

True Grace

By Leroy Surface

By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the *true grace* of God wherein ye stand.

I Peter 5:12

Consider the words, “*True Grace!*,” for a moment. When a thing is designated by the word “*true*,” it follows that there is also a “*false*,” or an “*imitation*.” In **John 15:1** where Jesus says, “*I am the true vine;*” it is certain, that there is also a “*false vine*.” The false vine can be found in **Revelation 14:19**, and is called the “*vine of the earth*,” which will be cast into the winepress of the wrath of God. In **John 10:11**, Jesus says, “*I am the good shepherd*.” It follows then, that there are also “*bad*” shepherds. Jesus calls them “*hirelings*.” They tend the sheep only for a salary; not out of love for the sheep. In our text, however, Peter closes his first epistle to the churches by reminding them of the purpose of his letter: “*I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein we stand.*” We can know by his words that Peter was aware of a “*false grace*” that was being taught, by false teachers, in the churches of his day.

Jude began his very brief letter by exhorting the people to “*earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints*.” The gospel of Jesus Christ that the apostles Peter, Paul, and John had preached was not to be turned away from. As Paul had told the Galatians, “*Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*” (**Galatians 1:8**). Thus were they to contend for that gospel faith of Jesus Christ. Jude clearly told what it was that false teachers were come into the churches to do: they were “*turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness*.” We know that lasciviousness is something that is “*wanton*,” or “*unclean*” of itself. The Greek word translated “*lasciviousness*” actually meant “*licentiousness*.” Jude said they were turning the “*grace of God*” into a “*license*” to continue in sin. We know what “*license*” is. We must have a driver’s license to drive a car. The license gives its holder “*permission*” to drive. The hunter must have a hunter’s license, the fisherman, a fishing license, etc. So many activities in the world today are legal only if you have the proper “*license*.” The person doing these things without the proper license are to be arrested and punished, but the one with the license enjoys the “*privilege*” of doing what others cannot do. The false teachers were giving the people a “*sin license*;” they called it “*the grace of God*.”

Paul encountered those people who believed they had a sin license. *“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”* Being totally void of understanding the gospel truth, they respond to Paul as related in **Romans 6:1**, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”* Paul’s answer in **Romans 6:2** leaves no room for doubt of the truth of the gospel he preached: *“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* According to Paul’s gospel, everyone who is *“born of God”* is also *“dead to sin”* (**Romans 6:11; Colossians 3:1-3; I Peter 2:24; II Corinthians 5:14**). Do you believe that you are a *“sinner”* whose sins are *“covered”* by *“grace?”* Do you believe that you will sin every day for as long as you live in this earthly body, yet go to heaven at the end because of grace? If this is the *“hope”* of your salvation, then you have believed that *“grace”* is a license to sin: that the more you sin, the more grace God gives to you. God forbid! I will seek in this message to reveal just what it is the apostle Peter called *“true grace.”*

Meet the God of *Mercy, Grace, and Forgiveness*

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, *merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin....*

Exodus 34:6-7

First we need to understand that God has always been a loving, forgiving God. He revealed His great name to Moses as *“merciful, gracious, longsuffering, full of goodness and truth, and forgiving.”* All too often people think of the *“God of the Old Testament”* as a *“tyrant,”* a *“God of wrath”* that was impossible for any man to please. Jesus said that He is *“...kind unto the unthankful and to the evil”* (**Luke 6:35**). Forty one times in the Old Testament we are told that God’s mercy *“endureth for ever.”* Twenty five times we are told that He is *“gracious.”* Hundreds of verses in the Psalms alone tell of His *“loving kindness,”* His *“goodness,”* His *“great mercy,”* His *“longsuffering,”* and His *“forgiveness.”* In **Malachi 3:6**, God said, *“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”* It was because of His love, His longsuffering, His mercy, His forgiveness, His promise, and His covenant that He did not absolutely destroy Israel for their backsliding. He is the immutable, unchanging God. He is nothing today that He has not always been. Is He a God of love and mercy today? He was a God of love and mercy throughout the Old Testament. Did He execute judgment and wrath against ungodly nations and sinners in the Old Testament? He will do the same today. Jesus’ death on the cross did not change anything about God. It didn’t even change the mind of God.

He has forever done all things based upon His own eternal purpose. That purpose, being eternal, has never changed.

