to the throne of grace and found the help they needed.

God has a way of meeting the needs of men in some such way as that.

When human means are not at hand, God meets the needs of His people directly. Out in the wilderness He sent bread from heaven to feed the hungry multitudes of Israel. He is not limited in His means in meeting the needs of those who come to His throne of grace.

What are your needs today? Come to the throne of grace and have those needs satisfied.

Do you need forgiveness for sin? Do you need comfort in sorrow? Do you need guidance in facing the problems ahead?

Do you need help in bearing the burdens that rest upon you?  
Whatever may be the need -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

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6. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAY.

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**Hebrews 4:16** - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,.....*

'Therefore' points back to the preceding verses, especially -

**Hebrews 4:15** - *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

Therefore, since we have One like that to plead our cause at the right hand of God -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,.....*

The High Priest is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He that opened the way to the throne of grace for us. He said of Himself -

**John 14:6** - *.....I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Sin had separated between God and man and had barred the way to the throne of grace. Jesus Christ offered Himself a sacrifice for sin and thus opened up the way for men to return to God.

It is He that makes possible the benefits when we come to the throne of grace. He sits at the right hand of God to plead our cause and to make intercession for us.

**Romans 8:34** - *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

We have nothing to commend us to God when we come to the throne of grace. There is much in our lives to condemn us. But our great High Priest is there to intercede for us and to secure for us the blessings we need.

There are many things that fit Christ to be an effectual High Priest.

1. His relation to the Father.

He is the only begotten Son of God, the eternal Son of God. He shared with the Father all the glory of the past. He joined with the Father in the creation of the world and in the plan of redemption. He came to the world in obedience to the Father and wrought out the way of salvation. He fulfilled the Father's will then went back to take His place at the Father's right hand.

Because of His relation to the Father, He is an effectual High Priest.

***b. His relation to man.***

He came to earth and took on a body of flesh thus identifying Himself with man. He entered into the experiences of men. He was tempted in all points like as we are.

**Hebrews 4:15** - *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

He knew human suffering and death.

Because of these experiences of earth, He is -

**Hebrews 4:15** - *.....touched with the feeling of our infirmities;.....*

and is fitted to be our High Priest.

3. His sinless character.

**Hebrews 4:15** - *.....was in all points tempted like as we are, yet **without sin.***

He was faced with temptations on all sides, yet He never yielded to temptation. He Who had come from the Father spotless and clean, returned to the Father without a stain. If He had committed one sin, He could not stand for us at the right hand of God.

But, because He is without sin, He can be an effectual High Priest for us.

***d. His atoning sacrifice.***

In the Old Testament dispensation, when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies to appear before God for the people, he carried the blood of the animal which had been sacrificed for the sins of the people.

That was only a symbol and type of Christ, the great High Priest.

The author of **Hebrews** reminds us -

**Hebrews 10:4** - *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

But Christ, when He had gone to the cross -

**Hebrews 10:12** - *.....offered one sacrifice for sins for ever,.....*

**Hebrews 9:12** - *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Because of His sacrifice for us, He can stand before the throne of grace as our High Priest and make it possible for us to -

**Hebrews 4:16** - *.....obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

**Hebrews 4:16** - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,.....*

There is nothing to fear so long as our great High Priest is there to plad our cause for us.

There is no blessing too great to ask for.

The unlimited resources of God are open to us.

# ***THE GOSPEL OF ENABLING GRACE***

## **STUDY 10**

**Scripture Portion: Philippians 4:13 (ASV)**

**Philippians 4:13 (ASV)** - *I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.*

Paul had been telling his Philippian friends that he had learned a very important lesson.

**Philippians 4:11** - *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

Whether he had little or much, he was content with his lot. He had Christ and that was riches enough.

As he thought of how Christ had given him this victory over earthly conditions, he gave expression to this full assurance of Christian omnipotence -

**Philippians 4:13** - *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Perhaps a more literal translation would be, “*With respect to all things, I am strong in Christ Who empowers me.*”

Someone is ready to say, “This was Paul, the great apostle of Christ. He could say that because he had had such wonderful experiences with Christ, but such omnipotence is not for me.”

God never offered anything to Paul in the way of spiritual power that He does not offer to any and all Christians. The most humble child of God can say -

**Philippians 4:13** - *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Three things are suggested concerning this Christian omnipotence.

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### **THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN OMNIPOTENCE.**

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**Philippians 4:13** - *.....through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

That same word which is here translated *strengthen* is translated *enabled* in -

**1 Timothy 1:12** - *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me,.....*

In that passage, the verb is in the aorist tense pointing back to a definite experience when Christ had poured His power into him.

In this text, the verb is in the present tense denoting continued action. *“I can do all things in Him that continues to pour His power into me.”*

In His last discourse to His disciples in the upper room, Jesus said -

**John 15:5** - .....*without me ye can do nothing.*

There is Christian impotence. Leave Christ out and the Christian is helpless, his efforts are in vain.

Whatever may be our talents and however strong our organization, without Christ we can accomplish nothing.

In the long ago, God reminded us of our dependence upon Him.

**Zechariah 4:6** - .....*Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The Christian ought to do all within his power to increase his talents and develop his resources, but it will be a sad day for him when he comes to depend on these instead of on Christ.

The church must perfect its organizations and make use of all of its means, but it will fail miserably if it tries to make these a substitute for the power of Christ.

An engine in a wonderful piece of machinery. Yet, it may have every part in place, every cylinder oiled and still be a helpless mass of iron and steel.

But, when the fires are kindled in its box, and the steam throbs in its boiler, the engine becomes a mighty power as it races down the track at sixty miles an hour, pulling a long train of cars behind it.

The windmill has been a useful servant of man. Yet, it may be perfect in its mechanism and still stand helpless in its place.

But, when the winds of heaven sweep through its wings, it draws the water from the well to satisfy the thirst of man and beast.

The church has been a mighty agency for good in the world. Yet, it may have its organizations in every detail, have both man and wealth, and still be impotent in the face of an evil world.

But, when the fire of God is kindled in its heart, and the winds of heaven sweep across it, it becomes a mighty force for tearing down the strongholds of sin and building up the

kingdom of God on earth.

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## **2. THE SCOPE OF CHRISTIAN OMNIPOTENCE.**

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**Philippians 4:13** - *I can do all things.....*

*“In respect to all things, I am strong.”*

Paul had been telling his friends how he had learned the lesson of contentment. Now he says, “Not only that, but I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.”

