



HIS GRACE OUR FAITH

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HIS GRACE – OUR FAITH

From the beginning with the creation of Adam to the final coming of Jesus, there has always been grace and law from God, and faith in response to God. Grace does not eliminate law, neither does law nullify grace. If man would walk with God, he must walk according to law (God's instructions). Since we cannot walk perfectly, then we must have faith in the grace of God. The subject of grace is no more complex than that.

The problem with the subject of grace develops out of our desire to do our own thing, which means in our religious behavior, we want to construct our own means of religious behavior by which we would please God and save ourselves. The Jews were masters at this practice. Because they honored the law of God, they established a host of other laws surrounding God's law in order to guarantee that the law of God was obeyed. By the time Jesus arrived, their religiosity had become so absurd that they rejected the law of God in order to keep their self-imposed rules and regulations.

The Holy Spirit was redundant to keep this legal religiosity of man-made statues out of the fellowship of God's people. Galatians was the first document written to blast the practice of binding where God had not bound. The Spirit came back with Romans a few years later in order to give a detailed document to explain the relationship between grace and law. And now we have submitted our own document, not to add to the Spirit's simple explanation, but to discuss what we consider to be the core of Christianity. We will make no apologies about approaching the subject from different directions. The subject of grace is so rewarding that we cannot say too much about this indescribable work of God in loving us.

INTRODUCTION

The revelation of God's grace separates Christianity from all religions of the world. While the adherents of man-made religions seek favor from their gods through meritorious conduct, the Christian enjoys, through faith, a God who has offered His grace to all who would seek to come into His presence for eternity. God offers His grace, but His offer must be accepted by those who yearn for His presence. He asks that we accept His of-

fer for eternal dwelling through a faith that responds to His work of grace on the cross of His Son. This act of grace makes Christianity unique from all religions of the world.

Our reaction to meritorious systems of man's religions has often distorted our own understanding of our salvation by grace through faith. Reaction to meritorious religiosity has led many to misunderstand something that is actually not

that difficult to understand. But because of our desires to live according to our own religious dictates, we are often tempted to practice and preach “another gospel” that is contrary to the grace that was revealed at the cross through the sacrificial offering of the incarnate Son of God.

It is not difficult to understand the simplicity of our salvation by the grace of God. From the creation of man to the culmination of humanity at the final coming of Jesus, God’s offer of salvation from mortality through grace has always been offered to fallen man. He stands as a just and fair Creator because He has always offered a way of escape from the confines of our mortality. Before the cross of Christ, those of faith waited in hope of the grace that would be revealed. After the cross, we are moved by revealed grace to offer up ourselves with the One who offered Himself for us.

Deliverance from our sin problem

has always been by grace through faith. There is no other means by which mortal man can possibly be saved from the confines of his mortality. Because of our own fallibility, our only chance at eternal life is by the grace of God. Because there is no possible way to obey perfectly any system of law from God, or to meritoriously atone for one sin through good works, salvation will always be by God’s grace. Subtract our obedient faith from the picture, and there can never be any reception of the free gift of grace. If we devise some theology of faith without obedience, then we eliminate any conditions that God places on those who would accept His grace. It is through the obedience of faith that we have access into God’s wonderful grace, wherein we stand and have confidence of our salvation. So through faith we thank “*God for His indescribable gift*” (2 Co 9:15).

Chapter 1

Grace: The Misunderstood Simplicity

Grace is the love of God who reached out to His creation through the cross. He reached out through the cross of His incarnate Son. If we delete the cross, there is no grace. If we ignore Jesus, there is no grace. Jesus Christ as the crucified Servant of God is the very illustration of God’s grace toward man. In all the discussions throughout history concerning grace, men seem to have had great difficulty in understanding the revelation and demonstration of God’s grace through the cross. But if we obediently

respond with faith in the crucified and resurrected Son, then we are on our way to understanding the motivating power of grace and faith.

In his struggle against the sale of indulgences that was practiced by the Roman church, Martin Luther struggled to harmonize grace and works as they were revealed through Paul and James. He had such difficulty with any concept of obedience of faith in his reaction to the sale of indulgences, that he referred to the book of James as “an epistle of straw,”

for it promoted works. He obsessed over justification by faith alone to the point that he misunderstood Paul's writings on grace and sought to ignore the principle of obedient works taught by James. In his reaction to Roman Catholic priest selling the right to sin, Luther went to the extreme of teaching that faith eliminated all works in reference to one's salvation.

Paul's emphasis on grace was certainly intended by the Holy Spirit. In his life before the waters of baptism in Damascus, Paul was breathing murderous threats against the church (At 9:1). But after his cleansing by the grace of God in the waters of baptism (At 22:16), who else would be the obvious choice to reveal the wonderful grace of God? If grace could save the chief of sinners, then it can save anyone. But in his teaching on grace, Paul did not become antinomian as many writers have, that is, he did not teach that grace covers the sin of the saint to the point that it does not make any difference what one believes or how he behaves. Paul always maintained an inseparable connection between grace and obedience. He always taught that obedience was a manifestation of faith, not a meritorious effort to justify one's self in response to the cross.

Augustine promoted one of the most interesting concepts of grace. He believed that all men were born totally depraved, and thus, unable to respond to God. He believed that it was not within the ability of any man to make a free-moral choice to respond to the call of God through His grace. Salvation, therefore, could only come as a result of God mak-

ing individual choices as to who would be given unmerited grace and who would not. Augustine taught that one does not merit the ability to choose, but we do exercise the ability to work.

John Calvin promoted the teaching that the grace of God was limited only to those whom God had chosen for eternal life. It was limited only to those whom God unconditionally elected. Calvin believed that before the world was created, God individually elected those who would be saved for eternal dwelling. And since God has already elected those who will go to heaven, then His grace is limited only to these individuals. Calvin's teaching means that God's grace is not a part of the universal call of God to all men whom He wishes would come to repentance. In fact, Calvin's teaching nullifies the great commission and the preaching of the gospel to the world in order that all men approach God with a penitent heart. Those of this belief contend that it is only the responsibility of the evangelist to inform the individually elected in the world that they are already saved. Their gospel (good news) is only an announcement of salvation, not a call to repentance through the preaching of the cross.

Opposite to the teaching of Calvin is the doctrine of universalism. The universalist contends that grace is unconditionally appropriated to all men, and thus all men will be saved. Salvation, therefore, is by grace alone, apart from any conditions that God would require on the part of any individual.

Another unfortunate misunderstanding-

ing concerning this subject is how people have failed to define the word “gospel” in the context of its New Testament usage. We have studied through many documents where this word is erroneously used to refer to law. When a particular preacher would say, “We must obey the gospel,” what he is actually saying is that we must obey the law of God. But this understanding is totally contrary to the gospel itself as it is defined in the New Testament. The fact that one would use the word “gospel,” as it is used in the New Testament, to mean law, **is a denial of the gospel itself.**

Immediately after Jesus returned from His fast in the wilderness, He “*came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God*” (Mk 1:14). Does this mean He started preaching the law of God? Is the gospel just another system of law to be obeyed? We think not.

The word “gospel” was used by translators to translate the Greek word *euaggelion*. This word simply means “good news.” But if the word “gospel” means law, then, as we will see in the remaining chapters, it would not be good news. Paul told Peter that because they could not be justified by law, they ran to Christ (Gl 2:16). Did they run from the Old Testament law to another system of law? In view of the early Jewish Christians’ attempt to be delivered from law, and thus, sin and death, why would the Holy Spirit supposedly use a word that would refer to another system of law under which one would again be brought into bondage because it too could not be obeyed perfectly? In other words, in 2

Thessalonians 1:6-9 Paul revealed that Jesus was coming from heaven to destroy from the presence of God all those who have not obeyed the gospel. Did he mean that those who had not obeyed every point of law would lose their souls? Did he infer, therefore, that the gospel, if it is law, must be obeyed perfectly in order for one not to suffer destruction from the presence of the Lord?

When Jesus began His ministry, He stated the good news (gospel) that He had arrived and was going to the cross as an act of grace on the part of God. Little by little He taught the people about the cross of grace, though His first disciples did not understand the good news (gospel) of the cross until after the event. As Paul explained briefly in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, the gospel was the revelation of Jesus’ death for our sins and His resurrection for our hope. **This was an act of grace on the part of God, not law.** This was the grace of God revealed at the cross. Obedience to the gospel does not refer to obedience to another system of law whereby one would seek to justify himself before God. Obedience to the gospel is joining with Jesus on the cross, in the tomb, and in His resurrection (See Rm 6:3-6). Our obedience to the gospel is a response to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross over two thousand years ago (Ti 2:11). That Jesus died there for our sins is the “truth of the gospel” (See Cl 1:5; Gl 2:5,14). So hereafter when we speak of “obedience to the gospel,” we are not referring to obedience to another system of law, but to baptism in response to the grace of God revealed

through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus

Somewhere between the extremes and misunderstandings concerning grace, there must be a simple understanding of God's grace that is so important and central to Christian faith. We would not for a moment believe that which is so important concerning our salvation would be so difficult to understand. Because some have developed their own theologies on grace out of a reaction to legal religiosity, we must caution ourselves in coming to the New Testament in study of this sub-

ject. We must guard our objectivity by allowing the word of God to speak for itself. We dare not call ourselves after the theology of any particular man. We must assume that understanding the grace of God is not difficult simply because God wants us to be assured of our salvation. Grace should bring comfort, not theological confusion. We must assume, therefore, that the Holy Spirit's teaching on the subject is so simple that even the novice student of the Bible can understand the truth of the matter.

Chapter 2

The Grace Of God

The Greek word for grace is *charis*. It is a word that is used in various ways in the New Testament. *"And the Child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the **grace** of God was upon Him"* (Lk 2:40). *"Now Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in **favor** [charis] with God and man"* (Lk 2:52). *"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the **grace** [favor] of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia"* (2 Co 8:1). *"And when I come, whomever you may approve by letters, these will I send to carry your **gift** [charis] to Jerusalem"* (1 Co 16:3). The word *charis* always carries with it the meaning of "favor," "unmerited favor," or "unmerited gift." In the context of our salvation, it is God's unmerited favor that He extends to us, which favor is accessed by our obedient faith.

The use of the word "grace" is de-

finied in the actions of the Gentile Christians in Macedonia who sent their "grace" contribution to the Jewish famine victims of Judea. The Gentile brothers had every reason to resent the Jews. The Jews had historically been arrogant toward the "pagan" Gentiles. However, when both Jews and Gentiles came together in Christ, love prevailed and favor (grace) was poured out on the Jewish brothers in their time of need. This is grace. In our time of need, God let love and grace prevail.

John wrote of grace as an historical event. *"For the [Old Testament law] was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"* (Jn 1:17). Though the grace of God has always existed, John's emphasis was on **the revelation of grace through the sacrificial offering of Jesus on the cross**. This is what Paul explained in Titus 2:11. *"For*

the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Grace is God's gift to man that appeared through Jesus Christ.

It was the event of the appearing of the grace of God that was prophesied by the prophets. "Of this salvation [by grace], Peter wrote, "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, **who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify ...**" (1 Pt 1:10,11).

Grace refers to the lovingkindness of God toward man that was prophesied by the prophets and revealed through the event of the cross. It is God's unmerited gift that He extends to man in order to bring man into His fellowship. It is His steadfast love towards His creation. Under the Old Testament law grace was revealed in God's steadfast patience with His people in their rebellious walk away from Him. Though the greater portion of Israel went into apostasy, there was always the remnant of faith who remained committed to God. God's lovingkindness continued with this remnant of faithful people to the time when a personal revelation of grace was made known through Jesus. However, we must not make the mistake of thinking that the grace of God has not always existed from the beginning when the first free-moral individual was created. It was only revealed in the advent of Jesus on the cross, though God from the beginning of time has always worked with those of faith through grace.

Under the New Testament covenant, we speak of grace as an event in history.

This was Paul's point in the statement of Titus 2:11. The cross was the revelation of the grace of God. It was the revelation of the favor that God has always had for those who walked by faith. It is thus "the gift of God" (Ep 2:8). It is as Paul explained in Romans 5:15: "But the free gift is not as the offense. For if by the offense of one many died, **much more the grace of God and the gift by grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.**" Jesus was the event of God's grace toward man. He is God's free gift of grace for the salvation of all those of all history who came and would come to Him through obedient faith.

The necessity of God's grace was revealed because of the total inability of man to deliver himself from his own predicament of sin. Sin moved man so far away from God, that God had to come all the way from heaven to the cross in order to reconcile man unto Himself (See Ph 2:5-11). The event of God's grace on the cross is magnified by the impossibility of man to reconcile himself unto God through either law keeping or meritorious works. All have sinned (Rm 3:23). All have been unable to keep law perfectly, and thus all men are lawbreakers (1 Jn 3:4). We are lawbreakers to the point of being in bondage to our own sin (Rm 7:7-20). Before contacting the blood of the crucified Son, we were all sinners by nature, and thus lost in sin (Ep 2:1-3). But in a state of hopelessness in a world of sin, God intervened with the event of the cross (Ep 2:12).

The only possible way for man to be delivered from his state of sin was that

God had to give freely the gift of grace through Jesus Christ. God came to man through Jesus in order that we might become the righteousness of God through grace. *“For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin on behalf of us, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Co 5:21). Jesus was the revelation of the grace of God. Through Jesus, God opened the heavenly door in order that we might truly see the opportunity of entering the presence of God (See Rm 3:21-26; 5:12-21).

The glory of grace is that it was revealed through the event of the cross without our expectation, for we were all by nature the children of wrath, and thus, dead in our sins. *“But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rm 5:8). The event of the cross was a surprise to those who knew that they were lost in sin. Though the disciples were expecting an earthly king who would redeem them from foreign occupation (At 1:6), the purpose for which Jesus came was to redeem humanity from sin. The disciples’ deliverance was not from earthly powers, but from the spiritual powers of darkness. When the resurrected Jesus talked with the two men on the road to Emmaus, *“their eyes were restrained so that they would not know Him”* (Lk 24:16). Without recognizing who Jesus was, they spoke with Him of *“things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”* (Lk 24:19). But they said nothing concerning the salvational event of the cross. As

the apostles, they too did not associate the event of the cross with the revelation of God’s grace. They understood the cross redemption only when the Holy Spirit revealed to the apostles and all the world that the cross event was the revelation of the grace of God.

At first the crucifixion of Jesus was only an historical event that crushed the hopes of the disciples in a king who would possibly deliver them from Roman power (Lk 24:21). But when the Spirit revealed that the cross was the revelation of God’s Suffering Servant for the salvation of all men, then the significance of the cross became more than a tragedy. It became the hope of the world.