It was over fifteen hundred years before Calvary that God stood on the mountain with Moses and declared His great name: *“merciful, gracious, longsuffering... forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.”* Obviously Jesus did not suffer and die to *“do”* what God had always *“done.”* The Old Testament record is filled with examples of God’s longsuffering, mercy, and grace toward man. One most incredible example is the record of King Ahab of Israel. Ahab was a very wicked king in the days of Elijah the prophet. Ahab and his wife Jezebel filled the land of Israel with altars to Baal and other strange gods. Of Ahab, it was written, *“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up” (I King 21:25).* The anger of God became so great against Ahab that He sent Elijah to speak destruction against him. Yet, in the day of God’s anger against Ahab, he humbled himself before God, and God forgave him. When wicked king Ahab repented, God said to His prophet Elijah, *“Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house” (I Kings 21:29).* Many like incredible examples of God’s mercy and grace were given throughout the thousands of years of time before Jesus suffered on the cross for our sin. Why then did Jesus die? He didn’t have to die to *“graciously”* forgive us, or to show mercy upon us. Calvary, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ on the cross, is about *“salvation from sin,”* and *“grace”* and *“glory”* to man.

Salvation

Of which *salvation* the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the *grace* that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand *the sufferings of Christ,* and the *glory that should follow.*

I Peter 1:10-11

You will notice there are four things I have italicized in this text. They are as follows:

1. *“Salvation,”*
2. *“Grace,”*
3. *“The sufferings of Christ,”* and
4. *“The glory that should (would) follow.”*

I believe we would all agree that “*salvation*” is by “*grace*.” It is necessary, however, to define both salvation and grace to see exactly what is meant by the term “*salvation by grace*.” Some time before Jesus was born to Mary, the angel Gabriel came to Joseph to reassure him that the unborn child was indeed the Son of God. Gabriel told Joseph in **Matthew 1:21**, “*Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.*” Salvation is not to be “*saved from hell*,” as so many teach and believe today. Neither did Jesus suffer and die to save the people “*in*” their sins. The only correct definition of Christian salvation is “*saved from sin.*”

Most “*Christians*” are confused on the issue of true salvation because of the almost universal teaching that Jesus died to take the “*penalty*” of our sins. These would teach that we are saved from the “*power*” of sin to damn us. This teaching leaves the people in their sins, but there is no “*penalty*” because, in their theology, Jesus took their penalty. Again, such teaching, even though it is thought by multitudes to be “*orthodox Christianity*,” is also erroneous. Jesus did not suffer and die to take the penalty of sin. John the Baptist introduced Jesus to Israel, saying, “*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*” John never mentioned the “*penalty of sin*,” but it was sin itself that Jesus died to take away, thus it is **not** the “*power*” of sin, but the “*presence*” of sin we are saved from. Finally, there are those who teach that Jesus suffered and died to give us “*power over sin.*” Again, this is error. Jesus suffered the death of the cross to give us “*freedom from sin.*” Notice **Romans 6:7**, “*...freed from sin.*” **Romans 6:18**, “*Being then made free from sin...*” **Romans 6:22**, “*But now being made free from sin....*” Hardly then can we come to any other definition for salvation. The work of salvation is “*saved from sin.*” It is a work that is finished at the cross. The result of salvation is “*free from sin.*” It is the presence of sin that drags people down to hell, but Jesus “*saves his people from their sins.*”

Hundreds of years before Christ, the prophets of God began to see and speak of something wonderful that was to come. The words most commonly used in describing what they saw were “*salvation*” and “*righteousness.*” The book of Psalms speaks of “*salvation*” sixty three times and “*righteousness*” seventy one times. The prophet Isaiah spoke of salvation twenty eight times and righteousness fifty two times. Concerning this wonderful “*salvation*,” Peter said the prophets “*inquired and searched diligently.*” They caught a glimpse of something the world had never seen. Abraham had sought for a city “*whose builder and maker is God*” (**Hebrews 11:10**). Isaiah prophesied of such a city. He called it “*The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel*” (**Isaiah 60:14**). Isaiah speaks further of that city in **Isaiah 60:18-21**, “*Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but **thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.** The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall*