There was no possible experience for which Paul did not feel himself adequate in the strength which Christ was giving him, in the power which Christ was constantly pouring into him.

Of course, Paul was speaking of all things that were in the line of Christian duty and within the will of God for his life. In all things that God wanted him to do, he was omnipotent.

Let us notice some of the things Paul could do through Christ which strengthened him, things that all Christians can do.

He could perform any service.

It mattered not how hard or impossible the task seemed to be, if it was the thing God wanted him to do, he could do it through Christ Who was pouring His power into him.

When Goliath, the Philistine giant, came forth and defied the armies of Israel, the men of Israel shrank back in fear and said, “There is not a man among us who can face that giant!”

**1 Samuel 17:10-11** - *And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.*

*11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.*

But one day a ruddy-faced lad came in from the fields and said, “I will go to meet this proud boaster.”

**1 Samuel 17:32** - *And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.*

His brothers ridiculed him, the soldiers of Israel laughed at him, king Saul warned him and told him he could not hope to win a victory over such a mighty foe.



**1 Samuel 17:33** - *And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.*

But David answered -

**1 Samuel 17:34-37** - *And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:*

*35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.*

*36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.*

*37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.*

It was in that spirit he went forth and, in a little while, the mighty giant lay dead in the dust.

**1 Samuel 17:50** - *So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.*

Years ago, a company of Christian missionaries were on a vessel going out to preach the gospel in one of the dark lands of the earth. One day the captain of the ship said to the leader of this band, "Do you think you can convert these heathen people?"

"No," was the reply. "We cannot convert them, but God can do it through us."

How marvelous have been the triumphs of the gospel as men and women have dared to go forth in the power of the living Christ!

He could overcome temptation.

Sometimes we think of men like Paul as having been above temptation. But, if our Lord-

**Hebrews 4:15** - *.....was in all points tempted like as we are,.....*

we may be sure that Paul had his temptations.

In **Romans, chapter 7**, he tells about his conflict with sin. He closes with a shout of victory -

**Romans 7:24, 25** - *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

*25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.....*

There was victory through Christ Who was pouring His power into him.

Through Christ's strengthening power, there is victory over temptation for all Christians.

He could face persecutions and endure sufferings.

The story of Paul's life as an apostle of Christ is a story of persecution and suffering. Read his own account of the things he had to face as recorded in **2 Corinthians, chapter 11**. Never did he complain or give way to despair.

It was while he lay in the Philippian jail, his back aching from the stripes he had received, his feet made fast in the stocks, that he and Silas sang songs of praise.

**Acts 16:22-25** - *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.*

*23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:*

*24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.*

*25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

It was from his Roman prison that he sent forth the triumphant message to his Philippian friends -

**Philippians 4:4** - *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*

As we follow this servant of God in his life of suffering, we are ready to say: "Paul, how can you stand it? Aren't you sometimes ready to give up in despair?"

Back comes the answer -

**Philippians 4:13** - *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

He could meet death with a shout of victory.

Death is described as being an enemy of mankind. In his description of the final victory of Christ, Paul says -

**1 Corinthians 15:25-26** - *For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*

*26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

In Christ, Paul faced that enemy unafraid.

**1 Corinthians 15:55-57** - *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

*56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

*57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In his last message to his son in the gospel, Timothy, he said -

**2 Timothy 4:7-8** - *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

*8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

*"I am strong to meet death in Him that strengtheneth me."*

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### 3. THE CALL OF CHRISTIAN OMNIPOTENCE.

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Our faith is sometimes so weak and small. It falters in the face of life's experiences. It seldom reaches beyond the realm of things that seem to be humanly possible. That is not faith, it is sight.

One thing that characterized the faith of men of old was the belief that their God could do the impossible things.

When God promised to do for Abraham a seemingly impossible thing, Abraham believed that God could, and would, do it.

**Romans 4:19-21** - *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*

*20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

*21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

Why shouldn't any Christian have a faith like that?

A thrilling story comes from one of the military campaigns of Napoleon. In 1799, one of his generals, with eighteen thousand men, appeared on the heights above a little town in Austria. Resistance seemed useless and there was talk of surrender.

The old dean of the church stood up and said, "It is Easter Day. We have been reckoning on our strength, and that has failed. It is the day of the Lord's resurrection. Let us ring the bells and have service as usual and leave the matter in God's hands. We know only our weaknesses, and not the power of God."

The bells rang and the French soldiers hearing the sound, thought an Austrian army had arrived, so they turned and fled.

#### *a. A call to Christian humility.*

When Paul said -

**Philippians 4:13** - *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

where did he place the emphasis? If he had placed it on “**P**”, then this would have been the declaration of pride. “**I** can do all things.”

But Paul always lost himself in Christ. “I can do all things **through Christ**.” That is the confession of a humble servant of Christ.

**Galatians 2:20** - *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Not I, but Christ! There is no place for pride in the Christian life.

It is by the grace of God that a Christian is what he is.

It is by the grace of God that he is able to accomplish anything.

It is by the grace of God that he is saved.

It is by the power of God that he serves.

Since our ability is through Christ Who pours His power into us, there is no room for pride or boasting.

Two women were one day discussing the life and work of J. Hudson Taylor. They wondered whether he was ever tempted to be proud. Finally they decided to ask Mrs. Taylor. She did not know but offered to ask her husband.

She said to him, “Two ladies have been discussing whether you are ever tempted to be proud. Are you?”

“What about?” he asked.

“Oh, about the things you have done,” she said.

Mr. Taylor seemed to be greatly surprised and said, “I never knew that I had done anything.”

And he hadn’t, but Christ had done a great deal through him.

## 2. A call to Christian activity.

There is much work to be done in this sin-cursed world and Jesus Christ is depending upon His people to do it. He points to a lost world and says -

**Matthew 28:19** - *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

He points to a war-torn world and says, Go and show men a better way. Lead them to -

**Isaiah 2:4** - *.....and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

He points to a world of selfishness, greed, prejudice and hate, and says, “Go and teach men a more excellent way, the way of love and service.”

Sometimes the church stands before this mighty task and hesitates. It is too big for the church’s limited power. And so it is. But it is not too big for the power of Christ.

He Who bids us go, promises His presence and power. All things are possible to the church, when it goes forth girded with the power of the living Christ.

“Lead on, O King eternal, and we will follow.”