Faith is the response of those who are mourning in their sin, though they rejoice over the grace event of the cross. Our faith is in the Redeemer on the cross, for we believe that His crucifixion was more than the martyrdom of a great religious leader. It was the revelation of God’s gift to all men. Since we could not deliver ourselves from our bondage of sin, God sent the offering of His gift of grace. Faith is our response. Obedient faith brings the alien sinner into the realm of grace. *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have **access by faith into this grace** wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”* (Rm 5:1,2). It is for this reason that faith moves the alien sinner to do all that God would require in order to come into this realm of grace. This was why Paul asked the Christians in Rome, *“Or do you not know*

that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” (Rm 6:3).

The sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross was the advent of God’s grace into this world. In order for one to reap the salvational blessings of the cross, we are

crucified and baptized with Him into His death for the remission of our sins (At 2:38). Our advent into the realm of God’s grace happens when we go to the cross and grave with Jesus in baptism, and then come forth to walk in newness of life with Him (Rm 6:3-6).

Chapter 3

Examples Of Grace

Grace is always accessed by faith on the part of man, for God accepts no meritorious works for the atonement of sins. However, when we say “accessed” we mean an obedience of faith whereby men respond to that which God provides through His grace. This is the means by which men have always come into the favor of God. Throughout the entire Bible when the faith of the faithful is mentioned, it is always obedience of faith. A simple acknowledgment that God exists has never brought anyone into the favor of God. Only when men acted on their faith in obedience did they receive the blessings and promises of God.

A. Noah was saved by grace accessed by obedient faith.

In our efforts to define the nature of obedient faith by which we access God’s grace, the text of Genesis 6:5-8 is a good commentary. After all, we are reminded in the New Testament that Noah acted on his faith. *“By faith Noah, being warned by God of things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of*

his house ...” (Hb 11:7).

In the historical context of Noah’s day, God *“saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth” (Gn 6:5)*. Because the population of the whole world was given over to sin, God said, *“I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth” (Gn 6:7)*. But of all humanity, *“Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Gn 6:8)*. *“Noah was a just man and blameless in his time. And Noah walked with God” (Gn 6:9)*.

Noah and his family were to be given the blessing of not suffering the impending destruction that God was bringing upon the earth and all humanity. The promise of Noah’s deliverance from the imminent destruction was an offer of grace. The destruction was coming, but Noah could not have delivered himself without following the instructions of God in order to benefit from the grace offer. Because he feared God, through his obedience of faith he prepared the ark.

The historical event of the flood of Noah’s day is the first example in the Bible that defines how God works through grace and faith. We can apply

how God worked in the case of Noah and the flood with the situation of all men in sin. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rm 3:23). Sin separates all men from God (Is 59:1,2). Therefore, in order for God to remain just (righteous) in view of the fact that all men have sinned, and are in danger of being eternally separated from Him, there must be a promise of escape from destruction. Because all men exist in a state of condemnation through sin, there must be a way of pardon from sin. Sin demands justice and judgment. In order for God to remain just in view of the fact that all sin, He offers mercy and grace. The condition for accepting God's grace is that man must respond through obedient faith. This is what Paul said in Romans 3:25,26. God set forth Christ "to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood through faith **in order to declare His righteousness** [justice] for the remission of sins in the past because of the forbearance of God, to declare at this time, I say, **His righteousness that He might be just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus.**" God is declared just because through His mercy He offers the grace of salvation to those who are willing "to build an ark" for their salvation.

God remained just in destroying sinful humanity in the flood because He offered Noah a way of escape through the command to build an ark. The wicked world persisted in sin, though Noah continued to preach repentance (1 Pt 3:20; 2 Pt 2:5). But by faith, Noah responded to God's warning by building the ark (Hb 11:7). God's offer was salvation through

the ark which was built as a result of Noah's faith. Grace made the means of salvation from the flood possible. Faith responded by building. In order for Noah to believe and build, there first had to be the revelation of God's grace. And in the revelation, Noah had to be told how he and his family could access the grace (salvation) of God. Saving grace, therefore, must be based on the following conditions:

1. An announcement must be made. The impending action on the part of God must be announced to those to whom it will affect. In the case of Noah, God announced, "*The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. And behold, I will destroy them with the earth*" (Gn 6:13).

2. Instructions must be given. Instructions must be given as to how one can access the grace of God. God said to Noah, "*Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood*" (Gn 6:14).

3. Obedient faith moves one to accept the offer of God. Obedient faith gave Noah the opportunity to access God's offer. "*Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord*" (Gn 6:8). However, Noah had to respond with faith to God's graceful offer in order to be delivered from the flood. "*By faith Noah, being warned by God of things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is according to faith*" (Hb 11:7). Noah's family would never have been

saved from the flood if Noah had never acted on his faith. Faith alone would have left him without a prepared ark for the salvation of his family. **The offer of salvation from the flood was through grace, but the acceptance of the offer demanded that Noah obediently prepare the ark.**

4. Action must be taken. In order to access the grace of God, our faith must respond as Noah's faith. *"Thus Noah did according to all that God commanded him"* (Gn 6:22). This was Paul's "obedience of faith" of which he reminded the Roman Christians (Rm 1:5; 16:26). It is a faith that follows the instructions of God as to how one would access God's grace.

Acceptable faith is not meritorious. If Noah were working meritoriously in order to save his family, then he would have had to know that through his own abilities that there was a flood coming. He would have had to scheme his own method of deliverance, and thus, build the ark according to his own knowledge and skills. But in God's instructions, all this information was provided. **This was knowledge that could come only through revelation.** And with the revelation of the coming event, **Noah was also given knowledge as to how the ark was to be built.** If Noah had not obeyed through faith the instructions given by God, then he could never have saved himself and his family. When God gives instructions concerning how one must access His grace, then men have no choice concerning the instructions they must follow. Men cannot subtract, substitute or

ignore God's instructions as to how they can access God's grace.

B. Israel was saved by grace accessed by obedient faith.

In Numbers 21:4-9, there is a case in the history of Israel that illustrates God's healing grace. However, the healing of Israel at the time was based on conditions.

The Israelites were in a moment of rebellion against the leadership of Moses. They complained, *"Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, nor is there any water; and our soul loathes this miserable bread"* (Nm 21:5). As punishment of the people for their rebellion, *"The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people"* (Nm 21:6). The biting serpents brought the desired result. The people came to Moses and said, *"We have sinned..."* (Nm 21:7). The Lord heard their pleas. He then commanded Moses to *"make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole"* (Nm 21:8). However, in order for the people to procure healing (grace) from God's offer, there was a condition. *"And it will come to pass that everyone who is bitten, when he looks on it, he will live"* (Nm 21:8). It was grace that provided the opportunity for healing. However, the condition was faith that moved them to look upon the brass serpent for healing.

God's grace provides the opportunity for forgiveness. His opportunity for healing must be communicated to the people. The people must have faith that

what is provided by God will accomplish the desired forgiveness. And then, **the people must act on their faith to receive the blessing of the opportunity that has been provided by grace.**

Through faith we have access into the atonement of our sins. The offer of atonement comes as a result of grace. But there must be a responsive faith on the part of man that moves one to “look upon” what God offers through grace in order that we access the blessing that comes with grace. It is for this reason that the Hebrew writer stated, “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (Hb 11:6). If the believer makes no effort to come, then there is no reward.

The grace that provided salvation from the flood of Noah’s day was offered to Noah. The offer and acceptance is not unlike the grace that is offered by God today that we be delivered from the impending destruction of all humanity by fire. Those of Noah’s generation “*were disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared ...*” (1 Pt 3:20). As God offered a way of escape to those of faith when the ark was being prepared, He does the same today. Through His grace He offers a way of escape from the coming destruction (See 2 Th 1:7-9).

Notice what Peter said in applying the situation of Noah’s day to our’s today: “*The like figure whereunto even*

baptism does also now save us ...” (1 Pt 3:21). As the waters of the flood washed away a sinful generation in Noah’s day, so the waters of baptism bring one into a realm of safety from the impending destruction that is coming (See 2 Th 1:7-9; 1 Pt 4:17). The comparison between the two cases is that Noah was saved by grace because of his obedient faith in response to God’s instructions concerning the building of the ark. The rebellious Israelites who were bitten by snakes that brought death, were healed when they, by faith, looked upon the serpent of brass that was made by Moses. The alien sinner is saved through obedient faith when he obediently responds to God’s instructions to be baptized for the remission of sins (At 2:38). Noah and the Israelites were saved by an obedient faith, just as alien sinners can be saved by obedient faith today. But because Noah was saved through an obedient faith that moved him to follow the instructions of God to build the ark does not mean that he was meritoriously saved through works. Likewise, the alien sinner today is not saved by meritorious works if he follows the instructions of God as to how one must access the grace of God. **Obediently doing what God tells us to do is not meritorious obedience.** If it were, then we could do nothing in following the Bible without it being meritorious in obedience.

In the cases of Noah and Moses, faith and grace are consistently carried out in five simple steps in order to bring man again into a reconciled relationship with God:

1. **God makes an offer to bless.** Through grace, God offers reconciliation and life.
2. **The offer is communicated to those whom God seeks to bless.** God communicates His offer to man through words of revelation.
3. **There must be faith that one will realize the effect of the offer.** Man must have faith in what God has freely offered, for without faith man will not respond to God's blessing.
4. **Men must respond with obedience.** Through obedience of faith man must comply with all that God

would require of us to receive the free gift that comes through a grace offer.

5. **Obedience leads to reaping the benefits of the offered blessing.** Upon obedience to the conditions to receive the free gift of grace, man reaps the blessings of grace.

This is the way it has always been since the beginning of time, and this is the way it will always be until Jesus comes again. Any theology, therefore, that changes this simple plan as to how God works with man always distorts the purpose of the cross and brings into question the sufficiency of the grace of God.

Chapter 4

Grace Comes With An Instruction Manual

The fact that we are saved by grace through faith is not the question, but how we are saved is what must be determined. Grace through faith means there is a divine side (grace) and a human side (faith) to our salvation. What was required on the divine side (the cross) was revealed to man without any obligation on the part of God to save man. It was an act of grace. Though man was in sin (Rm 5:8), the grace of God was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11). The revelation of God's grace was not based on the meritorious righteousness of man that put God in debt to pay man with the cross. Grace was a free gift. Nevertheless, it was a free gift that demanded requirements on the part of those who wanted the benefits of grace

before these benefits could be realized (our salvation). The free gift was given on the condition that the receivers comply with the conditions that were necessary to benefit from the gift.

The case of the cleansing (healing) of Naaman of his leprosy in 2 Kings 5 clearly illustrates how God works through His grace that is offered to all men today. The case illustrates the offer of the gift, but also the conditions that are placed on those who would enjoy the rewards of the gift.

A. What grace offered Naaman.

Elisha said to Naaman, "*Go and wash in the Jordan seven times and your*

flesh will come again to you and you will be clean" (2 Kg 5:10). Naaman's reaction to the instructions for his cleansing was fury (2 Kg 5:11). He was furious because he did not agree with God's conditions for his healing. He possibly thought that there should be no conditions to receive the blessing of cleansing. He argued, "*Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God and strike his hand over the place and cure the leprosy*" (2 Kg 5:11). His pride moved him to reason that there should be no conditions for the free gift of healing. From what he said, Naaman wanted to establish his own conditions, which is the mistake many make in reference to God's offer of grace today. They want the blessing of the grace without the conditions for reception of the gift. Some even think they can call on the preacher to call on God for their spiritual healing. But God's grace is not appropriated in this manner.

In his fury, Naaman then turned to offering an alternative to dipping in the muddy Jordan River. "*Are not Abanah and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?*" (2 Kg 5:12). Naaman's mistake was to think that his cleansing was in the power of the water. He thus tried to change the water and still receive the blessing. But his healing would be given by the grace of God, not by any powers in the water. And if it were to be received, then he had to follow the required instructions.

When God gives the instructions concerning the reception of His blessing, we do not have the right to change any of

the conditions. God will allow no substitutions. If Naaman had been cleansed by dipping in the "better" waters of the Abanah and Pharpar, then we would assume that we too have the right to substitute the conditions upon which we can receive God's blessings. We would also assume that there is some power in the water, as long as it is water. But when Naaman dipped in the right water in the right way, according to the instructions of God, it was then he that knew that God means what He says and says what He means in reference to receiving His blessings.

B. Naaman was cleansed by grace through faith.

The cleansing of Naaman was strictly by the grace of God. There was no possible way for Naaman to cleanse himself from leprosy. It was not within his power to bless himself with healing. The actual cleansing, therefore, was by God's grace only. It was a free offer from God. However, his faith had to move him to do that which God required of him to receive the free gift of cleansing. His healing only came by the power of God, **who only can heal**. His healing did not annul the necessity that he had to follow all of God's instructions to access the gift. We must not forget this point.

No one would conclude that Naaman was healed by meritorious works when God told him to go dip seven times in the Jordan River. Neither would we say that he was healed by "faith and works." Rather, **he was healed by faith**

that worked to fulfill the instructions of God that were necessary in order for him to receive the blessing (See Gl 5:6). He did not receive the blessing of cleansing until he followed all the instructions (2 Kg 5:14). So until he followed all the instructions, he did not receive the blessing of God's grace. When his faith eventually moved him to follow the instructions of God, then the free gift of cleansing was realized. He was healed "by grace through faith." His dipping seven times in the Jordan was the expression of his obedient faith in order that he be blessed with the grace of being healed.

C. Naaman's faith went to work.

Salvation is by grace through faith once faith goes to work in obedience to God's instructions. The free gift of our cleansing of sin by God's grace is not appropriated to our benefit until there is an expression of faith on our part. God's cleansing through grace is His work on our behalf for our salvation. However, in order for His work through grace to have effect in our salvation, it must be brought into effect in our lives through an expression of faith to follow His conditions. **Whatever condition God would give for the appropriation of grace to the salvation of the soul of the alien sinner must be followed in order for the work of God through grace to be applied.** Following God-required conditions is not meritorious obedience.

Now we must consider when Naaman's faith brought the healing of his leprosy. Naaman's faith in receiving the

healing that would come from the grace of God first manifested itself when he heard that there was someone in Samaria who could possibly heal him (2 Kg 5:5). When he heard of the possibility of healing, he took ten talents of silver, 6,000 pieces of gold, and ten changes of clothing, and headed for Samaria. He had faith that there was healing in Samaria, **but his faith alone did not heal him.** His faith did not "save" him from his leprosy until it was connected with what God required of him in obedience. **His faith only brought him to a knowledge of what would be required of him to receive the grace of healing. The power of the healing was not in his faith, but in the grace of God to heal.** Therefore, his faith would have accomplished nothing toward his healing if he had not obeyed all the instructions that were necessary for his healing. Until there was an "obedience of faith" (Rm 1:5; 16:26), there could be no grace appropriated to the healing of his leprosy.

