

Grace and Good Works

Every believer has been called to partake of the marvelous grace of Christ in our union with Him. God has made Christ to be everything to us. We are joined to Him. We are joined to His supply. It is so marvelous that we can live off of Him. Don't try to live off of yourself. Live off of Him. Whatever it may be, just the way you are, without one plea, just live off of Him. We can draw, we can call, we can admit, we can confess, and we can tell the Lord anything and everything in order that we might partake of His bountiful and rich supply. This is grace.

The meaning of grace in the New Testament

John's testimony concerning grace in John 1:16 is clear: "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace in exchange for grace" (lit.). This means one experience of grace after another. We start with grace, and then it is exchanged for another grace. So it is multiplied grace. Our life is just learning to remain in a receiving position, receiving from the fullness of His Person. This surely implies that Christ is not just a name or a figure back there two thousand years ago. He is a present Person, resurrected and alive. Hallelujah! He is right now transmitting Himself into our being. All of His victory and everything that He is becomes our portion and supply. What a Christ we have as our portion!

The New Testament is one book after another telling us more about the grace proceeding out of this

Person. It reveals the Christian life as a life with grace as the starting place and grace as the ending place. It is God supplying us every step of the way. It has nothing to do with ourselves in terms of anything we can do out from ourselves — "Not by works of righteousness which we have done" (Titus 3:5). We are justified by grace! He finds us just the way we are, and then He does everything over us and in us, that we might learn how to partake and draw from Him. So our life is really a life of multiplied grace.

Consider in the New Testament how the word grace occurs everywhere. Every Epistle starts out with grace, and every Epistle ends with grace. For example, Philippians 1:2 says, "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Then this Epistle ends with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (4:23). And Galatians ends with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (6:18). The dominance of grace in the New Testament means that God wants us to know that He has done everything. It is a word that conveys to us how God feels about us. It conveys God's disposition toward us, including His unmerited favor. Because of Christ and His redemption, God's attitude has forever been changed toward us as sinners. Now God reconciles us, justifies us — all because of Christ and what He did for us. So grace includes God's thought, attitude, and disposition toward us.

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But grace is not just God's attitude toward us; grace is also God's power toward us. It is Christ Himself as resurrection power coming into us to change us and to do in us what we could never do in ourselves. In other words, grace is not just God looking favorably at me from the heavens yet remaining detached from me. Grace is Christ actually coming into me, operating in my heart, taking away the stony heart, and inclining me to love Him. Grace is an inner, divine operation in my will to produce a willingness that I do not have in myself. It is Christ doing everything in me by His own resurrected energy. It is a ceaseless working, whether I feel it or not. Our life is hidden with Christ in God, and day by day this Person is operating in us and working in us to effect a change in our being. It is all grace. Indeed, He is "the God of all grace" (1 Pet. 5:10).

Grace is a word that describes the sum and substance of our Christian life. It reveals not only God's attitude toward us, but also God's very presence and power in us. On God's side, grace is both His attitude and His power; then, on our side, grace is enjoyment. It is sitting at the table, like Mephibosheth at David's table in the Old Testament, with our deformed feet under the table, out of sight, and feeding on the Word of God's grace (2 Sam. 9:13). Grace means we learn to feed on the Lord and enjoy Him by coming to Him just the way we are. We are learning how to lay our self aside and how to bypass solving our own problems by going directly to the source of our supply — to eat of Him and to drink of Him. So on our side, grace is enjoying and partaking of God. And on God's side, it is His favorable attitude toward us while at the same time He is working inwardly to transform us.

Years ago I was at the end of seven years of Bible school, seminary, and studying the Bible. Despite the Bible knowledge I was acquiring, it was not making a difference in my daily life. My life was basically falling apart and I could not get it together. And then the Lord spoke to me, "Put everything away and just go to the Word. And don't get a sermon. Don't get three points. Forget about your alliteration and go for Me." And I did that for one week, for the first time in my life, and everything changed. It was not because I tried to make it change, but it was because God became my portion. It was like someone had shot vitamins into me — vitamin C, vitamin B-complex. All the spiritual minerals and vitamins just got imparted into my being,

and all of a sudden, I didn't feel weak. Inwardly there was a supply, there was a divine energy, and the problems were gone. It happened because of learning how to lay everything aside just to come and feed upon God.