***c. A call to Christian courage.***

The enemies of Christ in the world are strong and determined. They will stop short of nothing to maintain and increase their power. They did not hesitate to nail the Son of God to the cross. Certainly, they will not hesitate to persecute and destroy His followers.

Jesus reminded His disciples of that when He said -

**John 15:20** - *.....If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;.....*

But of whom are we to be afraid when we have the power of the living Christ?

**Romans 8:31** - *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

When Henry Martyn, the frail missionary of Christ, stood before a high Mohammedan official and was threatened with death if he refused to recite the Moslem creed, “God is God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God,” the brave soldier of the Lord replied, “God is God, and Jesus Christ is His Son.”

When John Bunyan, who had been imprisoned for many years because of his loyalty to Christ and His gospel, was promised his freedom if he would promise to preach no more, he replied, "If I were released today, I would preach again tomorrow, so help me God."

The highest form of courage is moral courage - courage to stand for a great cause, courage to face opposition and ridicule.

Several years ago the following statement appeared in an editorial in a great metropolitan newspaper -

"Millions of people are doing things today, not because they want to, not because they feel more comfortable, not because it makes them healthier or happier, but because they lack the nerve to go contrary to the crowd."

In these uncertain and trying days, may God give His church and His people courage - that courage born of the assurance that there is an Arm stretched out, a mighty Arm that is stronger than all the forces of this world.

In the strength of that Arm, we will go on to victory.

# ***THE GOSPEL OF SACRIFICIAL GRACE***

## **STUDY 11**

**Scripture Portion: 2 Corinthians 8:9**

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

This great verse is found in the heart of Paul's appeal for a worthy offering from the church at Corinth. In his effort to arouse a spirit of liberality and sacrificial giving among them, he pointed to the liberality of the Macedonian churches -

**2 Corinthians 8:1-3** - *Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;*

*2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

*3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;*

And so forth.

That was a worthy example of sacrificial giving, but it was not the highest example. That was to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

In this verse, we have **THE GOSPEL OF SACRIFICIAL GRACE** set forth in the redemptive work of Christ.

Here, as in all his writings, Paul declares that salvation is all of grace -

**2 Corinthians 8:9** - *For ye know the **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ,.....*

It was not anything in man meriting divine favor that brought Jesus Christ from heaven to earth. God was under no obligation to provide a way of salvation for a race that had turned from Him to sin.

It was love in the heart of God that sent Christ to earth -

**John 3:16** - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

It was love in the heart of Christ that brought Him to earth -

**Galatians 2:20** - *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

The text reveals the marvelous working of that divine grace -

**2 Corinthians 8:9** - *.....though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor,.....*

A companion passage to this is found in -

**Philippians 2:5-8** - *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:  
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:  
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:  
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

The words of the text proclaim three glorious truths.

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#### 4. THE PAST RICHES OF CHRIST.

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**2 Corinthians 8:9** - *.....though he was rich,.....*

That points back to His high estate before the incarnation. To think of the story of Christ as beginning with His birth in Bethlehem is to miss an essential part of it. That birth had meaning only because of what lay behind it. Christ lived with the Father and shared the glory of the Father before He came to earth.

Many verses of scripture could be quoted in confirmation of this truth. The words of Jesus Himself are sufficient. To the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, He said -

**John 8:58** - *.....Before Abraham was, I am.*

In His intercessory prayer, He said -

**John 17:5** - *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

It is just as great a mistake to begin the story of Jesus with His birth as it is to close it with His death and burial.

Paul's declaration here is that, in that glorious existence before His birth, Jesus Christ was rich. Of what did those riches consist?



Any effort to answer that question staggers the imagination. Words fail when one tries to describe the eternal riches of Christ. A few statements suggesting something of the nature of those riches may be made.

He was rich in possessions.

The whole universe was His for He created it.

**Colossians 1:16** - *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

Who can measure that vast storehouse of riches?

The story is told of a man who, in the pride of his possessions, took a friend to the top of his spacious house and, pointing in all directions as far as eye could see, said, "All that is mine." And yet, it was but one little spot on the surface of the earth.

Jesus Christ, standing on the heights of glory and pointing to all the vast universe with its myriads of worlds, could say, "All that is Mine."

He was rich in possessions.

He was rich in Person.

John says in -

**John 1:1** - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

The author of **Hebrews** uses this language in describing His person -

**Hebrews 1:3** - *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,....*

Paul says in -

**Colossians 1:19** - *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*

Such language as that can mean but one thing - 'the essential and eternal deity of Jesus Christ'.

**The Sunday School Times** tells about an argument between a Christian and a Unitarian concerning the deity of Christ.

The Unitarian, who was a man of considerable intellectual ability, seemed to be getting the best of the discussion.

A Dutch farmer, who had been listening, said to the Unitarian, “Do you believe the Bible?”

“Yes,” was the reply.

“Then do you believe the verse which says -

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

“Certainly,” was the reply.

“Then when was the Lord Jesus rich?” asked the farmer. “The story of His poverty the world knows. When was He rich?”

There could be but one answer to that question - He was rich in His eternal estate with the Father.

**c. He was rich in position.**

**Philippians 2:6** - *.....to be equal with God:*

Jesus spoke of His glory In His prayer of -

**John 17:5** - *.....the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

He shared all the glory of the Father. He sat upon the throne of the universe and all things were subject unto Him. The great love of the Father was bestowed upon Him and angels bowed in submission before Him.

3. He was rich in power.

After what has been said, little can be added in amplifying this statement. Creative power was His. Reigning power was His for dominions, principalities and powers were subject to Him -

**Colossians 1:16-17** - *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:  
17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

These brief statements can only suggest something of the vast riches of Christ in His glorious existence before He came to earth.

People are filled with wonder as they think of the vast riches of some men who have succeeded in accumulating a few million dollars. But what wonder stirs the heart of man as he tries to understand the riches of the eternal Christ.

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5. THE VOLUNTARY POVERTY OF CHRIST.

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**2 Corinthians 8:9** - .....*he became poor,.....*

It was not poverty that was thrust upon Him by the hand of another. It was a voluntary act on His part. He -

**Philippians 2:5-8** - *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

*6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

*7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

No being in heaven, earth or hell could take His riches from Him. He became poor of His own choice.

In what way did Jesus become poor? Of course, there were some things in His riches that He could not entirely give up. He could not give up the sinlessness of His character, nor the love and compassion of His heart. He could not lay aside His deity.

Just as it is impossible for human minds to grasp all that is embraced in the riches of Christ, so is it impossible to understand all that is meant by His having become poor. His poverty, in some measure, was the reverse of His riches.