Since our salvation is by grace through faith, our faith is of no consequence until it moves us to do all that God requires of us to receive the blessing of His grace. We cannot add to the conditions that God requires, neither can we subtract from them. Our faith must be expressed, demonstrated and manifested through our obedience to the conditions that God requires.

The above is the conclusion that we would derive from the teaching of James 2:14-26. James' argument is not in reference to salvation by meritorious works. No one can meritoriously work in order

to be saved, for no good work will atone for any sin. And for sure, no one can work law perfectly in order to save himself. What James is discussing is that we cannot be saved by a faith that does not work. No unexpressed faith is acceptable to God. It is not acceptable **because unexpressed faith repudiates the instructions of God concerning what one must do in order to be saved.** Any conclusion in reference to our salvation by grace through faith that does not honor and obey the instructions of God as to how we must access His grace must be totally rejected.

James said, *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and by works was faith made perfect”* (Jas 2:21,22). And Paul said, *“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something about which to boast, but not before God”* (Rm 4:2). Now did James and Paul contradict one another? Certainly not! The proposition of **Paul was that he was arguing against meritorious works of law, whereas James was ar-**

guing for obedient works that are an expression of faith. Paul’s argument against the Jews who sought to work meritoriously to save themselves would put God in debt to save. James’ works of faith express our thanksgiving for our salvation (See 2 Co 4:15). **There is a difference between works that express faith and works that seek to merit salvation.** Because many have not recognized this difference, they have had great difficulty in understanding Paul’s letter to the Romans and what James revealed in James 2.

In the context of Naaman’s healing, when Naaman’s faith moved him to do exactly what God told him to do, without any additions, substitutions or subtractions, then his healing by the grace of God was realized. The same principle applies to us today. God offers His grace, but until we comply with all instructions that He requires, we cannot access His saving grace. If He instructs us to “dip” in the waters of baptism, then that is exactly what we must do in order to be cleansed of our sin (See At 22:16).

Chapter 5

Grace Freely Offered And Conditionally Accepted

If one would seek a brief New Testament explanation of salvation by grace through faith, then the context of Ephesians 2 would be one of the most concise commentaries on the subject. In this context Paul truly gives the road map into the grace of God, and once there, what is

required of the obedient to remain there. For a moment, therefore, we need to journey with the Ephesians from their “nature” in sin, before their obedience to the gospel, into the revealed saving grace of God in which they stood at the time Paul wrote.

A. Dead in trespasses and sins:

Paul begins his definition of grace by reviewing the state of the Ephesians before they were baptized into Christ. As alien sinners he reminded them, “**You were dead in trespasses and sins**” (vs 1). They were in a state of condemnation wherein they lived. He said, “... *in which you walked according to the ways of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience*” (vs 2). Notice the pronoun “you.” They were personally responsible for their sinful walk. Their sin had nothing to do with the sin of Adam that some say was supposedly handed down to them as “original sin” from Adam. Neither were they born with a “sinful nature” wherein they were inclined to sin against their will. Paul clearly writes that **they were individually responsible for their sinful walk of life**. They could not blame Adam. They could not blame God for giving them some “sinful nature.” They could not even blame the devil for making them sin. They could only blame themselves. They were personally and individually dead in sin because they chose to behave sinfully. Unless one takes ownership of his own sinful behavior, he will not repent.

People need to stop blaming Adam for the fantasy of “original sin.” We need to also stop blaming God for a supposed “sinful nature,” and the Devil for supposedly making us sin. Some theologians have given sinners almost every escape for their sin, accept the sinner himself.

Paul never let the Ephesians off the hook. They were personally responsible for their own culture of sin. And because they created their own culture of sin, they had to take ownership for their sin before they could respond to the grace of God who made the offer of deliverance from sin.

B. Life according to the world:

In their former life, the Ephesians individually chose to walk according to the desires of their father, the devil. Jesus explained the state of some when He said, “*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.*” (Jn 8:44). They were of their father the devil because they “*behaved in times past in the lusts of your flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest*” (Ep 2:3). The Ephesians lived according to the sensual sins of gratifying the desires of the flesh, filling their minds with all wicked thoughts, following after a life-style of pride, envy, covetousness and lusts of the mind.

They were “by nature” in the habit of behaving after a lustful life-style. It was not that they were born with a sinful nature. The context of what Paul is saying is entirely against this conclusion. They had made a free-moral decision to live according to the lusts of the eyes, flesh and pride of life. The Greek word used here for “nature” refers to a life-style that has been formed after **the habit of doing something over a long period of time**. They were “dead in trespasses and

sins” because they had adopted a life-style of living according to that which was contrary to the will of God. Their conscience was seared because they had no feelings of guilt that their sinful living was wrong. They were thus judged to be dead in trespasses and sins because there was no hope of eternal life in their past state of behavior.

The lost state of the Ephesians before their obedience to the gospel confirms the fact that the atoning sacrifice of Jesus **was not universal**, regardless of the knowledge of men about the sacrifice. By the time Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians in A.D. 61,62, the Ephesians had been delivered from their life of sin. But before the gospel came to them through the preaching of Paul, they were without hope. If Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross was unconditional, and thus universal, then they would not have been dead in their trespasses and sins before the coming of Paul and the preaching of the gospel. The biblical interpreter must therefore be careful about assuming that the redemption of the cross applied to all men regardless of their knowledge of God’s grace and the conditions He requires to receive His grace.

C. **The announcement and response to grace:**

And now the glorious news. “*But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive with Christ—by grace you have been saved*” (Ep 2:5). Paul’s continued com-

mentary of this outpouring of grace was stated in Romans 5:8. “*But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” It could be nothing else with grace. The outpouring of grace must be nothing short of an outpouring of mercy, regardless of the state of those to whom it is offered.

Grace was unconditionally offered, but it is not unconditionally appropriated, or applied to the saving of alien sinners. Please keep in mind that the Ephesians became Christians long after the outpouring of grace on the cross in A.D. 30. They were still in a state of condemnation at the time Paul, Aquila and Priscilla came to Ephesus in Acts 18. It was through the ministry of these and others who “*came and preached peace to you [Ephesians] who were far off and to those who were near*” (Ep 2:17). **The offer of grace was preached to the Ephesians while they were dead in trespasses and sins.** They responded. And subsequently, Paul could make the statement, “*... by grace you have been saved*” (Ep 2:5). They could be saved by grace only when they heard about the grace of God that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11). Grace was appropriated in their lives only when they heard and obeyed the gospel (See At 19). Grace is thus neither universally appropriated, nor unconditionally received.

Please keep in mind that these to whom Paul was writing this letter were dead in sin after the cross and before the heard the gospel. They did not become alive until they heard and obeyed the gospel. Therefore, they had not been individually elected and predestined to

heaven before the creation of the world. **If they had been so elected and predestined, then why did Paul say that they were all dead in sin before they obeyed the gospel?**

D. Salvation by grace through faith:

“So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rm 10:17). When the Ephesians heard the word of Christ (Ep 2:17), their faith in Him was aroused. The words of Jesus would be appropriate here. *“He who believes and is baptized, will be saved”* (Mk 16:16). The Ephesians were not unconditionally dead in their trespasses and sins. They voluntarily chose a sinful way of life. They adopted such as their culture. Therefore, they could not blame Adam for their sinful behavior as some have supposed. As they were voluntarily and personally accountable for their previous sinful nature, grace came to them voluntarily and personally. Each one who heard the preached word of Christ, voluntarily and individually responded to the conditions God required to receive the offered gift of His grace. As they voluntarily sinned after their lusts, they had to respond voluntarily to the preached grace of God. As they individually chose to lead a sinful life, they had to choose individually to respond to the grace of God. Their response to grace, therefore, had to be an obedience of their faith (See Rm 1:5; 16:26).

We must not misunderstand Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:8,9. *“For by grace you are saved through faith, and*

that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

The grace of God was offered while the Ephesians were in a state of condemnation in their trespasses and sins. It was God’s free gift to offer to all men a way of escape from a sinful predicament from which man could not deliver himself. The gift, therefore, had to be free. But the reception of the gift came with conditions. Simply because the gift is free does not mean there are no conditions of reception. Titus 2:11 states, *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.”* The free gift appeared and was offered through preaching. But its application came with conditions on the part of man. If there were no conditions, then salvation would be universal. If the Ephesians were still dead in their trespasses and sins after the grace of God was revealed through Jesus on the cross, then grace was not universal. Reception and application of the effect of grace is on the condition of faith. It is salvation by grace “through faith.”

Salvation by grace through faith is not of ourselves. In other words, no salvational schemes of men will work. If we could be saved through our own systems of salvation, then our salvation would be meritorious. But by works of law or tradition no one can be saved (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). When Peter said to the thousands on the day of Pentecost to *“save yourselves from this perverse generation”* (At 2:40), he did not mean that everyone should construct for himself some system of salvation. What he meant was that they must take the initiative to

do what God commanded in order to access His grace. And what God instructed was, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*” (At 2:38). And such did the Ephesians in their response to the gospel (See At 19:1-18).

E. Faithfulness through works of thanksgiving:

Paul wanted the Ephesians to know that their initial coming to Christ was not the result of any meritorious efforts on their part, lest they come to boasting with one another concerning their works. Their salvation was not by meritorious works, but through an obedient faith in response to the grace of God. Nevertheless, as Christians, their faith had to be perfected through a work of love in response to the grace by which they were saved. “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we*

should walk in them” (vs 10). Paul had told the Philippians, “... *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Ph 2:12). The Ephesians had been baptized into Christ (Eph 3:26,27). Now it was time that they perfect their faith through their works of faith. “*You see that faith was working with his [Abraham] works, and by works was faith made perfect*” (Js 2:22). We are God’s “workmanship” when our faith is made perfect through obedience. When our faith works in response to the salvation that we have in Christ, then it is perfected. His grace causes works of thanksgiving. “*For all things are for your sakes [all that God did to bring us into Christ], so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to the glory of God*” (2 Co 4:15). It is an obedient faith in response to the revealed grace of God that brings one into Christ. This faith is perfected when the obedient work out their salvation in thanksgiving for the grace by which they are saved.

Chapter 6

The Grace That Teaches

We will risk being redundant in this chapter. We will not apologize for the repetition in our discussion concerning matters of grace. The problem is people are not obsessed with grace. Some are afraid to talk too much about a subject that is so precious and indescribable. As the heart of Christianity, we must obsess over the grace that was revealed at the cross. In our obsession, we will draw

people to that for which they also yearn (See 1 Pt 3:15). So we will be repetitious because of the tremendous misunderstanding that prevails in reference to Paul’s statements in Ephesians 2, and similar passages, that state we are saved by grace through obedience of faith (Eph 2:8).

It is unfortunate that many do not see the similarity between a faith that is

obedient to the conditions that God requires for one to initially receive the free gift of grace, and the works that perfect the faith of the Christian who walks in the new and living way. There is also a similarity between meritorious works whereby one might seek to earn his salvation and the same meritorious works that one might perform as a Christian in order to put God in debt. Such meritorious works are simply foolish efforts on the part of some who do not understand the principle that our recognition of God's grace toward us moves our faith into obedient action. **There is nothing meritorious about the alien sinner obeying the commands of God to be saved and the Christian working out his salvation with fear and trembling.** But because there is a misunderstanding among many concerning the difference between obedience of faith and meritorious obedience, it would be good here to begin with the alien sinner's condition in sin and his responsibility to respond to the offer of God's grace.

A. **The spiritual condition of the alien sinner:**

As alien sinners, the Ephesians were previously dead in their trespasses and sins (Ep 2:1). They were behaving according to the sinful culture of the world (Ep 2:2), and thus, they were children upon whom the wrath of God would eventually be revealed (Ep 2:3; 2 Th 1:6-9). However, through the preaching of Paul, the mercy and grace of God was revealed to them. They responded by being bur-

ied with Christ in baptism in order to be raised to walk in newness of life (Ep 2:4-6). In their obedience to the gospel they were saved by grace because of their responsive faith (Ep 2:8). God offered the saving grace. Through faith, they responded with obedience to the gospel in baptism.

B. **Saving grace:**

The Ephesians, as well as all men, are saved by the unearned or unmerited favor that God extends to all sinners. No one can devise his own system of salvation, nor can one keep any system of laws perfectly, for salvation before God must always be by grace. Anyone who would devise his own system of salvation, must devise a meritorious system. This is true simply because the system is from man, not God. Therefore, if God reveals "His system of salvation," then **it can never be meritorious. Obedience to the commandments of God is never meritorious.** If we assert that obedience to any command of God that is necessary for salvation is a meritorious work, **then we have denied obedience to the word of God.** We would thus be living under the condemnation of Revelation 22:18,19.

Salvation, therefore, is by grace and not by the keeping of law or developing one's own system of salvation. John wrote, "*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (Jn 1:17). Keeping Old Testament laws could not bring salvation. Paul continues this thought by saying, "*I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righ-*

teousness comes through law, then Christ died in vain” (Gl 2:21). If one could be saved by keeping any law, whether from God or from man, then the cross was a useless effort on the part of Christ.

If one should seek to be justified by perfect law-keeping, then he lives under the curse of law. “*For as many as are of the [meritorious] works of law are under the curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them’*” (Gl 3:10). The one who seeks to justify himself through law-keeping is cursed with death because the law he seeks to keep condemns him as a law-breaker (See Rm 3:23; 6:23). Therefore, “*You have been severed from Christ, you who seek to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace*” (Gl 5:4).

The alien sinner can never meritoriously earn his salvation by perfect keeping of law. The saved Christian can never maintain his salvation by perfect keeping of law. One’s initial salvation results from an obedient faith to what God requires of one to be saved. The Christian’s faith continues working through love in order to maintain the salvation he enjoys in the grace of God.

C. Revealed grace:

The grace of God was initially revealed at the cross (Ti 2:11). It was revealed, not because God was indebted to save man (Rm 5:8), but because God so loved His creation (Jn 3:16). Grace was revealed because we had no hope without grace. The cross of grace was made

the center of preaching that went out into all the world in the first century because the world then and now is lost in sin. Paul wrote to the Colossians, “*Even in all the world this gospel is bringing forth fruit, just as it does also in you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth*” (Cl 1:6).