Every lack that we sense in us is only a call to draw once again from God as our source. It is a constant reminder that in us dwells no good thing and that the supply is not in ourselves. We are not the source. So our feelings of lack are not occasions for discouragement. Our feelings of lack are calls to drink more of Jesus by calling on His name and going deeper into His Person. Then we are just living off of God. This is grace.

Grace and good works

Not only is grace in the New Testament, but also good works are mentioned throughout its pages. It seems that these two matters are in opposition to one another. It seems that when we talk about good works we have switched tracks from grace, and now we are on another track that somehow throws us back onto ourself to operate out from our own energy. Whenever "good works" or "works" are spoken of, we somehow switch gears and move into a realm other than grace. But grace and good works are both in the Bible in a positive way.

If you want to see the polarized situation between grace and works, just look at Paul's statement in Romans 3:28 about being justified by faith apart from works, and then turn to James 2:24 to see that a man is justified by works and not by faith only. How do you explain this? How do you explain that James so boldly says a man is justified by works and not by faith only, while Paul says a man is justified by faith apart from the law and apart from works? Apparently this is a contradiction. But not really. Always remember that whenever you think something is contradictory in the Bible, never trust your thinking. Trust that God has a higher thought than you see. We know the Bible is one book, and Paul's ministry and James' ministry were one ministry, speaking the same thing.

We need to appreciate the relationship between grace and good works. Really it is very simple. Good works are just grace bulging. Grace bulging is grace abounding (2 Cor. 9:8). When grace bulges, it becomes good works. Do you know what it is to bulge? When you bulge, you expand. So good works are just the

bulging of grace, the expansion of grace. They are not something different from grace; they are the coming out of grace. Good works are the issue, the fruit, and the result of grace. Good works prove that the grace in us is genuine. Good works are just an extension of our enjoyment of grace. So when we are enjoying the Lord's life and following that life, there is something that comes out as good works. We need to see the relationship between our enjoyment of grace and its expression as good works.

The inner source of good works

Our experience of grace in a genuine and practical way is a testimony on this earth of the kingdom. For example, Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Notice that it says "that they may *see your good works*" — let them be seen. But do not forget the first part of the verse: "Let your light so shine before men." In other words, good works are just the outshining of this life that we are enjoying. So when I am enjoying Christ as my light, the issue will be good works. John 1:4 says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." To *let* our light so shine before men is to let the inner life of Christ as our light come out of us. It is not to outwardly hold a little candle. It is to inwardly let the shining of our inner enjoyment of Christ beam out of us in the form of good works. Thus, good works are just grace in another form. Ephesians 5:8 tells us that we are now "light in the Lord." When I enjoy that light and stay in that light, I "let" it shine, and then there is an outflowing. That outflowing is called "good works." These are practical deeds and specific actions particularly in relationship to others. Good works are just Christ applied in a specific way to meet the needs of others.

Good works prove the genuineness of what is in us. At the end of the New Testament in the Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, there is an atmosphere of some spurious and counterfeit things that had come in among the believers. There was feigned faith and there were other things that were not genuine. So these brothers ministered in a way to expose that which was genuine and that which was not genuine — that which was from the anointing and that which led astray. For example, James' mention of good works as the proof of

genuineness shows that he was addressing a situation where there was some hypocrisy.

When James talks about faith in his Epistle, he is not talking about faith in the same sense that Paul speaks of it in Romans and Galatians. In those Epistles, Paul speaks of initial faith for initial justification. He mentions faith in that sense — initial faith. Initial faith comes by hearing the gospel. Upon hearing, we are saved and justified in a split second through faith. This initial experience is by grace and not of ourselves. That is the nature of faith in many of Paul's passages in Romans and Galatians.

But when James mentions faith, he is talking about an already existing faith. He is addressing not initial faith but indwelling faith. It is faith like Timothy's in 2 Timothy 1:5-6, which dwells within and needs to be stirred up. It is faith that can be tested. It is faith that can be tried to such an extent that it reveals to you that your salvation experience was not just an emotional one. You can pass through trials and tribulations and count it all joy though this faith be tried with fire. In other words, the faith that James is talking about is tested faith. It is the faith that is genuine and can pass through the trials and go all the way to the judgment seat. James is speaking of faith in that sense. He is not speaking of faith as a gift of God without works as in Ephesians 2:8-9. He is speaking of faith as an already received gift that can be tested.