1. He became poor in possessions.

Jesus had no earthly possessions. He summed it up in these words -

**Matthew 8:20** - .....*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

When He walked on earth, Jesus was a poor man. He might have become the world's richest man, if that had been His desire. He voluntarily took His place with the poor people of earth.

He was born in a borrowed stable -

**Luke 2:7** - *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

He preached from a borrowed boat -

**Luke 5:3** - *And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's,.....*

He rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey -

**Matthew 21:2-3** - .....*Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.*

*3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.*

He ate His last Passover with His disciples in a borrowed room -

**Mark 14:13-14** - *And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.*

*14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?*

and was finally laid to rest in a borrowed grave -

**John 19:41** - *Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.*

Some poet whose name I do not know, has described the poverty of Christ in these lines

-

*They borrowed a bed to lay His head when  
Christ the Lord came down.  
They borrowed the ass in the mountain pass  
For Him to ride to town.  
But the crown that He wore  
And the cross that He bore were His own.*

*He borrowed the bread when the crowd He fed  
On the grassy mountain side.  
He borrowed the dish of broken fish  
With which He satisfied.  
But the crown that He wore and the cross that He bore  
Were His own.*

*He borrowed the ship in which to sit  
To talk to the multitude.  
He borrowed the nest in which to rest -  
He had never a home so crude.  
But the crown that He wore and the cross that He bore  
Were His own.*

*He borrowed a room on His way to the tomb,  
The Passover lamb to eat.  
They borrowed a cave for Him a grave;  
They borrowed a winding sheet.  
But the crown that He wore and the cross that He bore  
Were His own.*

*The thorns on His head were worn in my stead;  
For me the Savior died.  
For the guilt of my sin, the nails drove in,  
When Him they crucified,  
Though the crown that He wore and the cross that He bore  
Were His own.*

The meaning, as expressed in the words of the last two lines of these stanzas, is not in accord with the facts. In a sense, the cross He bore was a borrowed cross. It was His own only because He chose to bear it for others.

In a very real sense, it was my cross, and your cross, that He bore.

2. He become poor in Person.

**Philippians 2:8** - *.....he humbled himself,.....*

Volumes have been written in an effort to explain the meaning of these words. Certainly the words cannot mean that Christ emptied Himself of His deity. He was still the Son of God. But He clothed His deity for a time in a body of flesh, "a state of being in which the attributes of divinity were necessarily restricted in their exercise".

The eternal Son of God became a Man, voluntarily taking upon Himself the limitations and weaknesses of a human body.

Lightfoot says, "He stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty."

He Who existed in the form of God, came to earth and -

**Philippians 2:7** - *.....took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

How poor in person was the tired and hungry Man of Galilee -

**John 4:6** - *.....Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey,.....*

the sorrowing Man of Gethsemane -

**Matthew 26:37** - *.....began to be sorrowful and very heavy.*  
the dying Man of the cross -

**Mark 15:34** - *.....My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

in comparison with the eternal Christ Who had lived and reigned on high!

He became poor in Person.

***c. He became poor in position.***

He Who had ruled in heaven, He Who had been a Prince -

**Philippians 2:7** - .....*took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

He Who had received the ministry of angels-

**John 13:4-5** - .....*took a towel, and girded himself.*  
*5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

He Who had received the petitions of men -

**Matthew 26:39** - .....*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

and became a suppliant before the Father's throne.

He Who had held the scepter of the universe in His hand, was -

**Matthew 27:26** - .....*when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

He Who had worn the diadem of heaven was -

**Matthew 27:29** - *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head,.....*

He Who was the Prince of life hung upon a cross and died -

**Luke 23:46** - .....*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*

**Philippians 2:8** - *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

From the throne of heaven to the cross of Calvary He stooped.

He Who was loved of the Father was despised by men -

**Isaiah 53:3** - .....*He is despised and rejected of men;.....*

He Who had known the fellowship of angels was crucified between two thieves -

**Mark 15:27** - *And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the*

*other on his left.*

He Who had known sweet communion with His Father, cried out -

**Matthew 27:46** - *.....My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

He became poor in position.

4. He became poor in power.

This also, was a part of His self-emptying. In becoming poor, He voluntarily limited His power. He became a helpless Babe in a woman's arms, with all the weaknesses of a little child. He was carried in the arms of another.

He grew and developed as did other children.

**Luke 2:52** - *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*

When He became a man, He felt the pangs of hunger -

**Matthew 21:18** - *Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.*

He grew tired and weary in body -

**John 4:6** - *.....Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.*

While tradition tells of miracles performed by Jesus in the days of His childhood, there is no foundation for such stories.

Jesus never performed a miracle until after the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism.

**John 2:11** - *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.*

In the house of Cornelius, Peter said -

**Acts 10:37-38** - *That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;*

*38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

Jesus wrought in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, He yielded Himself to the will of His enemies, and died upon the cross. He Who had created the universe, lay dead in a tomb.

It was only after He had come forth from the grave, victorious over death, that He stood before His disciples and said -

**Matthew 28:18** - *.....All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.....*

Jesus, the Lord of the universe, became poor.

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## 6. THE GRACIOUS PURPOSE OF CHRIST.

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**2 Corinthians 8:9** - *.....yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

Paul was writing to people who had never known Christ in the flesh. Some of them had been born since Christ's death on the cross. And yet, Paul says -

**2 Corinthians 8:9** - *.....yet for your sakes he became poor,.....*

Christ had them in mind when He came to earth -

**Luke 19:10** - *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

And that is the blessed truth which we, who have been born many centuries after Christ, can claim for ourselves. It was for our sakes that He became poor.

He had us in mind when He came to earth and went to the cross.

**2 Corinthians 8:9** - *.....that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

Not rich in silver and gold that perish, but rich in the things that cannot be taken away.



Paul rejoiced in the fact that he had been -

**Ephesians 3:8** - *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

He was thinking not only of the riches that are in Christ, but the riches which Christ offers to men. What are those riches?

Again the imagination falters and words fail. Who can describe the unsearchable riches that Christ gives to those who trust Him?

1. The riches of salvation.

A man's riches consist of the things that are worth most to him. The dictionary gives, as one of the definitions of riches, "Abundance of that which is esteemed precious or valuable".

There are some things that make a man infinitely more rich than silver and gold, for there are some things infinitely more valuable to him.

Christ asked the question, which carries its own answer with it.