*the moon give light unto thee: but **the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.** Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be **all righteous**: they shall inherit the land for ever, **the branch of my planting (John 15:1-5), the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.**” The world had never seen such a city whose “walls” would be salvation, whose “light” would be the LORD, and whose “people” would be “all righteous.” In **Isaiah 62:1-2**, Isaiah, overcome with the glorious things he was seeing, cries, “*For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.*” At the time, Isaiah had no way of knowing that he was seeing the “Church of Jesus Christ” which Jesus would “purchase” with His own blood. Isaiah loved the city of Jerusalem, and longed to see these wonderful things fulfilled in his day, saying, “*I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*” But it was not to be in His day. Isaiah, like so many other of the prophets and patriarchs, “*died in faith, not having received the promises,*” (**Hebrews 11:13**) “*... God having provided some better thing for us...*” (**Hebrews 11:40**). Peter said that God revealed to these prophets that it was “*not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister these things...*” (**I Peter 1:12**).*

Peter summed up this wonderful “salvation” the prophets had foreseen, calling it “*the grace that should come unto to you (the church).*” In the next verse, Peter speaks of the “*Spirit of Christ*” that was in the prophets testifying beforehand the “*sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*” The grace of God and this wonderful salvation are revealed both in “*the sufferings*” and “*the glory.*” Keep in mind that Peter wrote this letter to the churches to “*exhort and to testify that **this is the true grace of God wherein you (and we) stand***” (**I Peter 5:12**).

The “Sufferings of Christ”

Many of the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament prophesied of the sufferings of Christ. Most of them saw only bits and pieces, but some like Isaiah and David stagger our minds with the clarity with which they describe the sacrifice at Calvary. Did they clearly understand the things they saw? No, but they saw and wrote enough that we could clearly understand.

Among the first to receive a glimpse of Calvary was Abraham. Jesus told the Jews in **John 8:56**, “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*” Jesus spoke of the day God provided a “*substitute sacrifice*” to die in the

place of Isaac (**Genesis 22:9-14**). Abraham “rejoiced” as he offered the “ram” instead of his own son. He named that sacrifice altar “*Jehovah-jireh*,” meaning, “*The LORD will provide.*” It was a prophecy of the day the Son of God would suffer as a substitute sacrifice on that very mountain. He prophesied of Calvary. Hundreds of years later, pilgrims visiting that same altar would say, “*In the Mount of the Lord, it shall be seen.*” They looked for a redeemer.

David prophesied very clearly of the sufferings of Jesus in the twenty-second chapter of Psalms. He began with the same words Jesus cried out as He suffered on the cross, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.*” A thousand years before the fact, David gave us the very words of the mockers that mocked Jesus as he hung on the cross. He told of the soldiers dividing the clothes and gambling for the cloak of Jesus. Speaking in the first person, for it was the Spirit of Christ that was in him, David said, “*They pierced my hands and my feet.*” Before the prophecy ends, however, David tells us that the “*kingdom*” belongs to the one that suffered. He spoke clearly of a “*seed*,” the children of God, born of the Spirit of God that would “*serve Him.*” David had never seen such a people as this “*seed.*” It was a “*new creation*,” with “*new*” men and women re-created in the image of God. They were a people such as the world had never seen. David saw the “*sufferings of Christ.*” He also saw the “*glory that would follow.*”

Isaiah prophesied of the “*servant of the Lord* (Messiah).” But who could believe the things Isaiah spoke of? He saw His face, “*marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men*” (**Isaiah 52:14**). Notice Isaiah’s next words, “*So shall He sprinkle many nations.*” He saw a cleansing from sin for the nations of the world in the “*marred*” face and “*scarred*” body of the Son of God. “*Who hath believed my report?*” Isaiah cries. He continues, “*To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him*” (**Isaiah 53:1-2**). How is it possible that Isaiah is speaking of Israel’s promised redeemer? No “*form or comeliness... no beauty that we should desire Him.*” His attraction would not be a great “*physique, charming personality,*” or “*handsome face.*” Yet, there were those who saw Jesus “*as He is,*” and in His face they saw the “*glory of God.*” John said, “*And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” These were those who said with the apostle John, “*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*” (**I John 1:2**). They never told us of his “*form*” or “*features.*” We know nothing from them of the color of His eyes, hair, height, weight, or any of the things the world uses to judge beauty. For they could not see beyond the life, the glory, the beauty and the grace that is Jesus Christ.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:3-4