When genuine faith is tested, it always has works with it. For example, James 2:1 says, "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality." That is, do not have faith in that way. How do you have faith? How does it dwell in you? In which way do you possess this faith? Is it hypocritical? Or is it genuine? James is talking about an existing kind of faith that lives in you, and he is telling you not to have the faith of our Lord Jesus with something that is so incompatible with it. We can see then that James is talking about faith in another sense. It is not a matter of "receiving" faith in the book of James. It is a matter of "having" faith in a way that is compatible with the Lord Jesus. So we have to see that works are very precious in James' Epistle because the good works are the expansion of faith and grace. They are the outflowing of faith and grace in a practical way.

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Christ as Our Rock

(Part One)

A living stone. A cornerstone. A foundation stone. A capstone. A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. A smiting stone. The rock of salvation. The rock of refuge. The smitten rock. The rock that is higher than I. The rock of ages. Remarkably, all these biblical titles refer to Christ. How striking! That Christ is pictured as a rock so frequently and in so many different aspects through the pages of the Bible is surely noteworthy. It is readily apparent that the Holy Spirit is revealing to us a wonderful reality of Christ for our experience.

The Solid Foundation Rock

David said, “He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps” (Psa. 40:2). In this passage, David is talking about what his feet (his whole being) and his steps (his daily life) are founded upon. At certain points in his life, David found himself in a pit of miry clay. We all know what moving about in miry clay is like — it is easy to slip, fall, and even sink, because nothing is solid or secure. It is hard to get any secure footing. This is how David describes his inward condition at certain points in his life. But at those points, David cried out to God, and God brought him up out of the miry clay and set his feet on a rock. A rock is different from clay. A rock is so solid. When our feet are on a rock, we have a sure footing so that we can stand and walk with great security. This means God Himself became the solid footing for David’s life. As a result, God established his steps.

The Lord Jesus also spoke of different kinds of footing in the Gospels. But instead of using miry clay in contrast to the rock, He used sand. He said, “Everyone therefore who hears these words of Mine and does them shall be likened to a wise man who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they burst against that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall” (Matt. 7:24-27). In this parable, the Lord likened our life to a house that is being built. And the central point of the parable is this: what are we founding our house upon? That is, what are we founding our lives upon? Is our life founded upon the sand or the rock?

In this parable, the rock refers to Christ and His Word. Those who have founded their house upon the rock are the

believers who have founded their life upon Christ. In other words, Christ is so preeminent in their lives that everything they do and every decision they make is based upon Him, is out of Him, and is unto Him. But others have founded their lives upon the sand. The sand refers to our human resources, which includes our energy, talents, abilities, and efforts as well as the lure and promises of the world. The world promises so much — happiness, success, wealth, and pleasure. It tells us that if we exert ourselves and try hard enough, we will reap great contentment. So we resort to our own energy and abilities to achieve happiness and success, be it in education, career, marriage, or family life, and we are trusting that the world will live up to its promises. This is what the Lord refers to as sand.

But then a storm comes — a big storm. Problems arise in our marriage. We fail in school. Our children are rebellious. We lose our job. Our finances become impossible. Our health fails us. Meaningful relationships fall apart. And what happens? We collapse! We find that everything we hoped in and depended on in the world is unreliable and shaky at best. We find that the world cannot deliver as it had promised. We find that we are not as strong and dependable as we had imagined. Our inward resources of strength seem to run out. In the midst of the storm, our life falls to the ground, and as the Lord said, “great was its fall.”

And what about the man who built upon the rock? He too experiences the great storms of life. He is not exempt from storms. Indeed, his storms are just as bad as anyone else’s. Yet, his life is not founded on the world’s empty promises or on the energy of the self, but on Christ. Christ is his rock! The Word of God is his foundation. So that when life’s trials come, he finds something so solid within him. Yes, money, health, or relationships may be lost in the storms of life. But because this man’s life is not founded on these things, his house remains. His life is not in shambles. It still stands. Why? Because he is founded on Christ, the solid rock.