**Mark 8:36** - *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

Certainly, salvation is a part of the riches which come through Christ. It is -

**Matthew 13:46** - *....a pearl of great price,*

It is more valuable than all other things combined.

Put it to a practical test. Ask any Christian how much he would take for his hope in Christ. He may have grown cold, his interest may have waned, he may have fallen into doubts, but I can hear his answer to that question, -

"All the world could not buy my hope in Christ."

Ask the unbeliever, who has never accepted God's great gift in Christ, how much he would take for the hope he has that one day he will become a partaker of that salvation. Not many would be willing to sell it at any price.

These riches of salvation are offered to all through Jesus Christ. They may be had for the asking.

**Romans 6:23** - *.....the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

It cost God a great price to make salvation possible for a sinful world. It cost Him the blood of His own Son. But He offers pardon and peace to men -

**Isaiah 55:1** - *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

**John 3:16** - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Leave sin behind and come to Jesus Christ Who became -

**2 Corinthians 8:9** - *.....though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

2. The riches of life.

Everything that goes into the making of a great life is to be found in Christ. Listen to the promise in -

**Philippians 4:19** - *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

All that one needs in molding a noble Christian character and living a useful life is found in Christ.

Many times Christian men and women live in spiritual poverty while God is offering them spiritual riches through Christ.

The **Associated Press**, a few years ago, carried the story of the death of an eighty-year-old woman. She had been found dead in a Brooklyn tenement, surrounded by poverty. Neighbors said she had spent money sparingly.

When the police took charge, they found a purse containing a small fortune. The entire estate of the dead woman was estimated to be worth more than a half-million dollars.

She was living in poverty when she might have had all the comforts that money could buy.

Many Christians are living in spiritual poverty while untold riches are within their reach. They are living in defeat when, in Christ, they might have victory.

They are living in despair when, in Christ, they might have hope and courage.

They are living in sorrow and gloom when, in Christ, they might have comfort

They are living in doubt when, in Christ, they might have assurance and peace.

3. Riches of glory.

In his description of the Eternal City, John uses figures of speech that suggest unlimited riches.

**Revelation 21:18-21** - *And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.*

*19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;*

*20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.*

*21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

Streets of gold, walls of jasper, gates of pearl!

What we get in Christ here on earth is but a foretaste of the riches in glory. But those riches are not material. They are the riches of the fulness of salvation, the riches of eternal fellowship with the hosts of heaven.

Sometime ago the papers carried the story of a man who had been brought to the gutter through strong drink. One night, in a tramp's mission, he was converted. He went forth with the joy of the Lord in his heart and the hope of heaven in his soul.

The next morning, he boarded a car. When the conductor came to him, he noticed his shabby clothes, but he saw a strange light in his face.

He said to him, "Why, man, you look as if someone had died and left you a fortune."

"You are right," came the quick reply. "Jesus Christ has died for me and has given me His riches in glory."

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

# ***THE GOSPEL OF GLORIFYING GRACE***

## **STUDY 12**

**Scripture Portion: 1 Peter 1:13**

**1 Peter 1:13** - *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

(ASV) - *Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

The verse opens with the familiar word *wherefore* which means that what the apostle is about to say is based on what he had just said. What has gone before furnished the reason for what follows.

In the preceding verses, Peter has been talking about the salvation that has come through Jesus Christ.

**1 Peter 1:10-12** - *Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:*

*11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

*12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

The prophets of old, while they prophesied concerning this salvation, did not fully understand it and searched diligently that they might get some conception of the blessings they foretold.

Even the angels of heaven desired to look into these glorious things and were not permitted to do so.

But, the Christians of Peter's day, and of all future generations, had the unspeakable privilege of experiencing that salvation.

Wherefore, in view of this unspeakable privilege, Peter urges Christian people to live up to -

**Philippians 3:14** - *.....the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

He exhorts them to do three things.

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7. Gird up the loins of their minds.

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**1 Peter 1:13** - .....*gird up the loins of your mind*,.....

That is a figure of speech based on a familiar custom of the day.

The people wore long, flowing robes. When they were about to do something that called for the free use of the limbs, they girded their robes about their loins.

When one started on a journey, or prepared for battle, or entered a race, or began any work, he girded his robes about his waist.

The night in which the children of Israel ate the Passover in Egypt and prepared to start out on their journey to the land of Canaan, they were commanded -

**Exodus 12:11** - .....*eat it; with your loins girded*,.....

Following his victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah -

**1 Kings 18:46** - .....*girded up his loins, and ran*.....

Peter calls on the Christians to whom he writes to -

**1 Peter 1:13** - .....*gird up the loins of your mind*,.....

They have a journey to make, a warfare to wage, a race to run and a work to do. In preparation for it, they are to -

**1 Peter 1:13** - .....*gird up the loins of your mind*,.....

In his exhortation to the Ephesian Christians to -

**Ephesians 6:11** - *Put on the whole armour of God*,.....

Paul says -

**Ephesians 6:14** - *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth*,.....

Dr. F. B. Meyer, in his comments on this passage, says, “Our souls are clad with the flowing robes of various appetites, tastes, affections and propensities, which hang loosely around us, constantly catching in the things of the world and hindering us in the Christian race. We must gird up the habits of our souls.”

All the powers of the inner man must be held in readiness. All the thoughts and feelings must be brought under control.

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8. BE SOBER.

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**1 Peter 1:13** - .....*be sober*,.....

There is a difference of opinion among commentators as to whether the qualifying adverb 'perfectly' belongs to this or to the following verb.

Are Christian exhorted to be 'perfectly sober' or to 'hope perfectly'?

Dr. Alexander Maclaren has an impressive sermon on "Hope Perfectly", which he interprets to mean "Hope with certainty, and hope continually".

But it seems to me that the adverb naturally belongs to this exhortation to soberness. "Be perfectly sober."

When we speak of one as being sober, we usually mean that he is not under the influence of strong drink, or that he is grave and serious in his manner. The word which Peter uses carries the idea of self-control.

The sober man is the one who, by the grace of God, is master of himself, controlling all the forces of his being.

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**3. SET THEIR HOPE ON THE GRACE THAT IS TO BROUGHT UNTO THEM AT THE COMING OF CHRIST.**

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This is the heart of Peter's exhortation.

The other verbs are participles, preparing the way for the imperative call to an unfaltering hope.

**1 Peter 1:13** - *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

It is interesting to notice some of the various translations of this verse.