Grace was first revealed by God on the cross. It was then preached by the early messengers of God. It was the destiny of Paul “*to testify to the gospel of the grace of God*” (At 20:24). After he had preached the grace of God to the Ephesians, it was to this grace that he commended them. “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace that is able to build you up ...*” (At 20:32). Christians, therefore, must be cautious not to be quickly removed from the grace of Christ (Gl 1:6), and not do despite to the Spirit of grace as some have (Rm 2:4; see 1 Th 5:20).

D. Faith and grace:

God’s part in our salvation is grace. Man’s part is faith. It is faith that links the salvation by grace to our souls that are laden with sin. For this reason, without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing to God (Hb 11:6). Through Christ “*we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations ...*” (Rm 1:5; see 16:26). God’s grace must be accepted through “*obedience of faith*” before it is appropriated, or applied, to our trespasses and sins. When faith obeys, then the grace of God is freely activated in our lives. Our obe-

dience is not the invention of our own schemes, but is commanded by God. It is the command of God to believe and be baptized for remission of sins (Mk 16:16; At 2:38). If one does not have the “obedience of faith” of which Paul spoke, then he will not be baptized in order to wash away his sins (At 22:16). If the salvation of the alien sinner was by his own schemes, even his own faith, then there would be no need for God to remit sins through His grace. But one’s faith must move him to obey. This is what Jesus meant when He said, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved ...*” (Mk 16:16). Faith must be linked with what God requires of us to be saved.

If salvation were strictly by faith alone, then there would be no need for grace, for the word “alone” would eliminate everything that is necessary for one’s salvation. It is for this reason that those who teach a salvation by faith alone have some problems here. They ignore the work of God on the cross, and count the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross to have been in vain (Compare Gl 2:21). When we are dealing with our eternal relationship with God, there can never be any theology that would suggest that man’s salvation is by faith alone, to the elimination of what God has done for us through the cross and what we do for Him in response to the cross.

Though Jesus was the Son of God, “*He learned obedience by the things that He suffered*” (Hb 5:8). Jesus set the example for all those who would come to Him. He was obedient to the Father by

going to the cross for our sins. “*And having been made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him*” (Hb 5:9). Jesus led the way in obedience. The only way we can become His disciple is through obedience to what He says. He said, “*You are My friends, if you do whatever I command you*” (Jn 15:14). Through obedience of faith we have access into the grace that was revealed through Him. We have access to the grace of God because the Christian has done what Jesus commanded, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (Mk 16:16). When we follow the example of obedience by which our Savior went to the cross, then we will search for those things we must obey in order to follow His example. We can be assured that this is more than “faith alone.” **The one who is truly seeking to be the disciple of Jesus is looking for commands of Jesus to obey.** He is not looking within himself in order to base his salvation of feelings or emotions of his own origin.

By works (obedience), faith is made perfect (Js 2:22). “*So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ*” (Rm 10:17). Faith comes through the teaching of the word of Christ. The result of faith that results from the teaching of the word of Christ is obedience to Christ. Faith is thus made perfect in obedience to the words of Christ. This is why the disciples of Jesus live soberly, righteously and godly according to the word of Christ (See Ti 2:11,12).

E. Eternity and grace:

In Ephesians 2:7 Paul reminded the Ephesians that grace was not only for this present age. “... so that **in the ages to come** He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Grace is necessary for the salvation of man because God created man a free moral agent. The free moral ability of men to make choices often leads them to make bad choices. And because we cannot atone for our bad choices through meritorious law-keeping or good works, there is no possible way that we can be saved without the grace of God. Therefore, in our walk with Jesus, we must continually walk in the grace of God.

We must also walk in grace in the “ages to come.” Paul wrote Ephesians 2:7 in this age. We assume, therefore, that in the ages to come after the passing of this age there will also be the need for the grace of God. This would mean that we will not lose our free-moral ability to make choices in the heavenly age to come. Whenever and wherever man is a free-moral being, the grace of God must exist in order for man to be in a saved relationship with God. This is logically necessary simply because no man can live perfectly in reference to law wherever there is law to direct our ways.

F. Teaching and grace:

Because we are under grace does not mean that we can choose or invent our own moral laws. In fact, Jude warned

that there were “certain men” who “*turn the grace of our God into licentiousness ...*” (Jd 4). The Hebrew writer cautioned that Christians should be “*looking carefully lest any man falls short of the grace of God*” (Hb 12:15). We are “taught” by the grace of God to live morally correct and faithful to the truth. Some have unfortunately taught that grace is a license to immorality, that is, we have freedom to establish our own morals by which we conduct our lives. These were those about whom Jude wrote who turn the grace of God into licentious living.

Others have believed that grace is a license to doctrinal syncretism, that is, regardless of what we believe, we are saved by grace. Grace supposedly gives us the right to blend our moral codes with God’s moral codes, and thus come up with a religiosity that has origins from both God and man. However, there are too many statements in the New Testament that teach we must contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints (See Jd 3). Our moral behavior must first be based on the truth of God. For this reason Scripture was “*given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (2 Tm 3:16). Elders are given specific instructions to hold “*fast the faithful word*” so that they “*may be able by sound teaching both to exhort and refute those who contradict*” (Ti 1:9).

Grace does not give one the right to establish his own moral behavior, neither does it set aside the truth for any false teaching that is propagated by the reli-

gious world. Grace teaches us that we must walk a godly life according to the instructions of the word of God. Grace teaches us to direct our beliefs by the word of God. How it teaches us is not difficult to understand. It is based on one simple statement of Jesus that is echoed throughout the epistles. *“If you love Me you will keep My commandments”* (Jn 14:15). We love God because He first loved us through the giving of His Son (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:19). Grace came to us because God loved us. We love and obey

Him because we are thankful (2 Co 4:15). Grace, therefore, teaches us to obey, to respond to the love of God. If we truly love Jesus, therefore, we will seek out His commandments in order to obey. Jesus did not say, *“If you love Me you will believe My commandments.”* What He said is if we love Him we will **keep** His commandments. There is no love of Jesus unless there is keeping of His commandments. Now listen to this statement of John: *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments”* (1 Jn 5:3).

Chapter 7

Grace Versus Law

At the beginning of his description of the ministry of Jesus, John wanted to make it clear that there was a change coming. Jesus' ministry was not to be a continuation of the religious *status quo*. He was not coming to reform the law, neither was He seeking to revive the Old Testament. He was coming to fulfill the law (See Mt 5:17,18). And the fulfillment of the Old Testament law meant that it would be nailed to the cross with every other religious legal system that men bound on themselves as a means of salvation. *“... wiping out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He took it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross”* (Cl 2:14). Therefore, the revolution that was coming would involve not only a change in God's relationship with man through law, but a covenant relationship between God and man that was better than law (See

Hb 7:20-22). It was a concept of reconciliation that was based on the initiative of God to extend favor to man regardless of the inabilities of man to live according to law. Jesus' revolution would be a change in how the people of God would be motivated into service. They would forever be ignited into service through grace, not law. What was coming, therefore, was the “grace revolution.”

John introduced the revelation of the ministry of Jesus by saying, *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”* (Jn 1:17). Notice that the statement is in the past tense, thus revealing that at the time John wrote he was looking back to what Jesus had already accomplished through the cross and the revelation of grace and truth. As he looked back, he could clearly see the difference between the way it was under the Old Testament law and the way

it was at the time he wrote. Grace, not law, had become the prime mover of the people of God. But the law changed from the Old Testament law to the New Testament of Jesus. We know the place of the Old Testament law in reference to the Christian. Paul covered this subject in Romans 15:4. *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning”* The Old Testament is a record of events to which Christians look for examples of obedience, not laws to be bound (1 Co 10:11). We are thus no longer under the law of animal sacrifices, but the final sacrifice of the Son of God. Paul writes, therefore, that we are not under the law, but under grace (Rm 6:14). But what exactly does he mean?

A. Defining law:

Webster’s Dictionary defines the word “law” to mean: “All the rules of conduct established and endorsed by the authority, legislation ... of a group.” In the ecclesiastical context of the word, it means “a divine commandment,” or “all divine commandments collectively.” In the Greek text, the word for law is *nomos*. The word means a command or dictate. Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words* defines *nomos* to mean, “usage, custom, and then law, law as prescribed by custom, or by statute.”

In the context of God’s relationship with man, law would refer to commands or dictates given by God to man for the instruction of man to live according to His will. Through law God seeks to direct our behavior in order that all men

cohabit with one another in an environment of peace. But when it comes to man’s relationship with God, other things are to be considered, things that identify the impossibility of law to be given as a means by which any man can be saved. In fact, we will conclude that God never gave law to man as a means in and of itself to save man. Law condemns. It does not save. It is a recognition of condemnation, not a foundation for salvation.

B. The nature of law:

In reference to man’s relationship with God, God’s law brings a curse. It is the nature of law to curse, not bless. Paul explains this in Galatians 3:10 by quoting Deuteronomy 27:26. *“For as many as are of the works of law are under the curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them.’”*

The emphasis of Paul’s statement is on “all things” of the law. This is all the commands, statutes, and rites designated by law for man to obey. This was the nature of the law of Moses. It required strict obedience from which there was to be no deviation. However, any violation of any point of law brought the judgment of the law upon the sinner. Paul continued to bring this out in the context of Galatians 3:11. *“But that no one is justified by law in the sight of God is evident”*

Herein is the curse of law. **No man can possibly keep any system of law perfectly.** And because no one could

keep the law of Moses perfectly, the law became a curse to those who sought to maintain a saved relationship with God through law alone. James was right. *“For whoever will keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he has become guilty of all”* (Jas 2:10). One sin against law makes one a sinner. It is the law that condemns because of just one sin. Therefore, law is a curse to those who would seek to keep it perfectly in order to be saved. God knows this, and thus, He did not give law in order that it be an exclusive means of salvation.

For the above reason Paul wrote that sin and death were in the world from Adam to Moses. *“For until law [the law of Moses], sin was in the world, but sin is not credited when there is no law.”* (Rm 5:13). Paul explained, *“...for where there is no law, there is no transgression”* (Rm 4:15). Since sin exists when there is violation of law, then Paul concludes that there was law from Adam to Moses, though it was not the law of Moses (Compare Hb 1:1,2). From Adam to Moses there was law from God in the world because sin reigned (Compare Hb 1:1,2). It was even during this time that humanity became so wicked according to law, that except for eight souls, a whole world of wickedness was washed away in the flood of Noah’s day (See Gn 6:5).

When the law of Moses came, it came only to the Jews: *“... to them were committed the oracles of God”* (Rm 3:2). The Gentiles continued under the “law of conscience” unto themselves until the coming of Christ. Paul explains this thought in Romans 2:14,15. *“For when*

the Gentiles who do not have law do by nature the things contained in [the Old Testament] law, these having no law, are a law to themselves; who show the work of law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness”

Regardless of which system of law mankind was under before the coming of the grace that was revealed on the cross, all men were under the curse of law. Therefore, *“what the law could not do ...”* (Rm 8:3), God did through Jesus. But until the time when the grace of God was revealed through Jesus on the cross (Ti 2:11), all men were under the curse of law, not being able to keep law perfectly in order to justify themselves before God. Thus law was *“the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us”* (Cl 2:14). Law demanded that we do the commandments, but our “doing” must be perfect. We had the command to do, but not the ability to perform flawlessly. Because the law was from God, we understood that *“the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good”* (Rm 7:12). But regardless of how good it was, in our efforts to do good we could not fulfill the demands of law that it be kept perfectly without flaw. What was good from God, became a curse to man. What was holy, made us unholy. What was just and fair for God to give, brought judgment and condemnation. It is because of the inability of man to keep law perfectly that makes it impossible for law in and of itself to be a means of salvation.

We must not conclude that those who lived under the law of Moses, or the

law unto their conscience, were all lost. It was that they were not saved through their obedience to any system of law. They, as we, were saved by grace and faith. We must remember that the classic statement of Habbakak 2:4 is an Old Testament verse. *“But the just will live by his faith”* (See Jn 3:36; Rm 1:17).

C. The coming of faith:

So now we understand the foundation of grace upon which the whole “law of liberty” is based. At the cross God looked back at the curse of the law under which His people lived before Christ. Here is the verse. *“For this reason He [Christ] is the mediator of the new covenant, so that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions committed under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance”* (Hb 9:15). Though the law of Moses was a curse, it was preparatory to bring men to the cross. *“The law was our headmaster to bring us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith”* (Gl 3:24). While using the law as a headmaster to bring Israel to faith in the redemption that was accomplished at the cross, Christ was *“an atoning sacrifice by His blood through faith in order to declare His righteousness for the remission of sin in the past because of the forbearance of God”* (Rm 3:25). God was forbearing the sins of the faithful before the cross. He was forbearing because the atoning sacrifice of the cross was for all men under all law from Adam to the final coming of the second

Adam, Jesus Christ.

Law made man aware of sin. It made man aware of the sinful wounds they inflicted upon one another for which there is no balm under law. It manifested bruises and cuts for which there was no healing. But Jesus came to mankind in order to bring a *“new and living way”* (Hb 10:20). It was the way of the cross. *“For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”* (Ep 2:8). What a relief! This is the relief that Paul expressed to Peter when he said, *“... knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus, even we [Jews] have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by works of law, for by works of law no flesh will be justified”* (Gl 2:16). And so we cannot forget the comforting words of John. *“My little children, these things I write to you so that you do not sin. And if anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* (1 Jn 2:1).

God’s part in our salvation is grace. Man’s part is faith. On God’s part our salvation is wholly the result of grace. This is true because **God accepts no meritorious works from man as atonement for sin**. Even when we do all that is necessary in obedience to God’s commands to be saved, our obedience in no way puts God in debt to save us. He sees our obedience as a signal of love, and because He is love, He accepts us through grace into His fellowship. On the part of man, salvation is wholly by obedience of faith, for man cannot offer any grace on

his own behalf for his salvation. Neither can he offer any good works to atone for just one sin. Our faith, therefore, is in God because He promised to accept us into His fellowship through grace if we were obedient to His will.