The Example of Marriage Life

Let’s take a practical example — marriage life. So often marriages are founded, right from the beginning, on human affection, common interests, or physical attraction. There is often a high expectation that your spouse will be the source of true happiness, based on a perception of how wonderful he or she is. However, every marriage eventually goes through storms. Yes, there may be a “honeymoon.” There may be a period where marriage seems to satisfy every desire you have ever had. It seems that your marriage is so solid — that nothing could ever break it up. Yet eventually storms come. Your spouse begins to irritate you with some recurring habit. Disagreements over finances, the children, the in-

laws, or household chores arise and create bad feelings. Often these disagreements culminate in a big storm precipitated by a certain circumstance. In the midst of such a storm, it seems that your human affection runs dry. The common interests and the physical attraction you had do not matter anymore. Your high expectations of your spouse being the eternal fount of happiness are dashed. And you discover that your starry-eyed perception of your spouse was largely exaggerated. In other words, you begin to discover that your marriage has been founded on sand, not on the rock. And too often, when the storm is over, the marriage has collapsed!

But now let us consider a marriage that is founded on Christ the Rock. What does it mean to have Christ as the Rock of a marriage? First, it means that the husband and wife do not look to one another to be the source of their happiness and contentment. They both realize that only Christ can satisfy. Only Christ can impart deep joy and contentment. They have abandoned any expectation in each other, realizing that only Christ is the unfaltering fountain of satisfaction. Second, it means that they do not resort to their own resources to keep or sustain their relationship. Christ knows how to be a husband and how to be a wife. He knows how to love unconditionally, how to forgive, how to be longsuffering, how to drop petty complaints. They realize that the self is utterly bankrupt when it comes to relationships. So they let Christ live in their daily life. They join with Paul and declare “for to me, to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21). Third, it means that they both have one goal in their marriage — to gain Christ. When the storms come and the winds blow, they have one common goal — to know Him, to experience Him, and to love Him. They do not focus on settling issues or hashing out problems. They focus on gaining Christ! They have founded their marriage on Christ the Rock.

And what a rock He is! How reliable, how solid, how faithful! He will never fail us. He is the “Rock of ages,” the everlasting Rock (Isa. 26:4). In other words, Christ has been a solid rock from eternity past and He will be a solid rock into eternity future. Throughout all the ages, human civilizations have come and gone. They rise and they fall. But Christ is always the same — unshakable! Indeed, nothing can shake Him. This means that we can put our full trust and assurance in Him. It means that if we build upon Christ in every aspect of our life, we will never be disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6). When the storms come, the winds come, and Satan comes to buffet us, our whole life stands so secure in Him. The Bible tells us that a time is coming when everything that can be shaken will be shaken (Heb. 12:26-28). But Christ will not be shaken. His kingdom will not be shaken. So let us ask ourselves this crucial question: what are we founding our lives upon? Upon the sand or upon the Rock? May we found our entire lives on Christ, the solid Rock.

The Smitten Rock That Follows Us

Christ is not only our solid foundation Rock. He is also the Rock that follows us! Did you ever realize a Rock is following you wherever you go? Speaking of the children of Israel in the wilderness, Paul says, “and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). Of course, Paul is referring to a particular experience Israel had while in the wilderness, as recorded in Exodus 17. The people were complaining to Moses that there was no water to drink. Moses cried out to the Lord, asking Him what to do. The Lord replied to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink” (Exo. 17:5-6).

This is most unusual. The Lord told Moses to take a rod and strike a rock, and out of that smitten rock would flow water for the people to drink. Why a rod? Why a rock? Why would water come out of a rock? It would have been much more normal for God to tell Moses to dig a well in a certain spot and have water gush out of the well. But He did not do it that way. The question then becomes, why did God do it this way? It is because He foresaw Christ, the spiritual rock. That is, He foresaw that the day would come when Jesus Christ would be smitten on the cross. Moses’ rod represents God’s righteous law. And God’s righteous law smites all unrighteousness. The Bible tells us that we are sinners and we are unrighteous in God’s sight. Thus, we are deserving of God’s smiting judgment. But the Bible also tells us that Christ went to the cross and stood in our place. That is, Christ, who did not know sin, was “made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). The Just One took our place at Calvary and bore the fury of God’s righteous law. Christ was smitten by God on our behalf (1 Pet. 3:18; Isa. 53:4). Now we can be justified before God by simple faith in Christ’s redeeming blood. This is wonderful! Praise Him!