An ancient manuscript translates the fourth verse as follows; “*Verily our sickness He took and our sorrows He bore, and we held Him as leprous and smitten of God, and meeked (beaten into submission).*” It is no wonder Isaiah wrote, “*and we hid as it were our faces from Him.*” So much more than just physical health or healing, Jesus bore the “*leprosy of our sin*” upon that cross. He bore all that fallen man is, and we “*hid as it were our faces from Him.*” We could not look upon what **we are** as it hung on the cross. Isaiah continues in **verse five**:

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 53: 5

The world looked upon Jesus as He suffered the cruel death of the cross, and saw Him not only as a man condemned to death as a blasphemer, but they saw Him as one cursed by God Himself, because Moses had said, “*Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree.*” Isaiah saw all these things Messiah would suffer, but he saw more than that. He saw that it was because of us that He suffered. “*...He was wounded for our transgressions....*”

The “*grace that should come unto us*” was first manifested in the sufferings of Christ. No one can deny the grace of God that was shown at Calvary. John begins his gospel with the words, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*” (**John 1:1-3**). John continues in the verse fourteen, “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us....*” This identifies the eternal “*Word*” as being Jesus Christ. “*All things were made by Him....*” The creator of heaven and earth was made flesh and dwelt among us. There was only one purpose for His incarnation: He came to suffer the horrible death of the cross for the redemption of His creation. We were not worthy of such a thing. As Isaiah had prophesied, “*All we had gone astray, everyone to his own way....*” No wonder the apostle John marvels, “*What manner of love is this... (I John 3:1)?*” It is grace: The grace of God... and of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would suffer and die for sinners, the ungodly, even the enemies of God. Undeserved, unmerited, Christ died for sinners. The prophets prophesied of it, but could never comprehend it. They questioned, “*what, or what manner of time*” is this? Isaiah begins his message of the sufferings of the Messiah with “*Who hath*

believed our report?” No one could believe such a thing. For what purpose would Christ come in the *“likeness of sinful flesh?”* (**Romans 8:3**). There could be only one purpose; *“...to condemn sin in the flesh.”* He would gladly lay down His life to save His people from their sin. Was this for Israel only? No! Jesus was not only the Messiah of Israel, He was the creator of every man. The creator of every man came to save *“His people”* of every nation, tribe, race and color. Jesus died for all. This is the grace that came unto us through His sufferings.

The “Glory that Follows”

The great mystery, of everything the prophets saw of the sufferings of the Messiah, was that there was always the *“glory that followed.”* I do not hesitate to tell you that they were seeing the *“glorious church of Jesus Christ,”* which is *“without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish”* (**Ephesians 5:27**). Isaiah prophesies, *“Thy people shall be **all righteous**”* (**Isaiah 60:21**). And again, *“...they shall call them, **The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken**”* (**Isaiah 62:12**). The prophets could understand but little of the things they were seeing; yet they saw so much. God told Isaiah, *“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying”* (**Isaiah 65:17-19**). We also, as did Peter, *“look for new heavens and a new earth, **wherein dwelleth righteousness**”* (**II Peter 3:13**). But at the same time we must know that God has already created a *“new creation,”* and a *“new man”* in Christ *“wherein dwelleth righteousness.”* He has already created *“Jerusalem a praise and her people a joy.”* It is this *“New Jerusalem”* that Paul says is *“the mother of us all”* (**Galatians 4:26**). Everything God has created in this *“new creation”* is that *“wherein dwelleth righteousness,”* for the new creation is a *“kingdom of righteousness.”*

None of these glorious things the prophets prophesied of could come before Christ suffered the cross. These things of necessity issue out of Christ’s sufferings, and are the *“grace of God”* to us just as surely as His sufferings are. They are inseparable. Did Christ suffer? Glory must follow. The night before suffering the cross, Jesus prayed to the Father, saying, *“...now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was”* (**John 17:5**). When Jesus says *“...before the world was,”* He speaks of the state of man, with God, before Adam transgressed and sin entered. The *“world”* began, with the entrance of sin. Therefore, Jesus tells the Father in this last public prayer (at least, that we have record of), that He will gladly drink the cup of suffering, and be baptized with the

baptism of death, if that is the price of restoring the glory of a sinless man(kind); a man(kind) without sin, a man(kind) created in the image and likeness of Christ. These things are what Jesus died for; and are the “*glory that should (would) follow*” the sufferings of Christ (**I Peter 1:11**). If there is no “*new creation*,” Christ died in vain. If there is no true righteousness, Christ died in vain. If there are none that are holy, Christ died in vain. If we are yet sinners who must continue to sin as long as we live in this human body, then Jesus Christ died in vain. If these things are true, then nothing happened at Calvary.