D. Walking in grace:

John made it clear that *“if we walk in the light as He is in the light, “the blood of Christ through the grace of God continues to cleanse us of sin (1 Jn 1:7). If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us (1 Jn 1:9). But in our walk in the grace of God, we must be careful not to abuse our gift of grace by walking contrary to the will of our Father.*

God’s grace did not come to us cheap, for it came at the cost of the crucifixion of the permanently incarnated Son of God. It is not cheap in our lives, for we struggle to walk in the light. *“What then will we say? Will we continue in sin so that grace may abound? **Certainly not! How will we who died to sin live any longer therein?**” (Rm 6:1,2).* The fact is that the child of God should never conceive of the idea of taking advantage of God’s grace and continual cleansing of the blood of Christ. We should never conceive of the idea of behaving as *“ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness” (Jd 4).*

When one truly understands the wonderful gift of grace, he does not want to work against the will of God. When we understand the grace of God, we work for God more abundantly (1 Co 15:10). It is this grace that causes us to work in

thanksgiving for all that God did for us (2 Co 4:15). God’s unselfish gift to us moves us to give our lives unselfishly for others. **The beautiful thing about understanding the grace of God is that it generates work for God in our lives far beyond what any obedience to law could ever do.** The law of Moses was based on the concept of “do and you will live.” But the grace that was revealed on Calvary cries out, “Because of grace we will do.” In the realm of grace the Christian works because he is saved, not in order to be saved.

It is by grace that we are new creatures in Christ (2 Co 5:17). We are raised from the waters of baptism to walk “in newness of life” (Rm 6:4). It is a new and living way because we are living within the realm of God’s grace. Under grace, we put away our efforts to trust in human accomplishments. Our salvation is not based on human attainment. It is based on faith that responds to the favor of God toward us through our Lord Jesus Christ. **The grateful always live more abundantly than the law-driven.**

Understanding Paul’s description of grace enlightens James’ statement, *“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues to abide in it, not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, **this man will be blessed in his deed**” (Js 1:25).* The blessing comes when men realize that they have been freed from the curse of perfect law-keeping and brought into a realm of grace wherein there is freedom, not only from sin, but also from the demands of law that it be kept perfectly in order to bring salvation.

Our relationship with God is not impersonal and legal. The child of God enjoys a wonderful liberty, having been set free from the bondage of law in order to walk by faith. It is this liberty from the curse of our inability to keep law perfectly that we cry out in thanksgiving to our Father, “Abba, Father.” *“And because you are sons,”* Paul announced, *“God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’”* (Gl 4:6; see Rm 6:15-17).

If Christianity were simply another system of law, then there would be no freedom from law. There would be no glorious grace. If Christianity were simply a law system of “do and live,” then we would again have been brought into the bondage of the curse of law. We must never reduce the “law of liberty” to a system of meritorious legalism. Such was what the judaizing teachers were seeking to do with the true gospel of freedom that Paul preached to the Galatians. Paul reminded the Galatians, *“But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed”* (Gl 1:8).

We must be careful about relegating Christianity to a system of legal codes. If we ritualize our worship as “acts” and “performances,” or bind a system and number of prayers, or attendances at meetings, or so many Lord Suppers, we will be in danger of subjecting the law of liberty to a “legal gospel,” and thus turn the grace of God into a meritorious system of justification. In doing such we would bring ourselves under the curse of law, and the condemnation that Paul

stated, *“... let him be accursed.”*

There is justification from sin only by grace. Justification can never be through works of law, simply because law condemns. Its purpose is to define sin. There can never be a system of trading a “good work for a sin.” Therefore, justification by law is impossible because we can never do enough good works to atone for a single sin.

Paul wrote, *“For Moses describes the righteousness that is of law, ‘The man who does those things will live by them’”* (Rm 10:5). Now God said to Israel, *“You will therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them”* (Lv 18:5). God was referring to perfect obedience to His statutes. But if one made just one mistake, then the law condemned him. Law could give life only if one kept it perfectly. But one is under a curse if he would be so arrogant as to attempt saving himself by perfect obedience to law. *“For as many as are of the works of law are under the curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them’”* (Gl 3:10).

With law comes the curse of not being able to comply with all the statutes of God. Those who would seek to be justified by perfect keeping of law are thus under the curse of law that calls for judgment of lawbreakers. Justification could have been possible exclusively under the Old Testament law only if one could have kept it perfectly. This is also true of the law of Christ. However, one would be foolish to seek eternal salvation through

perfect keeping of law. The attitude of the one who would be so presumptuous as to think he was a good “law keeper,” would disqualify him from being a candidate for heaven.

Modern-day legalistic teachers will always magnify the works of man, and subsequently seek to boast because of their good works, or obedience to their system of law that they have orchestrated out of an outline of proof texts. They will magnify the works of man to be meritorious in earning the grace of God. The works of man are often magnified to the point that the grace of God becomes a subpoint in one’s theology, if not altogether forgotten. Unfortunately, men too

often exalt rituals over right living, while promoting orthodoxy to the exclusion of loving relationships. We often blind ourselves with our own glory to the point that we can no longer see the glory of the cross. We need a reality check in understanding that Christianity is not a religion of men. Neither is it a religion that is based on man-made rituals and ceremonies. Christianity is grace. Someone was right when he defined the attitude of the true disciple of Jesus:

**I will not work my soul to save,
For that my Lord has done;
But I will work like any slave,
For love of God’s dear son.**

Chapter 8

A New Covenant And A New Law

One of the common misunderstandings that surrounds the subject of grace is that there are no conditions to receive its blessing. Founded upon the erroneous concept that God individually predestined individuals before the creation of the world to either heaven or hell, an unfortunate theology was developed that has distorted God’s offer of grace to all men. The cross is thus considered an inconsequential act on the part of God to fulfill His obligation to those He had already predestined.

This erroneous theology is that grace was given only to those who were individually elected for eternal dwelling, and thus grace has been unconditionally given only to the elect. And if grace was

supposedly unconditionally given to the individually predestined, then there need be no law for the elect. Since the individually elected were predestined to heaven, then they could break no law that would send them into apostasy and condemnation. To those of this theological persuasion, Paul’s statement, “we are not under law,” means that there are no conditions to receive the grace of God. Grace was irresistibly given to the elect, and thus, no matter what “the chosen” may do in life, they are saved.

Not only does the preceding theology make God a respecter of persons, it stands contrary to the grace of God and makes a mockery of the atonement of the Son of God on the cross. If by the time

of the cross grace had already been given to the elected few, then the cross would have been senseless. Why would the Son of God need to incarnate and suffer if the saved were already predestined for eternal glory?

But the grace of God revealed on the cross was not in vain, nor was it a simple public show that was performed by God. It was grace revealed, and grace that is to be accepted upon conditions that are obeyed by anyone who would respond. For grace to be grace, it could never have been appointed for a predestined few who did not need to respond to the cross. It could not have been free to all men if it could be accepted only by those who had already been predestined to glory.

Grace is God's favor that He extends to all His creation. And since He has extended it to all men, then all are called to respond in obedience to His will. This means that the free gift must be received according to the will of God. It was not cheap grace at the cross. And no man should think that he can receive it with a cheap faith.

This brings us to the subject of how one accepts the free gift of grace. What does God require of us in order to walk in the realm of His grace? In order to walk in the light of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7), there must be instructions. The Bible refers to these instructions as law. We are not afraid of the word "law," because we know that God did not give those under grace a meritorious system by which they must save themselves without His grace. Therefore, we define law through the eyes

of grace, not through the ability of ourselves to presumptuously claim that we can save ourselves.

A. Prophecy of a new law:

Through Isaiah 2:2,3, God promised Israel that there would be a new law coming, a law that would originate from Jerusalem.

*And it will come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house will be established on top of the mountains, and will be exalted above the hills. And all nations will flow to it. And many people will go and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will **teach us His ways** and we will walk in His paths." **For out of Zion will go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.***

Isaiah's prophecy was about the coming of the Messiah. The coming of the Messiah would involve the establishment of the Lord's house (See 1 Tm 3:15). The establishment of the Lord's house would involve teaching, and in order for one to be taught, there had to be a standard, a law, that must be taught. Therefore, a law would go forth to be taught to the people.

Before His ascension, Jesus pointed the disciples' minds toward the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2,3. He said to them, "... *and that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in*

His name among all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk 24:47). When the preaching of remission of sins began (At 2:38), then the law was taught, which law went forth out of Jerusalem to all nations. With the preaching of the remission of sins that comes with the grace of God, comes also the instructions (law) by which men must live in order to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7). One is saved by grace, but must walk according to the will of God, for it is our faith that establishes the law of faith in our lives (Rm 3:27-33).

Throughout His ministry, Jesus made statements as, “*Whoever hears these words of Mine and does them And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them ...*” (Mt 7:26). “*For whoever will do the will of God, he is My brother and My sister and mother*” (Mk 3:35). “*And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things that I say?*” (Lk 6:46). The New Testament writers followed these statements by the following: “*... for not the hearers of law are just before God, but the doers of law will be justified*” (Rm 2:13). “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*” (Js 1:22; see 1 Co 9:21).

The fact that we are under grace does not mean that we are not under any obligation to be obedient to the word of God. One of the greatest deceptions in the theologies of men today is the teaching that we are saved by grace alone without any instructions from God as to how we must behave as Christians. But this is not the conclusion that we draw from the preceding prophecy of Isaiah. Though

the Christian walks in the grace of God, there are instructions from the Father. These are instructions to guard us from doing that which is against the will of our Father.

Peter said that we have “*been born again, not by perishable seed, but imperishable, by the word of God that lives and abides*” (1 Pt 1:23). This is the word of God that we believe and obey in order to be born again (See Jn 3:3-5). It is this same word that directs our lives as we obey it. This is the word by which we are saved, as James wrote, “*Receive with meekness the implanted word that is able to save your souls*” (Js 1:21).

B. Prophecy of a new covenant:

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant that God would establish with the houses of Judah and Israel.

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the days that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they broke, although I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this will be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts.

Through Jesus Christ, Christians are

now under this new covenant relationship with God (See Mt 26:28; Hb 8:8-12). This covenant relationship with God is different than the covenant that God made with Israel when He brought them out of Egyptian captivity. Under the new covenant, **people are first taught the law of God**, and then they obey the law of God before they come into a covenant relationship with God.

The old covenant with Israel was different. God brought the people out of captivity, and then established a covenant with the nation on Mount Sinai. He gave them the law, **which law they had to be taught because they were already in a covenant relationship with God**. But under the new covenant, one already knows the conditions of the covenant when he is baptized into a covenant relationship with God. This is exactly what Jesus meant when He said, *“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they will all be taught of God.’ Therefore, everyone who has heard and has learned from the Fa-*

ther comes to Me” (Jn 6:45).

Israel was brought to God, and then taught the law. But under the new covenant, people are taught of the grace of God that was revealed at the cross (Ti 2:11). They then voluntarily come to Jesus. But in order for one to come to Jesus, he must be taught not only that Jesus is the Son of God, but what is required of one to come into and live in a covenant relationship with God. One must be taught the word of Christ. *“If you continue in My word”* Jesus said, *“then you are truly My disciples”* (Jn 8:31). Under the new covenant, there are commandments (laws) to be obeyed if one would continue as a disciple of Jesus. *“If you love Me you will keep My commandments”* (Jn 14:15; see Jn 14:21,23; 15:10,14). Walking in the grace of God does not relieve one of the responsibility of walking in the commandments of the Lord (See 2 Pt 3:2; 1 Jn 2:3-5; 5:2,3; 2 Jn 6,9).

Chapter 9

Christians Under Law

Prophecy of the new covenant and law teaches that Christians are now under law, but not under law as a means to be justified before God, for they are justified through Jesus. Grace does not exclude law. On the contrary, the free gift of God’s grace is the opportunity for all men to respond to law. And in responding through faith, we obey the will of God.

After Paul successfully argued the case that no one will be justified before God through meritorious keeping of law, he stated in Romans 3, *“Therefore, by the works of law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by law is the knowledge of sin”* (Rm 3:20). However, take a closer look at the conclusion of Romans 3. Did Paul contradict himself when he concluded, *“Do we then make void law*

through faith? *Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish law*” (Rm 3:31)? It is not that God gave a way of escape from law when He freely offered grace that was accessed through obedient faith. Though there is a difference between the law of faith and a meritorious system of law whereby the Jews sought to justify themselves before God, there is still a law for the Christian that must be identified, explained, and finally, obeyed.

The legalist would argue that one is justified by law. But Paul argued, you are justified, therefore, keep law, knowing that your failures in keeping law do not undo your justification.

A. The law of the Spirit:

“*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death*” (Rm 8:2). Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied that a new law would come. And here it is. It is the “law of the Spirit” that is placed in contrast to the law of Moses, and the principle that law in and of itself brings spiritual death. Paul explains in verse 3. “*For what the law [of Moses] could not do in that it was weak through the flesh [no one could keep it perfectly], God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*” (Rm 8:3).

Law has always been “weak through the flesh.” It is weak because it is impossible for anyone to keep law perfectly in order to be justified before God. Outward ceremonial performances of the statutes of the law cannot reconcile one to

God simply because our obedience to the statutes is flawed (Rm 3:23).

The Hebrew writer explained the problem with the law of the first covenant that was made with Israel. “*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them ...*” (Hb 8:7,8). The fault was not with the law or the covenant. The fault was “with them.” The fault is never with the law of God, for the law of God is holy, just and good (Rm 7:12). The fault is with us.

The “law of the Spirit” freed us from our inadequate efforts to be justified by meritorious works of the flesh. Jesus came to condemn the sin that comes from our inabilities of the flesh. He has given us freedom in our minds by assuring us that we are saved by the grace of God, apart from law. Our confidence, therefore, is not in the performance of our flesh, but in His grace that covers our lack of performance in the flesh. Our faith is in God to declare us justified by His grace. We do not have to depend on perfect performance of the flesh. So Paul wrote, “*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin*” (Rm 7:25). Though Paul was obedient as much as possible to the will of God, he had no confidence in his works of law. His confidence through faith was in the grace of God. This was the “law of the Spirit.” Since our faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rm 10:17), then it is by our faith that we serve the law of God.

B. The law of Christ:

In Galatians 6:2 Paul wrote, *“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* In the New Testament there is the “law of faith” (Rm 3:27), the “law of God” (Rm 7:25), the “law of the Spirit” (Rm 8:2), the “law of liberty” (Js 1:25) and the “royal law” (Js 2:8). All these statements refer to the same law. Therefore, when Paul speaks of “obedience of faith,” his reference is to obedience to what God would require of Christians as conditions in their covenant relationship with Him. The works of law about which Paul spoke in Romans 4:2,4 and 9:11, however, refer to works of law about which one could boast, and thus, reference is to meritorious works of law, specifically meritorious efforts to keep the law of Moses. But when Paul referred to “obedience of faith” in reference to law (Rm 1:5; 16:26), he was speaking about obedience to the “law of faith,” “law of

the Spirit,” “law of liberty” and “royal law.” There is no room for boasting in reference to keeping this law since the Christian knows that it is impossible to keep law perfectly in order to be saved. *“For sin will not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace”* (Rm 6:14). The Christian is not under the necessity to keep law perfectly, but under the necessity to keep law.