But there is more. Out of the smitten rock, water flowed! The flowing water represents the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is often pictured in the Bible as flowing, gushing, living water (John 7:37-39; 1 Cor. 12:13). This is because the Spirit is a refreshing drink to quench our inward thirst. Without the flow of the Spirit, we are so thirsty — just like the children of Israel were in the desert. Our soul is like a dry, parched land. And people today attempt to assuage their inward thirst with so many worldly substitutes. But none truly quenches the soul’s parched condition. Only the Spirit can quench our thirst. So when Christ was smitten on

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Grace and good works in Ephesians 2:8-10

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, ⁸ “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Here it is more than clear that we are saved through faith, by grace. It is the gift of God, and specifically not of works. Then verse 10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” So verse 9 says “not of works,” and verse 10 says “for good works.” This shows us that there are two aspects that Paul is speaking of. We are nothing by our works. Our whole relationship with God is based on grace. And we are just drawing and receiving. It is the gift of God. You do not pay for the gift. You do not work for the gift. You receive the gift. It is just a pure gift. But now, having received the gift, guess what! You have been created in Christ Jesus. You have been remolded in your whole being, and now you are His workmanship. You are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works. So now there is an expression of good works coming forth.

Grace and good works in 2 Tim. 1:9 and Eph. 2:10

Now let us read 2 Timothy 1:9: “[God] who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” Here it is not according to our works that we were called and saved. It is according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us. So grace was given to us before the foundation of the world. And it was not of our works. In fact, we were not even born yet. We did not even have a chance to establish anything. God chose us. God selected. Out of His own purpose and grace He called us. So the grace was there before.

Then Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we were “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” So not only was the grace prepared, as 2 Timothy says, but the good works were also prepared. This means that as a believer I not only know that I am saved and that I have a relationship with God, but God is bulging in me. God is expressed in me. God is flowing out in me. What I

have is genuine and real because there is an issue, there is something coming out. So we can see that the good works are the expression of the grace.

Grace and good works in Titus 2:11-14

We find grace and good works brought together again in Titus 2:11-14: ¹¹ “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” In verse 11 it is grace that teaches me to deny. The word “deny” is a compound Greek word that literally means “to say no.” So the grace teaches me to say no. In the late 1980s one of the leading statements used in our country to campaign against drugs was “Just say no.” Probably a lot of people tried to just say no, but they did not have the energy to say no. They needed to be regenerated. Once you are regenerated, you are connected to the power source of the universe. And when you say no, you open the valve of God in your spirit to let Him flood your being.

The grace teaches me to say no. My no is my affirming that I am one with Christ my Head and with everything that He is supplying to me this moment. Just like you say yes, you say no. When you say no, you touch life. You touch the Spirit. When ungodliness comes up, when worldly pleasures come up, just say no. The grace teaches you to say no. So we can see it is altogether a participation in grace.

But if you do not know how to tap into that grace in your spirit, it is frustrating to hear that you need to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live righteously in this present age. You might say, “My, Paul, if you lived in this age you could realize the pressures toward worldly lusts. They surround us.” So if you are just looking to yourself — if you do not know that you have a spirit, if you do not know how to contact God at any moment with your mouth, how to call Jesus and touch the spirit, if you do not know how to interact with the Lord and how to draw from grace — then it is just more frustrating to hear “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.” You might say, “But I have been trying to do it.”

But the point is that what you need and what I need is to discover that grace is with our spirit. And you have a regenerated spirit. If you are a born-again person, the Lord lives in you and there is a supply in your spirit.

But you may say, “I am born again and I have prayed, but it doesn’t work.” Well, you have to realize there is a pressing-in sometimes. In Gethsemane the Lord cried, “Abba, Abba!” He pressed in to touch His willing spirit. So you have to know and I have to know that it is like a step of faith. It is like putting your foot out of the boat and stepping down. You wonder if something is really going to happen when you pray. But just keep praying. Get with some who know how to touch the Spirit. Let them help you. Let them coach you a little bit on how to get to what is in you — that supply of grace. And that grace is what is teaching us. God redeemed us for this. It is all His mercy, that He might have a people for His own possession, zealous for good works. This means the grace needs to be expressed now.

Grace and good works in Titus 3:5-8

Now let us look at Titus 3, beginning with verses 5-7: ⁵ “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Here we are justified by His grace, not by works. But now read verse 8: “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Have you ever noticed Ephesians 2, Titus 2, and Titus 3? These very sections of the Word that teach and reveal grace and faith and justification as something not of works are the very same sections that bring in good works, which are an expression, an overflow, of that grace coming forth in practical ways. And these good works testify to the genuineness of the inner life, rather than having a hypocritical faith or something spurious or out of deception.

Grace and good works in 2 Timothy 2:1-7

In 2 Timothy 2:1-7 Paul says, ¹ “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Then right away he says, ³ “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵ And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops.” Then he says, ⁷ “Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.”