The “Righteousness of Christ”

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20

I took this text at a morning session with a group of young men and women at a Bible college. I began by asking them the question, “*What is the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees?*” *Almost instantly and unanimously they answered, “The Righteousness of Christ.”* They were absolutely correct in their answer. Then I told them a story, a fable that has lasted for hundreds of years called “*The King’s New Clothes.*”

The vain little king had been deceived by a couple of crooks pretending to be magical tailors. These deceivers pretended to weave magical cloth out of solid gold, and to make the most beautiful suit of clothes with the magical quality which only the “*pure in heart*” could see. The king decided he must have such a unique suit of clothes. His fame would greatly increase and he would be the envy of all kings if he possessed such clothing. He agreed to deliver the gold of the kingdom to these “*tailors*” to weave the magical cloth. Occasion arose that he sent his general to inspect the progress of the suit. The general could not see the suit, but he knew his heart was not pure, so he pretended to see it. Later the king sent his governor to inspect the suit with the same results. The governor did not see a suit, but he also knew his heart was not clean, so he also pretended. Both of these gave the king glowing reports of the amazing beauty of his new suit. The day came that the “*suit*” was finished, and the king would be dressed in his new suit. When the “*tailors*” pretended to bring the suit out, obviously the king could not see it, but he also knew his heart was not pure, so he also pretended. He, like the general and the governor before him, did not want anyone to know his heart was impure, so he gushed out praises of the beauty of the suit, even giving a bonus to the tailors for doing such a magnificent job. Word of the king’s beautiful suit of clothes spread throughout the kingdom. It was decided that such beauty should not be withheld from the masses

of people in the kingdom. There would be a parade, with brass bands, and all the dignitaries of the kingdom leading the way. The king would march the length of main-street wearing his magical suit. The day came and the procession began. Finally, the little king marched out of the palace doors and strutted down Main Street, dressed in nothing more than his underwear. The entire kingdom had heard of the magical nature of the king's suit, that only the "*pure in heart*" could see. Everyone knew their own heart was not pure, but they did not want their friends to know it, so everyone pretended. They raved; they rejoiced; they shouted with joy, praising their little king for his beautiful suit of clothes. Finally a little child tugged at his mother's skirt. "*Mommie, mommie!*" "*Hush child, look at the king's beautiful clothes.*" "*But mommie, the king doesn't have any clothes.*" Word spread through the crowds of people that innocent little children had said the king was naked. The sad truth struck home to the multitudes, and finally to the little king himself, that the king had no clothes, but walked naked for all to see.

I told them this story and asked a second question; "*Is this the righteousness of Christ?*" There was absolute silence for a time. Finally one brave young person answered, "*No!*" Why was there such caution in answering? Why could not everyone present instantly answer with a resounding "*No! That is not the righteousness of Christ?*" Sadly, this generation has been taught that the "*righteousness of Christ*" is a suit of clothing for the believer that only God can see. These deceitful "*tailors*" have been taking the gold of the kingdom and dressing the church in invisible clothing for a full generation, and we have become a church full of pretenders. Consider these words from the apostles of our Lord:

If so be that being clothed we shall not be found *naked*.

II Corinthians 5:3

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are *naked* and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Hebrews 4:13

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and *naked*:

Revelation 3:17

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk *naked*, and they see his shame.

Revelation 16:15

The Righteousness That Exceeds

Jesus left no doubt in His “*Sermon on the Mount*” as to what the “*righteousness*” is that “*exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.*” He gave five examples in the **fifth chapter of Matthew** alone that cannot be impugned by man. I will give three of these.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,*

Matthew 5:21-22

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Matthew 5:27-28

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven....*

Matthew 5:43-45

The “*righteousness that exceeds the righteous of the scribes and Pharisees*” is the righteousness of a pure heart. It is not a righteousness that can be produced by the working of “*man’s righteousness* (thou shalt not kill... thou shalt not commit adultery); it is a “*gift of righteousness*” received by “*grace*” through “*faith.*” Hear the words of Paul to the Romans, “*...much more they which receive **abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ***” (**Romans 5:17**). It is the “*gift*” of a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*” that Ezekiel prophesied of in **Ezekiel 36:25-27**. It is a “*pure heart*” in which there is no murder, adultery, hatred, or any other thing that defiles the man. It is true righteousness that all may see without pretence. It is the righteousness without which Jesus said, “*Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” It is the “*gift by grace*” Paul spoke of in **Romans 5:15**.