Christians are not under a meritorious system of law that requires perfect obedience. They are under a law of freedom where they are continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus that manifested the grace of God on the cross, which blood continues to work in the life of each Christian (Ti 2:11; 1 Jn 1:7). Christians, therefore, must be cautious about turning the law of Christ into a meritorious system of law. To do such would be reverting back to the system by which the Jews sought justification under the law of Moses.

Chapter 10

The Purpose Of Law

In 1 Corinthians 9:21 Paul wrote, *“To those who are without law, as without law, though not being without God’s law but under Christ’s law, so that I might win those who are without law.”* Some have argued that the Christian is no longer under law because we are under grace. In fact, some have assumed that because we are supposedly not under law that we are under grace alone. But this thinking is contrary to the subject of obedience that

saturates the New Testament. Jesus set forth the principle of obedience in the initial statements of His ministry. *“Not every one who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven”* (Mt 7:21). *“If you love Me you will keep My commandments”* (Jn 14:15; see Rm 2:4-11; 2 Th 1:6-9; Hb 5:9; 1 Pt 4:17). Christians are under the “law of liberty” (Js 1:25). They will be judged

by the law of liberty (Js 2:12).

Justification by grace through obedient faith does not mean that we are not under law. *“By the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight”* does not mean that there is no law of Christ in existence today (Rm 3:20). Though we are not under a system of law whereby we seek justification, we are under the law of faith because we are justified. Now *“do we then make void law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish law”* (Rm 3:31). We are not under a law whereby we seek justification through meritorious keeping of law, but under law whereby we receive direction in life as an expression of our faith. As the justified, we seek instructions from God whereby we can know that we are walking in the light (1 Jn 1:7).

A. Law for the justified:

The justified live under law, but the means by which they were justified was not by law. Neither is it by law that they continue to be justified. Paul said it clearly. *“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through law, then Christ died in vain”* (Gl 2:21). The righteous are not righteous through any system of law, but they are not righteous without law. **They do not nullify the grace of God by turning the law of Christ into a system of meritorious justification.**

Christians are under law (instruction) by which they have assurance that they are following the will of God. If there were no law of God in existence

today, then Christians would never know for sure if they were pleasing God. Law brings comfort, freedom and assurance. It brings comfort in knowing that we are the disciples of Jesus by keeping His commandments. It brings freedom because we guard ourselves from creating laws after our own traditions. We are thus free from ourselves when we submit to the law of God.

1. Moral law: In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul defined unrighteousness as fornication, idolatry, covetous, and a host of other violations of God’s moral laws. If Christians did not know that fornication was against the will of God, then some would, as the Corinthians, justify fornication without feeling guilty about violating the will of God. Law, therefore, identifies moral sins.

A moral law is self-evident. It is a law of a self-evident standard of right and wrong by which a moral man can make a free choice. If one chooses that which is wrong, then he has violated his intellectual awareness (his conscience), and thus, has sinned. Paul wrote of this. *“For when the Gentiles who do not have law do by nature the things contained in law, these having no law, are a law to themselves; who show the work of law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else excusing one another”* (Rm 2:14,15).

God held the Gentiles accountable to their conscience. Their self-realization of right and wrong was the law unto themselves, though this law was not written

as it was for the Jews who were given the written oracles of God (Rm 3:1,2). The Gentiles were to be held accountable to the God who was witnessed to them by the creation. “... *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is manifest within them, for God has shown it to them. For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and divinity, so that they are without excuse*” (Rm 1:18-20).

The Gentiles who coexisted with Israel were without excuse because they knew about God. They witnessed His existence through the things that were made. Nevertheless, they gave up a knowledge of God and ran after their own moral unrighteousness. If there were no New Testament law of Christ today, there would still exist this moral law by which men would be judged.

2. Law of worship: “*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*” (Jn 4:23). If there were no law in reference to worship of God, then we would have the right to worship God according to our own inventions. In our ignorance, we would surely establish our own systems of worship, falling under the condemnation that Jesus pronounced on the Pharisees. “*In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*” (Mk 7:7). We would be as the Greeks who had no law of God concerning worship

of the one true and living God, and thus, **we would worship in ignorance** (At 17:23). Therefore, there must be truth revealed by which we can be assured that we are worshiping God according to His will and not our own.

If there were no laws concerning true worship, then we would make laws for ourselves in reference to worship. We would make laws concerning places of worship, acts of worship, ceremonies of worship, and behavior of worship. The fact that this is true is evidenced by the numerous systems of worship that exist throughout the world today. What Paul wrote to the Colossians is certainly true today. “*These things have indeed a show of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and neglect of the body, but not in any value in restraining the indulgence of the flesh*” (Cl 2:23). If we were not restrained in our worship by the law of God, we would certainly create a worship that involved the indulgence of the flesh.

3. Law of ministry: “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to take care of the orphans and widows in their affliction ...*” (Js 1:27). How would we have known this if it had not been revealed by the Holy Spirit? In Jesus’ last statements concerning the judgment, He enjoined on His disciples that they feed the poor, clothe the naked, and give drink to the thirsty (Mt 25:31-40). But how would we have known this benevolent behavior if it were not spoken with authority by the One of whom we claim to be a disciple?

Instruction (law) is given in the New

Testament in order to give direction for our behavior and relationships with one another. Through law we know what is right and wrong. God did not leave us to ourselves to invent our own laws of moral conduct.

To make a statement that Christians are not under any law of God is senseless and reckless. We have witnessed too many people who have conducted themselves according to their own moral standards—if indeed they had a consistent standard—and lived licentiously (See Jd 4). To take Paul’s statement that we are not under law out of the context in which he made the statement will lead to all sorts of immoral and unethical living. God did not give man the ability to establish his own moral codes, or the measures and controls by which He would be worshiped. These things must be revealed by God to man. God gave law to man in order to prevent man’s own self-destruction.

B. The purpose of law:

Law was never given for the purpose of bringing salvation to man. The fact that it was not is in the reality that God knew we could never keep any system of law perfectly in order to be declared righteous before Him. It is simply true what Paul said, “**By the works of law no flesh will be justified**” (Rm 3:20; see Gl 2:16). If we can understand this one truth concerning law, then we can understand why there must be divine law for man from Adam to the final coming of Jesus.

The fact that God has given law does not assume that He considers law the foundation for our salvation. The reason law cannot be considered the foundation for salvation is the fact that if our keeping of law—though we might keep it perfectly—**would mean that there was no need for grace**. “*Now to him who works, the reward is not credited according to grace, **but according to debt***” (Rm 4:4). If law could save, then we would assume that God would save us by our keeping of law. We would thus need no grace, for by our obedience to law we would have put God in debt to save us. But the reward (salvation) can never be based on debt. If it were, then there is no need for grace. Christ would have died in vain. We could have accomplished our salvation on our own. So the fact that God has given law, does not negate grace. And since grace has been revealed, then we need to determine the purpose of law while we are under grace.

1. **With law comes the knowledge of sin.** “... *for by law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rm 3:21). If there were no law given by God, then we would not know what would be considered right or wrong. Paul wrote, “***I would not have known sin except through law, for I would not have known coveting except the law had said, ‘You will not covet’***” (Rm 7:7). God’s law, therefore, becomes a rule of awareness. Through law we know what is good and what is evil in the eyes of God. Law, therefore, keeps our minds focused on God in our relationships with one another.

2. **Law directs our relationships**

with other people. Law not only sets the pattern for our conduct, but also the principles by which we must conduct our relationships with others. Paul corrected the Jewish Christians in Galatia who had withdrawn themselves from the Gentile Christians upon the arrival of some Jews from Jerusalem. He wrote of the incident, “*I saw that they [the Galatian Jewish Christians] were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel ...*” (Gl 2:14). Their conduct was not reflective of the nature of the gospel of God’s grace, for God showed no respect of persons when He offered Jesus upon the cross (See At 10:34,35). Because the gospel is for all people (Jn 3:16), then our behavior in obedience to the gospel must reflect to all people the nature of God. Through law we do not have the right to manifest respect of persons (See Js 2:8-12). Through law we know when we do the will of the Lord (Mt 7:21). Through law we know when we are obeying Jesus (Hb 5:9). In our relational behavior with one another we can know that we are fulfilling the law of Christ (Gl 6:1). If there were no law of Christ, therefore, then Christians would have no confidence in their behavior because they would not know if they were reflecting the will of Christ in their relationships with one another. But when we walk according to the commandment that we receive from God, then we can walk with confidence because we know we are obeying the will of God (See 2 Jn 4). We must remember 2 John 6. “*And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have*

heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” Remember 1 John 2:3? “*And by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.*” In order for us not to be led astray in following after the doctrine of demons, God had to reveal to us His commandments in order that we might know that we are obeying Him (See 1 Tm 4:1-5).

3. Law is the means by which the Spirit leads us. “*The way of the truth*” was revealed by the Holy Spirit through the apostles and prophets (2 Pt 3:2). The result of this revelation was freedom. “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death*” (Rm 8:2). By the leading of the revealed truth of God, the Spirit directs our lives. “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God*” (Rm 8:14).

The sons of God follow the law of God. It is by this following of the will of God that everyone can determine who the sons of God are. If we were left without law, no one would be able to determine who the sons of God truly are. It is for this reason that our sonship can never be determined experientially. People of all religious faiths have great emotional experiences. If we had to determine who the true sons of God were by the emotional experiences of people, then we would be left to total confusion. The confusion would be as great as the confusion of the emotionally misguided. We can thank the Holy Spirit, therefore, that He inspired instructions for the behavior of the sons of God. “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*

for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tm 3:16,17). This is a very powerful statement. It is powerful in reference to the will God being revealed through the Holy Spirit in order that the sons of God be led correctly in their daily walk in the truth (See Gl 5:16-25).

The conclusion of any discussion on law in reference to the Christian, is Paul’s statement of 1 Timothy 1:5-9:

*Now the purpose of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience and a sincere faith, from which some, having swerved, have turned aside to meaningless discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor what they affirm. **But we know that the law is good, if a man uses it lawfully.** Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners ...”* (See vs 5-11).

Chapter 11

Walking With The Romans Through Grace And Faith

There could have been no person more qualified to write for human posterity the two most precious books in the Bible on the subject of grace than the one, who at the time of his death, still confessed that he was the “chief of sinners” (See 1 Tm 1:12-17). Who else than Paul could the Holy Spirit have chosen to pen the inspiring words of both Romans and Galatians.

In Galatians the Spirit, through Paul, wrote against those who were seeking to make Christianity a system of legal performance by which men might attempt to justify themselves before God through law-keeping. Such was the religiosity of Paul while living the Jewish life of Saul. If Galatians was the first inspired New Testament letter written, then it was the Declaration of Independence of Christians from a futile system of justification through law-keeping.

In Romans, the Spirit went right to the point to identify the nature of Christianity by contrasting grace with the Jews’ efforts to justify themselves through self-imposed law. If one gets the point of Romans, then God has gotten that person. Romans is the defining principle upon which Christianity is built, and thus, the principle that establishes the difference between Christianity and all man-made religions.

Man-made religion is based on man who contrives a system by which he would please the god he has created after his own imagination. His religion, therefore, is contrived. It is contrived after self-imposed behavioral rites and rituals he would perform in order to please his mind-conceived deity. And thus, his religion is man-made. The further away from the word of God that a religious person is, the more his religion is filled

with his self-made religious performances (See Cl 2:23). Such is the problem with many today who have little knowledge of the word of God. They, as the Jews in reference to the Old Testament, have constructed their own system of religion, and yet, they seek to hover under the umbrella of Christianity.

But true Christianity it is different. The principle of Christianity is grace, and thus, if we thoroughly understand the revelation of grace through the suffering Son on the cross, then we know whom we have believed and is able to keep us until that great day when He is again revealed from heaven (See Rm 8: 28-39; 2 Tm 1:12). Christianity, therefore, is about Christ, not man.

We do not mean to present an extensive commentary on the letter to the Roman disciples. In this chapter we simply seek to focus on the theme of the message that Paul sought to reaffirm to all Christendom. It is important to focus on some thoughts of those key statements that Paul made in order to build his overall theme of salvation by grace through faith.

A. Romans 1:5; 16:26

*“...through whom we have received grace and apostleship, for **obedience of faith** among all the nations, for His name” (1:5). “... but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all nations for **the obedience of faith**” (16:26)*

It was as if the Holy Spirit knew there would be those who would misunderstand Paul’s use of the word “faith” throughout this book. Thus in order to clarify what He wanted us to understand in His use of the word “faith,” the book of Romans is started and concluded with the same definition of faith. When we talk about the faith that is pleasing to God it is “obedience of faith.” It is not faith alone, neither obedience alone. It is not the dead faith that is unresponsive to the will of God. It is a faith that seeks to obey all that God would require, both of the alien sinner who is seeking redemption, and of the saint who is seeking to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7). It is not a meritorious obedience, but a faith that trusts in God’s grace, not in one’s performance of law. When the word “faith” is used by Paul in the context of Romans, think about one trusting in God for justification, not in one’s performance of law in order to be justified. So when faith is mentioned by Paul, always assume that it is obedience of faith. It is a faith that moves one to do all that God would require to be saved.

The works about which James wrote is parallel to the obedience of faith that Paul here introduces in the book of Romans (See Js 2:14-26). There is no conflict between Paul and James on this matter. Paul’s reference to works in Romans are those **meritorious works of law** by which one would seek to justify himself before God, and about which one could also boast (See Rm 2:17). The **obedience of faith** that Paul here mentions and James clarifies, is faith that is perfected

by obedience. Paul uses the phrase “obedience of faith” in contrast to the works that cancel faith, and thus nullifies grace. The works that perfect or complete faith in the context of James 2 are not the meritorious works of law that cancel faith and nullify grace about which Paul speaks. The works about which James wrote are the result of true faith.

The Bible interpreter who cannot distinguish between the meritorious works of law against which Paul writes in Romans, and the works of faith that James defends, will never understand Paul’s theme of the book of Romans. Paul speaks of the obedience of faith. It is a faith that is perfected by action. It is a faith that goes to work in the alien sinner to seek out what God would require of one to be saved. It is a faith that exists and is recognized as pleasing to God only when it goes into action.