At the beginning Paul says, “be strong in the grace,” or “be empowered in the grace.” And the issue of being empowered in the grace is a soldier, an athlete, and a hard-working farmer. This means grace is issuing in something of cooperation with the Lord. And in the verses that follow we see that this has to do with the future reigning of the saints who are now employing grace, using grace, working grace, cooperating with grace, and being stewards of the grace of God. Verses 11-12 say, ¹¹ “This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. ¹² If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.” So there is the matter of reigning due to being empowered in the grace as a soldier and athlete and hard-working farmer. This passage again shows us something coming out of grace.

Grace and good works in 2 Corinthians 9:8-9

Now let us consider what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:8: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.” This implies I am insufficient in myself to do any good work, to do anything that is an overflow of Christ and an expression of Him. In me there is no sufficiency. But Paul says, “always having all sufficiency in all things,” because the grace is coming. I am drawing from the grace and the grace is abounding to me. Then he says, “have an abundance for every good work.”

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We love Paul and we love James. We can see there is no polarization in what they say. It simply needs a clear, right dividing of the word of truth. We can see that our initial salvation and our standing with God is absolutely outside of our works, outside of ourself, outside of anything to do with us. It is His work, His grace. But then He gets into us. Then He operates. Then we draw. Then we are living off of God. And that issues in so many good works. And the good works are connected to the grace in chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians. Here Paul speaks of the giving of the money, the offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. And he speaks of it as “this grace” (8:6). He calls the monetary gift “grace.” And yet he also calls it a “good work” (9:8). So it is grace and good work. And this is the overflow. Good works are an issue of grace. They are the result of employing the grace.

Grace and good works in 1 Corinthians 15:10

Then there is such a verse in the Bible as 1 Corinthians 15:10 that tells us not to take the grace of God in vain. Do not take it in vain. In this verse we see Paul speaking in a very marvelous way: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.” That means it is possible that grace could be in vain. It is possible to have the grace but not have it do its work, not have it do what it was intended to do. It is like receiving a gift and putting it on the shelf and not employing it, not working it, not enjoying it, but just letting it be there. This is like the servant who had one talent and kept it and buried it and did not do anything with it (Matt. 25:24-25). So there is responsibility with the grace. It is not responsibility with the flesh, not responsibility with your self, but a responsibility with God, with opening to Him and contacting Him and drawing out of His storehouse of grace.

In verse 10, after Paul says that the grace toward him was not in vain, he adds, “but I labored more abundantly than they all.” This is works: “I labored. I labored more than they all.” Then he says, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” That is grace bulging in Paul. I labored, I labored. So much labor. Look at this man — toiling for the churches, caring for the church life, caring for the saints, doing all that he did. Look at the good works coming out of Paul. Look at this brother. He says, “I labored more than they all,

yet not I, but the grace which was bulging — the grace of God which was with me.” This shows that the genuine testimony of the enjoyment of grace is in the bulging. It is in the good works. It is in the expression. It is in the laboring. It is the athlete competing, it is the hard-working farmer sweating, and it is the soldier dealing with everything that takes him away from the one goal of his life. So this is the manifestation of the grace. We can see in all these passages, grace has an issue — good works.

— Bill Freeman

(Continued from Page 5)

the cross, water flowed out. This means that the cross released living water! The cross released the flow of the Spirit to man. Without the cross, without redemption, the Spirit could never flow. But because Christ died for our sins, water can now flow. The Spirit is available for us to drink.

So today we have a Rock that follows us. At any time, in any circumstance, the Rock is with us and we can drink from this Rock. His redemption is so secure. Just like a rock. And because of this, the availability of the living water is also so secure. The Spirit will never be taken away, nor will He ever dry up. He is available to us at any moment. The rock follows us as it did the children of Israel. Now, it is interesting to note that later on in Israel’s wilderness experience, the Lord told Moses that to obtain more water from the rock, he did not need to strike it again, but only speak to it (Num. 20:7-8). This signifies that Christ needed to be smitten (crucified) only once. Now that He has been smitten, we only need to believe. We only need to speak to the Rock — to thank Him, to pray to Him, to praise and worship Him, to sing to Him, and to call on Him. Speak to the crucified Christ and the Spirit will flow. Our thirst will be quenched. What a glorious reality!

— Kirk Eland

the Christian

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