How True Righteousness is Received

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Galatians 2:20-21

Let us first establish that *“righteousness does not come by the law.”* The *“law”* was in place over sixteen hundred years before Jesus suffered and died on the cross. If righteousness came by the law, there was no reason for Jesus to die. If Jesus must suffer and die before righteousness can come, then it follows that righteousness comes only by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Nothing that preceded Calvary can be the source of true righteousness, and nothing that came after Calvary can be that source. Apply Paul’s statement to any or every other thing men may trust in and you must come to the same conclusion, *“then Christ is dead in vain.”* For example, *“If righteousness come by the Psalms of David, then Christ is dead in vain.”* Or, *“If righteousness come by the Proverbs of Solomon, then Christ is dead in vain.”* Insert tens of thousands of other things men may trust in, from the *“Ten Commandments,”* or the *“principles of life”* unto any of thousands of other gods and religions or philosophies of this world, and the conclusion will be the same. If any of these bring true righteousness, *“Christ is dead in vain.”* Nothing but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, brings true righteousness. Sadly, few in the church, among those that are *“called by His name,”* have discovered this truth.

How is it that the death of Jesus brings true righteousness to the believer? Paul answered that question in the first verse of our text, **Galatians 2:20**. *“I am crucified with Christ.”* The power of the death of Jesus Christ is, as Paul said in **Romans 6:6**, *“our old man is crucified with Him....”* Is that what Paul believed? No! That’s what Paul *“knew.”* He began **Romans 6:6** with these words, *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him....”* There are some things you must **know**, and this is chief among them.

When I was a young preacher, my favorite text seemed to be *“I know by experience....”* Of course that text is not in the Bible, nor is it the word of God, but I had no problem convincing people of that which I *“knew by experience”* because it was their experience also. By our *“experience”* we knew that we had the truth. It was *“proven”* by our *“experience.”* We knew that the *“Christian life”* was hard, that it was a struggle. It was a life of divided affections, and continual struggle with our *“old man.”* We *“knew”* and *“proved”* these things *“by experience.”* Years later I came to a time in life and ministry that I was desperate for answers for the sin

problem that was in the heart of man. I had told God that if there were no answer given, I would close my bible and not preach again. About that same period of time, I was preaching, I thought under a heavy anointing, when I heard that *“favorite text”* come out of my mouth; *“I know by experience”* The Holy Ghost sharply reproved me on the spot. I heard His voice saying to me, ***“You know nothing by experience. You only know by my word.”*** This *“reproof”* brought a quick end to my message that night. Later, alone with the Lord in heart searching prayer the Spirit again spoke to me. ***“If you seek to establish the truth of God by your experience, you will always believe a lie.”*** I came to understand what He was telling me. We must establish what is truth by the word of God and believe it even when our *“experience”* denies it. Only then does our experience change. People will struggle with sin continually, obeying every principle, Proverb, Psalm, commandment, and ordinance, seeking through some means to attain unto righteousness. They can do it for a lifetime and still be lost and damned when they stand before God. They may plead for *“grace”* before God; but He will answer, *“I gave grace to make you free, but you would not believe it.”*

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Romans 10:1-4

Multitudes in the church today are so much like Israel was, even after Jesus suffered and died to take away their sin. They are *“ignorant of God's righteousness.”* They *“go about to establish their own righteousness,”* and they *“have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*

God's righteousness is Christ crucified. It is the Son of God, suffering at the hands of sinners, shedding His life's blood, and dying the cursed death of the cross for us. That is the *“righteousness of God.”* Paul told us in **Romans 3:25** that God set forth Jesus *“to be a propitiation (sacrifice victim) through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past....”* *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, giving Himself for a sin sacrifice, that is the “righteousness of God”* to man. That is grace!