American Standard - *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, and with perfect calmness fix your hopes on the mercy that you are to experience when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

Weymouth - *Therefore prepare your minds, and fix your hopes calmly and unfalteringly upon the boon that is soon to be yours at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Moffatt - *Brace up your minds, then, keep cool, and put your hope for good and all in the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

The object of this certain and unfaltering hope is the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. The verb is in the present tense and is literally translated, "is being brought to you".

In the Christian life, as Christ reveals Himself more and more, there is a constant and continuous unfolding of grace.

Peter closes his second epistle with these words -

**2 Peter 3:18** - *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

It is the privilege of the Christian to have an ever widening vision of Jesus Christ and to enter more fully into the blessings of His grace. But the glorious culmination of it all will be experienced in the return of Christ to this earth.

Nowhere in the New Testament is there to be found an uncertain note concerning the fact of Christ's return.

There is much uncertainty about the time of His return, but none at all about the fact of His return.

He promised His disciples that He would come again and exhorted them to live in readiness. He used the same figure of speech which Peter used -

**Luke 12:35-36** - *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;  
36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord,.....*

On the day of Christ's ascension, angels came and announced to His disciples that He would come back to earth.

**Acts 1:11** - *.....Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

The disciples preached the return of the Lord.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16** - *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:.....*

The Bible closes with the assurance of the living Lord that He was coming again.

**Revelation 22:20** - .....*Surely I come quickly.....*

*There are three words in the New Testament to designate the second coming of Christ.*

(1) ***Parousia.***

The literal meaning of this word is 'presence'. It carries with it the idea of 'presence after absence'. It is used concerning men.

**1 Corinthians 16:17** -*I am glad of the coming (parousia) of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus:....*

They had been absent and now they had returned.

In like manner, Jesus Christ, Who is now absent in person, will some day return. Hence, His second coming is spoken of as His **parousia**. This is the word which Jesus used in His discourse concerning His return to earth as recorded in -

**Matthew 24:27** - .....*so shall also the coming (parousia) of the Son of man be.*

(2) ***Epiphaneia.***

This word means 'appearance' or 'manifestation'.

Thayer says the word was often used by the Greeks to designate a glorious manifestation of the gods, especially of their coming to help.

In the New Testament, the word is used of both the first and second coming of Christ. His first coming was an appearing.

Paul, in talking about God's eternal purpose of grace, says -

**2 Timothy 1:10** - *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ,...*

But the word is used more especially concerning the second coming of our Lord.

**1 Timothy 6:14** - *That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

(3) ***Apokalupsis.***

The literal meaning is 'an uncovering' or 'a revealing'.



Sometimes we have the unveiling of a statue or a picture of some notable person. A veil is draped over it so that no one can see it. Then, when all is in readiness, someone pulls back the veil and the statue or picture is revealed to all.

Christ Jesus is now behind the veil. No one can see Him. But the day is coming when the veil will be drawn back and every eye shall see Him!

This is the word which Peter uses when he exhorts Christians to set their hope on the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It will be the culmination and consummation of all grace, the full inheritance of the saints of God.

That is the glorious object of our hope, a grace that glorifies.

The grace which we experience now is but a foretaste of the grace which shall be revealed at the coming of our Lord.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!*

What are the contents of that glorifying grace?

A full answer to that question will have to await the coming of Christ. Finite minds cannot grasp these eternal things. Human language cannot describe them. But the Word of God has revealed some things about them.

1. A glorified body.

When we take the dead body of a Christian and lay it to rest in the bosom of the earth, it decomposes and goes back to the dust whence it came. But that is not the end of it.

When Christ returns, the dead in Christ shall be raised and the living Christians shall be changed.

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52** - *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,  
52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

The body will be raised, but it will be a changed body, a glorified body, suited for the redeemed spirit.

Paul describes it in this language -

**1 Corinthians 15:42-44** - *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:*

*43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:*

*44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

That is the first blessing in that glorifying grace - a glorified body.

2. A glorious victory.

There will be victory over sin and over all the curse of sin. When Christ comes, the power of the devil will be forever broken. God's people will be freed from the very presence of sin and from all the brokenness that sin has produced in this world.

**Revelation 21:4** - *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

3. A glorious likeness.

**1 John 3:2** - *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

*3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

**Philippians 3:20-21** - *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

*21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

That is a part of the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. We shall be made into His likeness. We shall be like Him in body and we shall be like Him in character.

Dr. Lyman Abbott, in a sermon on **1 John 3:2**, said, "Of all scripture promises, the one that stretches my faith most is this: to think that poor, sinful, fallen man can become like Christ - that we who are unholy, impure, selfish, can become like Christ, holy, pure, unselfish, is beyond human comprehension."

"The how of it I cannot fathom. The fact of it I accept as one of the blessed promises connected with the Saviour's coming.

4. A glorious fellowship.

One of the first things a Christian thinks about in connection with life in the world to come is the privilege of seeing his loved ones again.

The assurance which brought comfort to David's heart as he looked into the face of his dead child, has eased the pain in many hearts in the presence of death.

**2 Samuel 12:23** - *But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

Heaven is a place where broken ties of earth will be knit together again.

But there is a larger fellowship than that - fellowship with all the saints. Heaven is the Father's house and all the great family of God will be gathered there.

In his vision on the Isle of Patmos, John saw -

**Revelation 7:9** - *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

What a blessed fellowship is that!

But there is something even better than that - fellowship with our Lord.

**Revelation 21:3** - *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

Jesus said to His disciples -

**John 14:2-3** - *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.  
3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

One Sunday evening, a Christian family sat together talking about heaven. Each one was giving his idea of what heaven is like.

"I don't believe I have any ideas about heaven except as a vision of beauty - the golden streets and gates of pearl and all that," said one.

"My delightful prospect is of knowing everything," said an eager student.

"Oh, but to think of loving everybody and having everybody love you," cried another.  
"And no separation," said one whose black dress spoke of recent sorrow.

“Ah, children,” said the grandmother, “if you had lived as long as I have, you would be rejoicing over the negatives of heaven - no pain, no sickness, no sorrow, no disappointments.

Then, an innocent little girl said, “My heaven is a place where I can do no wrong.”

Last of all, a little six-year-old lassie came and put her elbows on her father’s knee, looked up into his face and said, “And Jesus will be there.”

“What is heaven?” I asked a little child.  
“All joy!” and in her innocence she smiled.

I asked the aged man, with care oppressed.  
“All suffering o’er, oh, heaven at last is rest.”