We could illustrate this active faith by what was prophesied of Jesus in Luke 2:11. The angel of the Lord said to the shepherds, “*For to you a Savior is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.*” Was Jesus a “saving Savior” at the time of His birth? Certainly not! **He was a “saving Savior” only when He actually went to the cross and paid the price of an atoning sacrifice for our sins.** It was only then when He became our Savior and Redeemer from sin.

Can one have faith before it goes into action? Certainly! But it is a faith that is pleasing to God **only when it goes into action.** It is a saving faith only when it is “obedience of faith.”

Now connect this thought with He-

brews 5:8,9. “*Though He was a Son, He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him.*” Jesus became the Savior only after He obediently suffered. **He was perfected as our Savior only after He obediently went to the cross.** And so it is with our faith. Our faith must be perfected by obedience. Before obedience, our faith is simply a mental recognition that God exists and His Son was revealed. But faith must go beyond our mental recognition. This is why Paul uses the phrase “obedience of faith” at the very beginning of his discussions concerning our access into God’s grace. It is only when faith has been perfected through obedience does it have affect in reference to our salvation.

Salvation under grace is a system of faith. From the beginning of time, there has never been salvation outside this principle. The meritorious works of law, because of faith, always lead to sin and death. However, a faith that is not perfected by works cannot save, for in such a faith there is no response, no thanksgiving, no appreciation for the grace of God that appeared on the cross. **The faith that does save is active, visible, responsive and perfected by obedience.** But it is not meritorious obedience. For this reason, saving faith can never be a meritorious faith since our salvation is always by grace and not earned by works. Since it is obedience of faith that gives us access to the grace of God, then our faith is perfected by obedience to the will of God.

This obedience does not make void the grace of God. It is the faith that gives us access to the grace of God.

Since this point can be easily misunderstood by those who are of the “faith only” or “grace only” persuasion, please allow us to repeat this in different words. One must be careful not to misunderstand Paul when he uses the phrase “obedience of faith.” He did not mean “meritorious obedience of faith.” If he had, then he would have cancelled grace. “Obedience of faith” is one’s obedience to all that God would require of us to be saved. And because we seek His salvation through faith, we are willing to do all that He requires of us. If he had meant “meritorious obedience of faith,” then we would no longer be under grace, but law, for we would seek to obey the statutes of law in order to continue to be saved. Paul’s “obedience of faith” is not meritorious faith by which the alien sinner, or the Christian, seeks to move God through debt. It is a faith that moves man to be obedient to all that God would require of one to initially obey what is required of one to be saved, and then, to obediently walk with Jesus according to the will of God. As the Christian lives within the realm of God’s grace, his faith is perfected by his obedient walk in the new and living way.

B. Romans 2:28,29

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that

of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter”

Paul’s first defense and definition of grace is that grace is not defined or applied to anyone because of physical lineage or racial identification. Being a Jew gave no one an advantage into the realm of God’s grace. The true spiritual child of God (“Jew”) is one who has dedicated himself (“circumcision”) in the heart to walk by faith. Paul spoke of this in Colossians 2:11,12. *“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism”*

The Jews concluded that they were in a special salvational relationship with God because they were the chosen people. They concluded that they automatically stood in the grace of God because of their Jewish heritage. When Paul discusses subjects concerning grace and faith, therefore, at the beginning of his arguments he cancels out any advantage of being born of Jewish heritage. Salvation by grace through faith existed before the establishment of God’s special covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. It continues today after the death of national Israel at the cross (See Rm 7:4). Salvation by grace through faith, therefore, has nothing to do with heritage.

C. Romans 3:28-30:

“Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works

of law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since it is one God who will justify the circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through faith."

If one trusts in God's grace to save him, regardless of his imperfect obedience, then he is declared righteous in his fallible obedience. For this reason, both Jews and Gentiles can be justified before God by faith regardless of their heritage or access to the Old Testament law.

When we discuss the matter of grace and faith, Paul continues to emphasize that it is a matter of heart, not heritage. In order to understand this point, Paul is saying to his fellow Jews that they must step away from their heritage, even the Old Testament law, in order to come to God as individuals, not as Jews.

So Paul reminded the Jews that they could not be justified by the system of law that was given to them on Mount Sinai through Moses. There is no justification by keeping of any system of law simply because no one can keep any system of law perfectly in order to demand justification. "... *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rm 3:23). **The problem with any system of law is that there are no provisions for forgiveness.** Law demands justice according to the law. Through "*law is the knowledge of sin*" (Rm 3:20). And since no one can keep any system of law without failure, then "*by works of law no flesh will be justified in His sight*" (Rm 3:20; see Gl 2:16). Because there can be no justification through works of law, then "*apart*

from the works of law" "*God has set forth [Christ] to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood through faith ...*" (Rm 3:28,25).

Since there could be no justification by a system of law, it was in the plan of God that forgiveness come through our faith. God thus offered that which we could not accomplish through dedicated efforts of keeping law. And that which He offered was an atoning sacrifice through Jesus Christ in order to justify the unjust. Our faith, therefore, is not in our works of a system of law in order to justify ourselves, but in the Son of God who worked on our behalf at the cross. We understand, therefore, that our salvation must be based on a system of faith, and not a system of law. But does this faith set aside law? "*On the contrary,*" Paul concluded. "*We establish law*" (Rm 3:31). Through faith in God to provide justification through the cross, we have affirmed God's total purpose for giving the law to Israel. The Jews had to understand that they could not save themselves through the Old Testament system of law, but through faith in God who would initiate and maintain their justification through the blood of Christ (See 1 Jn 1:7). By faith, therefore, we reaffirm the "*law of faith*" by which we maintain obedience of faith in our lives as we walk in the light of His word. The "law of works" demanded perfect obedience. The "law of faith" demands a perfect sacrifice at Calvary and a total dependence on the grace of God.

Works focuses on man, whereas faith focuses on the cross. Any system of salvation that turns man's focus to him-

self to be justified before God can never be true. It cannot because we are all sinners. When we speak of justification before our Creator, therefore, all focus must be on the One who grants eternal existence in His presence through grace.

D. Romans 4:4,5

*“Now to him who works, the reward is not credited according to grace, **but according to debt.** But to him who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness”*

If we meritoriously work for Jesus, then we are trying to obligate God to pay us for our work. But if we trust in God to save us, regardless of our insufficient obedience, then we are credited righteous because of our faith.

All focus of our lives for our salvation must be on God, for it is He who grants that which we so earnestly desire. It is not within the working power of man to grant himself eternal life. Our eternal life is based on the promise of God, and the promise is based on His grace.

One must keep in mind that when the word “works” is used in the context of discussions in Romans in reference to our quest for eternal justification, Paul’s reference is to meritorious works, not works of obedience. And when we discuss meritorious works, we are actually identifying man’s focus on himself. The Jews came with the argument that because they received and kept the Old Testament law, they were justified before

God. Their focus was on themselves as Jews who had been gifted with the oracles of God (Rm 3:1,2). Paul’s counter argument to this thinking was that **by meritorious works of any law no one can be justified before God, for such works of law focus on the performer, not the Giver of grace** (Rm 3:20; see Gl 2:16). In the context of Romans 4, therefore, Paul is arguing against justification by meritorious works by saying that we are saved by obedience of faith in the One who alone initiated the covenants and made the promises concerning that which we so desire.

In the context of Romans 4 Paul reminded the Jewish audience of the fact that Abraham was accredited as righteous as a Gentile before he was circumcised (Rm 4:10). Because he walked by faith before circumcision, God chose him to be the father of all those who walk by faith. He was granted the privilege of a covenant marked with the sign of circumcision because he walked by faith. He did not receive the covenant of circumcision because he earned it through works. Through his obedience of faith, however, he was justified. *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works [of obedience] ... and by works was faith made perfect”* (Js 2:21,22).

Both Paul and James quote Genesis 15:6 in reference to the justification of Abraham. The harmony of the two writers is clear in the context in which each wrote. Paul focused on Abraham’s faith that worked. James focused on Abraham’s works that manifested his faith. Paul’s reference to Abraham is in

the context of stating that by works without faith one cannot be justified. James' reference to Abraham is that one cannot be saved by faith without works of obedience. The faith that always avails before God is the faith that is reflected through obedience. But the works that always fail before God are meritorious efforts to put God in debt to save us.

In Romans 4 Paul is specifically stating that the promise given and fulfilled through Abraham was in no way accomplished by any meritorious efforts on the part of Abraham. Because of grace, God established a covenant with Abraham, through which covenant all nations would eventually be blessed. The promised blessing would not and could not be worked out by Abraham. Abraham and Sarah tried to do this through Hagar, but God did not accept Hagar's child as the one through whom the promise would be fulfilled (See Gl. 4:21-31). Both the giving of the covenant and the promise to Abraham was God's work alone. Because Abraham trusted in the promises of God, he remained true to God through faith, and thus, he was credited righteous before God.

In Romans 3 & 4 Paul established Abraham as our father of faith. We could all agree, therefore, that in being justified by a faith that worked, Abraham was saved. But consider his justification by an obedient faith in view of what Paul stated in Romans 4:4. Did Abraham's work of faith, whereby he was justified according to James, **put God in debt to save Him**? Paul will bring this subject up again in Romans 11:6 where he said,

“And if by grace, then it is no more by works, otherwise grace is no more grace.” Was the promise fulfilled because of meritorious works on the part of Abraham, or by obedience of faith? If the fulfillment was because of meritorious works, then the fulfillment was a debt that God had to pay.

It is here that we must again make a distinction between works of obedience to what God commands, and meritorious works whereby we assert that we can put God in debt to save us. The works of Abraham had to be the former. As the father of our faith, Abraham did not through his obedient works of faith put God in debt to save him. His works, therefore, could never have been meritorious, for meritorious assumes that merit is earned, and thus, the one who grants the awards must pay upon the basis of one's merits. **But God can never be indebted to save man on the basis of man's performance.** We are only clods of dust in whom He has invested a spirit. Can this clod of dust back God into a corner and demand eternal life?

Now we must take this thought one step further. Was Abraham justified before God through his obedient faith alone? Think about this before you answer. If at the time he lived and obediently believed, was Abraham saved by his walk of faith alone? If so, **then why the cross**? Abraham was justified by obedient faith, but his obedient faith did not obligate God to offer redemption through the cross. The cross was in no way a payment of debt to those who were justified by obedient faith. In order that his read-

ers not come to an erroneous conclusion in his discussions concerning Abraham's justification by faith, Paul stated clearly, "But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rm 5:8). All mankind was under sin when Jesus died on the cross, even Abraham. Abraham could be justified by faith, therefore, only in view of the cross that was yet to come.

Abraham was included in the plural pronoun "we" of Romans 5:8. "We," as all sinners, are all there, sold under sin and unable to free ourselves from the bondage of sin. No matter how many obedient works Abraham accomplished, he was still in the "we," and thus, under condemnation if there were no cross in the future. His obedient faith could never have put God in debt. If his obedience would have put God in debt, then the cross was not the result of grace. **Jesus' sacrifice was never a payment of debt for obedient works of faith.** Right in the middle of Paul's discussions concerning Abraham's justification by faith, he implanted a most vital statement. "... whom God has set forth to be an atoning sacrifice by His blood through faith in order to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins in the past because of the forbearance of God ..." (Rm 3:25).

God could declare Abraham justified because He knew that the cross was coming. It would be there, at the cross, and only there, that all the faith of the fathers would find salvation through the blood of Jesus. The Hebrew writer repeated the meaning of Romans 3:25. "And for this reason He is the mediator

of the new covenant, so that by means of death for the redemption of the transgression committed under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

We must never conclude that we put God in debt through our obedience, even though our obedience is a response to the law of God. With our obedience comes the promise that God, through His grace, will eventually deliver us from the confines of this world. Clods will be transformed (1 Co 15:35-58). But the transformation will never come as an obligation to pay debt on the part of God. It will always be through His grace that He will keep His promise. But we must also never forget that it is a promise and our faith must be in the promise. So we anxiously read again Hebrews 6:13-20.

For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For indeed men swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all dispute. Therefore, God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of promise the unchangeableness of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast

and which enters within the veil where Jesus, the forerunner, has entered for us, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

E. Romans 4:14,15

“For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise has been nullified because the law works wrath, for where there is no law, there is no transgression.”

If one’s religious heritage is a guarantee to receive the promise, then both faith in the grace of God and the promise itself are nullified. This is true because the law works condemnation through sin.

Meritorious law-keeping produces wrath because law reveals sin that must be punished. Transgression of the law demands justice. And because there is no mercy in law, then those who break the law are considered dead in sin. If there were no law, then there would be no sin. But since men cannot cohabit with one another without law, then law must be given. It cannot be invented by men, for men in their corrupt thinking would devise “Hitler laws” by which they would feel justified to exterminate one another. Law, therefore, must come from a Higher Power. It must come from God. But since law is from God, then God demands justice when law is broken. Therefore, if we had to rely solely on law in order to receive the promise, then we would not realize our desire. We must conclude, therefore, that law was never given by God as a condition upon which the prom-

ises of God were guaranteed to be received. If obedience to law were a condition for receiving the promises, then our sin against law would always hinder the fulfillment of the promises.

The fact that God now calls on all men to repent of laws broken (Lk 13:2; 2 Pt 3:9), manifests the truth that law now exists against which all men have sinned. So man is left with futility in reference to receiving the promise. It can never be received through law itself, and thus, must only come as an act of grace on the part of God. Paul’s argument throughout Romans is to frustrate those who would strive meritoriously to justify themselves before their Creator, and then, think they can demand the promise. The truly honest person knows that there can be no justification through meritorious law keeping. He is thus driven by faith to the grace of God. He is driven from his own efforts to save himself to the One who only has the power to grant the promise through grace, regardless of law.

F. Romans 4:16

“Therefore, it is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be guaranteed to all to see, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.”

Since salvation is by faith, then grace is granted to both Jew and Gentile. Since the promise of God is that all men be saved in Christ, then all who come to Christ through faith receive the promise

of grace upon their obedience of faith. Therefore, Abraham is the father of all those who would come to God through faith.

Grace and law are in harmony with one another. Some have assumed that grace eliminates all law and works, and thus there is no harmony between grace and law. The tragic conclusion to this unfortunate reasoning is that it is believed that there can be absolutely no obedience on the part of the alien sinner in reference to his salvation. As a consequence, many alien sinners are left just outside the door that leads to a life-time of walking in God's grace. They are left there believing that their faith only has warranted them the right to declare their own salvation apart from obedience of faith.

But consider this. If faith and grace exclude obedience, then they exclude all faith. Jesus said, "*This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent*" (Jn 6:29). If one believes, is he not also obeying? If believing is obeying, then the claim that grace excludes obedience also excludes faith. Any assertion that grace and faith exclude obedience eliminates faith. And thus the conclusion to the assertion is that salvation is by grace only apart from faith. And if this is true, then all men are saved; none will be lost.