I asked a maiden meek and tender-eyed.  
“It must be love,” she modestly replied.

I asked the artist who adored his art.  
“Heaven is beauty!” spoke his raptured heart.

I asked the poet with his soul afire.  
“‘Tis glory - glory!” and he struck his lyre.

I asked the Christian, waiting her release.  
A halo round her, low she murmured, “Peace.”

So all may look with hopeful eyes above -  
“‘Tis beauty, glory, joy, rest, peace and love.

*e. A glorious service.*

I am glad that John, as he described the glories of the Eternal City, said -

**Revelation 22:3** - .....*his servants shall serve him:*

Toil that tires the body and grinds the spirit will be no more, but glorified service will be the privilege and joy of all.

The night before Dr. Ray Petty died, his physician, who was also his close friend, and his wife were talking with him.

He asked the physician if death was near.

When his friend told him he did not have much longer to live, his face lighted up with a smile and he said -

“I am soon going to be with mother and brother, and, when I get there, I am going to salute and say , ‘Lord, I am ready for the next job’.”

Life on the other side means promotion to a larger service.

All these things, and much more, belong to the grace which is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. No wonder His coming is spoken of as -

**Titus 2:13** - .....*that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*

*He is coming, oh my spirit,  
With His everlasting peace,  
With His blessedness, immortal and complete.*

*He is coming, oh my spirit,  
And His coming brings release.  
I listen for the coming of His feet.*

# ***MAKING VOID THE GRACE OF GOD***

## **STUDY 13**

**Scripture Portion: Galatians 2:21**

**Galatians 2:21** - .....*do not frustrate the grace of God:.....*

(ASV) - .....*do not make void the grace of God.....*

Paul preached the gospel of salvation by grace.

There were men in his day who preached a different gospel. Some turned entirely away from grace and declared that salvation came through keeping the law.

Others tried to unite grace and works, making salvation depend partly on grace and partly on the works of the law.

It was this latter group which gave Paul so much trouble. They followed him wherever he went, telling his converts they could not be saved unless they observed the Jewish law.

This group was so successful in its ministry among the churches of Galatia that these churches were about to forsake the gospel which Paul had preached to them and return to Judaism.

Paul wrote this letter to re-establish them in the Christian faith.

In **Galatians 2**, Paul tells of a controversy he had with Peter in the church at Antioch, which was made up largely of Gentile Christians.

It was while Paul and Barnabas were ministering in that church, Peter came and spent some time with them.

At first, he entered into the work wholeheartedly, laying aside his Jewish prejudices and having fellowship with the Gentile Christians.

But, when certain men came to Antioch from Jerusalem, Peter immediately separated himself from the Gentiles and assumed his old Jewish attitude toward them. Other Jews in the church, including Barnabas, were influenced by his example.

Paul stood up and -

**Galatians 2:11** - .....*withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

He reminded Peter that people were saved by the grace of God and -

**Galatians 2:16** - *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

In the words of the text, Paul sets forth his position -

**Galatians 2:21** - *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

The orthodox Jew claimed that salvation depended entirely on keeping the law. Some of the Jews who had embraced Christianity believed that people were saved, partly through faith in Christ, and partly by keeping the law.

Paul's contention was that both were wrong. To make salvation depend, in whole or in part, on keeping the law was to make void the grace of God.

**Galatians 2:21** - *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

That is the subject before us, "Making Void the Grace of God". It is a timely subject for many today are making void the grace of God.

Several aspects of the subject are to be considered.

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## 9. SOME WAYS IN WHICH THE GRACE OF GOD IS MADE VOID.

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I mention three.

By looking to other things for salvation.

When men turn from the grace of God in Christ Jesus and set their hopes of salvation on something else, they are making void the grace of God.

### (1) *Some make salvation depend on character.*

For the most part, these are people who deny the deity of Christ and the efficacy of the atonement. According to their belief, a person is saved because he is good. They seem to forget that Word of God which says -

**Romans 3:10** - *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

If salvation were to be secured by being good, a person would have to be wholly good.

Even one sin would mar his hopes for the Word of God says -

**James 2:10** - *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

Certainly, good character is not to be despised, but it does not furnish a sure hope of salvation.

(2) ***Others depend on good works for salvation.***

They think they are saved because they are kind, compassionate and liberal. Such a belief is based on a denial of the Word of God which declares -

**Galatians 2:16** - *.....by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

**Ephesians 2:8-9** - *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

*9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

(3) ***Still others tie up salvation with church membership and the observance of the ordinances.***

They do not entirely deny salvation by grace, but they are not satisfied to trust to grace alone. It is grace plus religious rites and ceremonies; grace plus baptism; grace plus the Lord's Supper; grace plus church membership; grace plus Christian activity.

(4) ***And still others make salvation a matter of education and training.***

Even in some evangelical denominations there are those who teach that an experience of regeneration is not necessary for a child which is reared and trained in a Christian home.

According to them, the child is already in the kingdom of God and, if he is properly trained, he will never get out of the kingdom.

Several years ago, a visiting speaker was addressing a group of Christian workers, representing several evangelical denominations. In the course of his address, he proceeded to set forth the doctrine mentioned above, that if a child is properly trained, he will never need to be converted.

A godly Lutheran pastor spoke up and said, "My brother, my Bible does not so teach me. It declares -

**John 3:6** - *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*



**John 3:7** - .....*Ye must be born again.*

**John 3:3** - .....*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

To this, some of the rest of us gave a hearty “Amen!”

Any teaching that makes salvation depend, in whole or in part, on anything but the grace of God, makes void the grace of God.

By doubts and unbeliefs.

Some make void the grace of God in salvation by doubting the truth of God’s Word and refusing to believe His promises. God says in His Word -

**Acts 16:31** - .....*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

Every person who has ever tried it will testify that God keeps His word. No one has ever put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and been disappointed.

**John 6:37** - .....*him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

This is the promise of Christ.

Some make void the grace of God in Christian experience by their doubts and unbelief. The living Christ says to Christian men and women in their trials and sufferings -

**2 Corinthians 12:9** - .....*My grace is sufficient for thee:.....*

But many make void that sustaining grace of Christ by refusing to take Him at His word. God promises -

**Romans 8:28** - *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

Many Christians miss the blessings and make void the grace of God by yielding to their fears and doubting the promise. Paul said -

**Philippians 4:13** - *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

So can any Christian if he will look to Christ for strength.