If there is no obedience of faith, then one is left with one of two conclusions: either all will be saved, or God is made a respecter of persons in that He unconditionally chose certain individuals on whom He would shower His grace. But at the same time, He individually destined

to eternal hell those who are not given His grace. Either conclusion is diabolical in the sense that God is conceived to be an unjust and fiendish god. He would be unjust to allow Hitler into eternal glory together with the persecuted Christian. He would be fiendish by predestining some to eternal hell apart from their own choices. Those who contend that we are saved by grace alone need to take another look at the conclusions of their theology.

It is the work of God that we believe. Faith is the highest form of work, for it involves the total commitment, the total life of the believer. Through faith one gives his entire life for the One who gave all for us on the cross. So are we saved by faith? Certainly! We are saved by faith if our faith involves the giving of our lives as a total sacrifice for God (See Rm 12:1,2).

Take another look at Titus 2:11,12. "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age*"

The grace of God **teaches us** the sacrificial life. If there is no law or obedience connected with grace, then grace is worthless in directing us to live sensibly, righteously and godly. Therefore, **all those who are saved by grace are taught by grace to live according to the will of God.** Paul instructed us to "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Ph 2:12). We can do this through the grace of God that causes thanksgiving within our spirit. Paul explained. "... *for it is God who works in*

you both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Ph 2:13). Here is the personal commentary of Paul: **“But by the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me”** (1 Co 15:10; see 2 Co 4:15). It cannot be more clear than that. God’s grace “teaches” by being the empowering motive in our hearts to go to work for Him because of what He did for us.

Those who would extract obedience from grace have cut the heart out of Christianity. They have destroyed the true motivation for discipleship. They have revealed their ungrateful hearts and lazy attitudes. If God’s grace does not move one unto obedience, then he has no right to claim that he is saved by grace apart from obedience in appreciation and thanksgiving for the cross. On the other hand, those who have realized the tremendous gift of grace on the cross, are always *“zealous of good works”* (Ti 2:14; see 2 Co 4:15). And because they have been moved by grace, their works will follow them right into eternal glory. It will be as revealed through John. *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”* ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, *‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow them’*” (Rv 14:13)

G. Romans 6:14

“For sin will not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”

Sin does not reign in the life of the Christian, because the Christian is not under a system of faith by which he must keep law perfectly in order to maintain his justification before God. Though the Christian may sin, through the grace of God he is continually cleansed of sin in the blood of Jesus. The Christian is now under a “system” of faith by which there is continual cleansing by the blood.

The Christian is not under a system of justification through meritorious law keeping. He is saved by the grace of God that is accessed through the obedience of faith (Rm 1:5; 16:26). Throughout Romans 6 Paul emphasizes that Christians must live righteously because they have in baptism obeyed the gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rm 6:3-6). They are now walking in newness of life, and should have no reason to go back to unrighteousness by trying to be justified by a meritorious system of law. Since they are no longer under such a system that brought only death in sin, they should be encouraged to move on under grace.

This does not mean that the Christian will not sin. Since he has been raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life, he walks in the light. And *“if we walk in the light as He is in the light ... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 Jn 1:7). When one comes forth from the waters of baptism, he is in Christ and not under the bondage of sin (Rm 6:6). Paul reminds the Roman Christians *“that our old man was crucified,”* therefore, *“consider yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our*

Lord” (Rm 6:11). The conclusion would be: “*Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you should obey the lusts of the body*” (Rm 6:12). Sin does not have dominion over the disciple of Christ because he has been baptized into Christ, and thus, is in continual contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus. Since he is in Christ, the faithful disciple seeks to walk obediently in the light of God’s word. The Christian’s walk is by faith in the grace of God, not by faith in his own performance of law or meritorious deeds. As a result, the statement, “*sin will not have dominion over you,*” (Rm 6:14) is defined by the statement, “*we should no longer be bondservants to sin*” (Rm 6:6).

Paul clearly explains that sin would no longer have dominion over Christians. These to whom he was writing were those who had been baptized into Christ. They were no longer under a system of law whereby justification was sought through the perfect keeping of law. They were now under grace, and though they could not live without committing sins, the continual cleansing of the blood of Jesus in their lives kept them cleansed of sin (1 Jn 1:7). The obedience of their faith (Rm 1:5) kept them in the grace of God. If they sought to go back under a system of law keeping in order to seek justification, they would have come under the judgment of Galatians 5:4, “*You have been severed from Christ, you who seek to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace.*”

H. Romans 6:17,18

“But God be thanked that though you were the bondservants of sin, yet you have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching that was delivered to you. And having been freed from sin, you became the bondservants of righteousness.”

Before coming to Jesus, we were bondservants of sin in our efforts to justify ourselves through our own ability to keep law. Our deliverance was a matter of the heart. When we submitted in our hearts to the teaching of the gospel of grace, we were freed from sin by being freed from the necessity of perfect performance of law. We were thus declared righteous before God through faith in His grace. His declaration of our righteousness now moves us in heart to be His bondservants (2 Co 4:15).

The obedience of faith by which Paul introduced and concluded Romans is here explained as obedience to a “form of teaching” that was delivered to all those who would walk by faith (See Rm 1:5; 16:26). This is the “*obedience to righteousness*” (Rm 6:16). There is no question that our salvation is by grace. But we must keep in mind that grace is that which is provided by God. Faith is our part. But our faith must be demonstrated in obedience to the “form of teaching” that comes from God (See Jn 12:48). Obedience is a required demonstration that we have faith in God’s grace.

Through the cross, God has offered the grace that saves. It is the responsibility of man to accept His grace through obedience of the gospel in order to walk in His righteousness (See Rm 6:3-6).

It is an unfortunate mistake to think that God offers the free gift of grace without any obligations on the part of man. When Paul said that our justification “*is of faith that it might be by grace,*” he meant that our obedience of faith is required to access the grace (Rm 4:16). Any lack of faith on the part of man will lead to our futility in accessing the grace of God. “*... for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (Hb 11:6). It is faith that moves us to seek the reward of grace. Without faith, there is no seeking of the reward. It was of this “seeking faith” that Paul proclaimed to those of Antioch of Pisidia, “*.. and by Him all who believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses*” (At 13:39).

We cannot be saved by works of law simply because law proves that we are lawbreakers. We cannot atone for our failures in reference to law by good works devised by men as meritorious offerings for sin. But we are saved by those conditions the Lord has prescribed that we follow in order to manifest our faith in His word. And in doing this, Jesus becomes “*the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him*” (Hb 5:9). Paul began his discussion of Romans by stating precisely how one begins his walk of faith in obedience to the good news of

Jesus’ death for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (Rm 6:3-6).

I. Romans 7:4

“Therefore, my brethren, you also became dead to the law through the body of Christ, so that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, so that we should bring forth fruit to God.”

Those who have been crucified with the body of Christ on the cross, are dead to the Old Testament law, as well as the necessity to keep law perfectly in order to warrant justification. Jesus was crucified in order to make all those who come to Him dead to meritorious obedience. In our obedience to the gospel (Rm 6:3-6), we were made dead to the bondage of law in order to be set free in our resurrection from the grave of immersion.

Because those who have obeyed the gospel are now under grace, they are no longer under the necessity of keeping law perfectly in order to justify themselves by works of law. The statement Paul makes here in Romans 7:4 is a continuation of the thought of Romans 6:14: “*... for you are not under law, but under grace.*” The Christian came under grace at the time he was raised with Christ from the waters of baptism. The Old Testament law functioned to bring the Jews to the cross. But now that the law has been made inactive, Christians are dead to it as a binding law (Rm 7:1-4). “*Therefore, the law was our headmaster to bring us to Christ so that we might be justified by*

faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a headmaster” (Gl 3:24,25).

If one would bring forth fruit to God, he cannot go back under a meritorious system of law. When those Jews who were once under such a system joined with Christ through their obedience to the gospel in baptism, they were made dead to meritorious law systems. If a Christian would seek to turn the law of Christ into such a meritorious system, then he is severed from Christ (Gl 5:4). He cannot bring forth fruit to God because he has been cut off from Christ.

J. Romans 8:1

“There is now, therefore, no condemnation to those who are in Christ”

The obedient believer has been baptized into Christ, wherein he is not in a state of condemnation that was brought on by his former failure to perform law perfectly. His walk in the light of God’s grace keeps him cleansed of his inability to perform perfectly.

If one would choose to walk by law alone, then he walks under condemnation, for under law sin abounds. Law manifests sin. As a meritorious system of law, the Old Testament law was a law of sin and death in and of itself. There was no provision for forgiveness within the law. James explained the problem: *“For whoever will keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he has become guilty of all”* (Js 2:10). One sin makes one a lawbreaker, and thus, condemned

by the law. But under the law of faith and grace, there is mercy that is manifested through grace. Christians do not walk in a state of condemnation because at the waters of baptism they have connected with the cleansing blood of Jesus (At 22:16). They continue to walk in the cleansing blood in their Christian life (1 Jn 1:7). They are thus not in a state of condemnation. This is exactly what Paul meant in Romans 8:2. *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death.”* Because the Roman disciples had been baptized into Christ (Rm 6:3,4), they were set free from a system of law that pronounced and condemned all men to be sinners. And thus they were freed from the death that is demanded by law.

K. Romans 10:6-10; 11:5,6

“But the righteousness that is of faith thus speaks, ‘Say not in your heart, “who will ascend into heaven?”’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring up Christ from the dead). But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith that we preach; that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and will believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation” (Rm 10:6-10).

“Even so then, at this present time there is also a remnant according to the

election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more by works, otherwise grace is no more grace” (Rm 11:5,6).

Notice carefully that in Romans 10:6-10 the statement is “*believe unto righteousness*” and “*confession is made to salvation.*” In both statements it **does not** say “believe and confess **for** righteousness and salvation.” Keep in mind that Paul wrote the statement of Romans 10:6-10 on the background of the argument that he had already settled in Romans, that salvation is by grace through obedient faith. Therefore, he reveals in Romans 10 that one must **believe** in God as the provider of righteousness through His grace. We as individuals, and before we were baptized into Christ (Rm 6:3), **confessed** that we could be saved only by grace that was revealed through the sacrificial Son of God. Believing in saving grace and confessing our own inability at keeping law, but the ability of Jesus on the cross, brought us to the cross and the waters of baptism. It was there that salvation was realized when we contacted the saving blood of Jesus. Therefore, before the point of baptism, every response on our part was “unto.” It was our obedience of faith that took us to the cross, grave and resurrection with Jesus (Rm 6:3-6). When we came out of the waters of baptism, therefore, it was then that we were saved.

The word “remnant” in Romans 11:5 is from the Old Testament. A remnant of Israel was delivered out of Babylonian captivity and returned to the land of promise. Paul metaphorically uses the

word in this context to refer to the remnant of the Jews who have come out of the captivity of law in order to believe and confess unto salvation. By faith the sons of Abraham chose to be delivered from the futility of a meritorious system of law keeping (See Gl 2:16). It was not that they meritoriously submitted to another law. Their obedience of faith moved them to submit to all that God required of them to come into a new covenant relationship with Him (Jr 31:31-34). They were given access to this covenant of grace, and therefore, they responded by faith to what God required of them to covenant with Him.

In the contexts of Romans 10:6-10 and 11:5,6, Paul contrasts two possible means by which one would seek to be saved. (1) There is the possibility of salvation by perfect law keeping. (2) There is salvation by grace. There are only these two means by which the remnant could choose to be saved. Paul had already argued in Romans with the obvious conclusion that “*by the works of law no flesh will be justified in His sight*” (Rm 3:20; see Gl 2:16). Therefore, the first option would not justify one of sin before God. Man is left only with the second option, justification by grace. The first option is salvation by meritorious works without the grace of God. The second option is salvation by imperfect obedience under the grace of God. Their only option was to believe unto the righteousness of God through grace, and confess their inability to save themselves, and thus depend on the ability of Christ on the cross.

Salvation has always been by grace

from the beginning of time. Enoch was saved by grace through faith (Hb 11:5; see Gn 5:22). However, he obediently “walked with God” (Compare 2 Jn 4). Noah was saved by grace, but he built an ark in obedience to the will of God for the salvation of himself and his family (Gn 6:22). Abraham was saved by grace

through his faith because he obeyed to offer up his Son. Only by the grace of God was he saved. The fact is that there is no salvation apart from the grace of God. Our access into this grace is through an obedient faith in God’s promise to deliver us from sin.

Epilogue

Paul stated to some proud Corinthians who were comparing their works with his, “*Your boasting is not good*” (1 Co 5:6). In his second letter to the Corinthians he wrote, “*For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that in holiness and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you*” (2 Co 1:12). Some in Corinth evidently tried to validate themselves as “spiritual” leaders because of their faith. To such we would remind ourselves that our faith is not in faith itself. Faith in and of itself is no means of salvation. No matter how strongly one might believe, even to the point of dying for his faith, he can never reap salvation by faith in faith.

We are inundated by those who use their faith as a testimony that God is working in their lives. Bookshelves are stacked with testimonies of those who have used their faith in their faith as a validation that God was working in their lives. We are sometimes reminded of Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 11:12,13: “*But what I do I will continue to do so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to*

be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading themselves as apostles of Christ.”

We have throughout this document referred to baptism into Christ by which one comes into the realm of God’s grace. Some would consider such obedience to the gospel to be a meritorious work. We believe that such thinking has been sufficiently refuted in the fact that obedience to what God requires of men to do to be saved **is never a meritorious work. It is not legalistic to do what God commands us to do.**

But here is the point we would make. We have never heard of anyone who has boasted of his or her baptism. We have heard many boast of their faith, but no one boasting of their obedience to the gospel as if their salvation was meritoriously acquired through their baptism. When Paul made the statement, “*Be not arrogant, but fear*” (Rm 11:20), he certainly did not mean such in reference to one’s baptism in obedience to the gospel. He did not because baptism was in obedience to the gospel in order to be born again into Christ. One cannot boast of

that which God requires of us to be saved. How can one boast of baptism when baptism comes from God, not man?

We would conclude, therefore, that our boast is in Christ, into whom we have come through obedience of the gospel. It may have been a struggle of faith to bring us to the point of obedience to the

gospel, but our boast is not in our faith, but in the marvelous grace of God by which we are saved and sustained through the blood of Jesus. The conclusion of the matter is Paul's thanksgiving: "*Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift*" (2 Co 9:15).