But many flounder in defeat and make void the grace of God by refusing to believe the promise.

*c. By sin and worldliness.*

The grace of God cannot operate in saving a man from his sins so long as he holds on to his sins.

**Luke 13:3** - .....*except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

This is a solemn warning of Jesus. The person who turns away from Christ and holds on to his sins, makes void the grace of God so far as his salvation is concerned.

Christian men and women make void the working of divine grace in their lives, in the fulness of its power, when they follow a sinful and worldly manner of life. The grace of God cannot operate in its fulness in a life that is not yielded to Him.

Why are not more Christians living the victorious life? It is not because the grace of God is not sufficient for them, but because they make void that grace by their unworthy manner of life.

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10. SOME REASONS WHY THE GRACE OF GOD IS MADE VOID.

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5. Ignorance.

The grace of God cannot operate in its saving efficacy and power so long as men and women are ignorant of the divine plan of salvation and the divine purpose in the Christian life.

There are many people living within the sound of the gospel, who make void the grace of God in their own lives by their ignorance of the Word of God and the plan of salvation.

For those who nailed Him to the cross, Jesus prayed -

**Luke 23:34** - .....*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.....*

In his sermon at the temple gate, Peter accused the people of having -

**Acts 3:15** - .....*killed the Prince of life,.....*

But he added -

**Acts 3:17** - *And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.*

And Paul said -

**1 Corinthians 2:8** - *Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

These people lived in the very presence of Jesus, but the grace of God was made void in their lives because of their ignorance.

There are those who live in our midst, many of whom attend our Sunday schools and worship services, in whose lives the grace of God is made void because of ignorance.

Who is responsible for this ignorance?

Of course, the individual himself is largely responsible. But perhaps some of the responsibility rests on us who teach and preach because we have not made plain the divine plan of salvation, have not been faithful in telling the story.

In non-Christian lands, there are millions in whose lives the grace of God is made void through ignorance. They do not know, they have never heard.

Certainly, we Christians cannot dodge our responsibility here. Those millions have never heard because we have not obeyed the command of our Lord to send them the gospel message.

**Romans 10:14** - *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

#### 6. Prejudice.

This was the great barrier to the grace of God in the lives of the Jews in the time of Jesus and of Paul. They had a deep-seated prejudice against all who were outside the Jewish fold.

They were not willing to admit that anyone could be saved without becoming a Jew. They refused to give up the religious rites and customs of their fathers and accept salvation as the free gift of God in Christ.

Who will say that prejudice - religious prejudice, racial prejudice, class prejudice - does not have a part in making void the grace of God in the lives of many today? We are loath to admit that -

**Galatians 3:28** - *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

In Carl Ewald's book **My Little Son**, there is a revealing story. The little son had come home one evening, boasting of the part he had taken in mistreating a Jewish boy who had come into the circle of his friends.

The father told the lad something about the Jewish people and their noble history. He told him about the patriarchs, the prophets, and about Jesus. Then he took the boy and went out into the darkness to search for that Jewish boy that they might tell him how sorry they were for the treatment of the afternoon.

They did not find him but the lad learned a lesson he would not soon forget. Later in the evening, as the boy lay on his bed, restless and unable to sleep, the mother said, "I fear our boy is ill."

The father replied, "Do not worry, Mother. I know what is ailing him. I have just inoculated him against the meanest disease in the universe."

**c. *Pride.***

This is one of the fundamental reasons why people make void the grace of God in their lives. They are not willing to humble themselves before God and pray -

**Luke 18:13** - .....*God be merciful to me a sinner.*

In their pride of achievement, men are not willing to accept salvation as a free gift of God. In their pride of spirit, they are not willing to bow as penitents before God's throne of grace.

One day a woman from a refined home went to hear George Whitefield preach. She listened in great disgust to his sermon and turned away in a rage, saying, "It is perfectly intolerable that ladies like me should be spoken to just like a creature from the streets."

That is the trouble with many. It is intolerable that they should lay aside their pride and bow humbly before the cross and confess their sins.

One of Bunyan's inimitable characters is "Mr. Loath-To-Stoop". Mr. Loath-To-Stoop was a very stiff and proper gentlemen, quite ready to accompany King Emmanuel so long as he received treatment in keeping with his dignity and standing.

He would gladly join the pilgrimage provided he would not be called on to do any stooping. Such an unbecoming attitude could not be expected of one of his standing. He would be willing to distribute alms and would consider the offer of salvation at a reasonable price.

But, when he was told that he could be saved only by bending the back and bowing the knee, and humbling himself as a poor sinner before God, he was greatly disturbed. That was too much to expect of one so upright as he. According to an old legend, one of the kings who took part in the Crusades succeeded

in taking the true cross of Christ from the pagans. He brought the cross back to Jerusalem with great pomp and splendor, only to find the gates of the city closed against him.

Before the closed gate stood an angel who said, "Thou hast brought the cross with great pride and power. He that died on it had shame for His companion and carried it on His back."

Then the king dismounted, stripped off his robes, laid the cross on his shoulder and walked forward barefooted. When he came in that spirit, the gates opened to him.

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11. A SOLEMN TRUTH CONCERNING MAKING VOID THE GRACE OF GOD.

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**Galatians 2:21** - *.....if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

If salvation were possible through keeping the law, then the death of Christ was unnecessary. If there is any other way of salvation, except through the atoning death of Christ, then God made a mistake in sending His Son.

And that is what Paul was saying in the words of -

**Galatians 2:21** - *.....if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

If salvation can be secured in some other way, then Calvary was a useless sacrifice and God made a great mistake.

A beautiful story is told of Bishop Kavanagh. One day, as he was walking along the road, a prominent physician came along in his carriage and offered him a ride. The physician was a scoffing unbeliever. The conversation turned to the subject of religion.

The physician said to his companion, "I am surprised that such an intelligent man as you are, should believe such an old fable as that salvation is possible through someone who was crucified 1900 years ago."

The good bishop replied, "Doctor, suppose years ago someone had recommended to you a prescription for pulmonary consumption and you had procured the prescription and had taken it according to directions, and had been cured of that terrible disease, what would you say of the man who would not try your prescription?"

"I would say he was a fool," replied the doctor.

Then Bishop Kavanagh said, “Twenty-five years ago, I tried the power of the grace of God. It made a different man of me. All these years I have preached salvation by grace, and, wherever accepted, I have never know it to fail.”

**Galatians 2:21** - .....*do not frustrate the grace of God*:.....