Paul said, *“being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness....”* Israel continued to trust in all things they had trusted in for hundreds of years; things that had never and could never make them righteous. Multitudes today seek to *“establish their own righteousness”* through life principles,

through the wisdom of Solomon, through obedience to ordinances, through things that may seem “good,” but things that can never give life or righteousness. It has produced a dead letter of religion, with no life, but only the promise of continual struggle and failure. They are “*ignorant of God’s righteousness.*”

As long as they hope in other things for righteousness, they will never “*submit*” to the “*righteousness of God.*” What is the righteousness of God they will not submit to? I have seen them submit to hundreds, even thousands of “*life principles.*” Some of the largest ministries in the world today are totally committed to teaching these “*principles*” which can never give life, and only a “*form*” of righteousness. All such righteousness is that which Isaiah called “*filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6),*” because it is the product of man’s ability. They are condemned to wander forever in the wilderness of the seventh chapter of Romans even as their teachers in whom they trust tell them that this is the normal and true experience of the children of God. These teachers damn their own students as they continually encourage them with another “*principle*” to solve the problems caused by the last principle. If the “*law*” or “*principles*” they trust in do their proper job they will bring that person to total despair of even being saved. Their teachers will do all to keep them from arriving to that place, forever hoping in the newest things to produce some good result. When **Romans 7:9-23** has finished its work, you will hear the cry of despair of the twenty fourth verse, “*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” The same answer will always come to such a wretched man, “*I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*” or, more perfectly translated, “***The grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.***”

The righteousness of God must be submitted to. However, none but the one in total despair of establishing their own righteousness will ever submit to it. The righteousness of God is not only “*Christ crucified,*” but it is also “*us, crucified with Christ.*” Fallen man can only be saved through death and resurrection “*with*” Jesus Christ. Submitting to God’s righteousness is to submit to His death. Listen closely to Paul in **Romans 6:6-7**. “***Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.***” Paul speaks in this sixth verse of an “*old man crucified,*” “*a body of sin destroyed,*” and, of a man that “*does not serve sin.*” He summarizes and concludes the thought in the seventh verse, “*For (or because) he that is dead (crucified with Christ) is freed from sin.*” Sin no longer reigns in the members of such a one. For we do not “*crucify ourselves.*” Crucifixion must be “*with (in union with) Christ.*” Self-crucifixion is a long process that can never succeed. Crucifixion with Christ is finished at Calvary, but it must be “*submitted to.*” We do not receive “*power over sin,*” we are “*made free from sin,*” the entire “*body of sin*” being “*destroyed (nailed to the cross of Christ).*” And in the seventh

verse, the translators have, “*For he that is dead is freed from sin,*” which is a great truth of the gospel, but it is not exactly what Paul said. Paul said, “*For he that is dead is **justified from sin.***” He gives the only scriptural definition of “*justification*” to be found. Man says that God “*justifies*” a person and nothing is changed. Man then leads that “*justified*” person who is still a sinner into the “*process*” of sanctification, where they wander forever in the wilderness of struggle and failure in sin. God’s definition of justification is, “*He that is **dead** (‘*crucified with Christ*’) **is justified.***” Everything is changed. Even the Greek word “*dikaioo,*” translated as “*justified*” throughout the New Testament, means, “*rendered just.*” The English word “*render*” means “*to return,*” or “*to restore.*” The person who **is** “*crucified with Christ*” **is** “*justified.*” They have been “*restored to righteousness*” through the death of Jesus Christ. That is true righteousness, the righteousness that Israel and multitudes in the church today refuse to submit to as they continue to struggle to establish their own righteousness. But Jesus yet speaks to all of these, “*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (**Matthew 11:28**).

Abundance of Grace

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into *this grace wherein we stand....*

Romans 5:1-2

Those who trust in a “*false grace*” to cover their sinfulness would believe it to be the “*great sinner*” who would receive “*abundance of grace.*” Not so! Clearly it is those who are “*justified (restored to righteousness)*” that have access by faith into what Paul calls “*this grace wherein we stand.*” This is the second manifestation of grace which the prophets prophesied of when they spoke of “*the grace that should come unto you (I Peter 1:10),*” the first being the “*sufferings of Christ,*” and the second, “*the glory that follows.*” It is in the results of Calvary; in this wonderful salvation itself that God “*gives more grace*” (**James 4:6**). Grace “*multiplies*” (**II Peter 1:2**), “*...through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*” We are to “*grow in grace*” (**II Peter 3:18**).

God gives **grace** to “*serve God acceptably....;*”

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have *grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*

Hebrews 12:28

and to “*labour more abundantly.*”

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

I Corinthians 15:10

God gives grace to *“preach the unsearchable riches of Christ....”*

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

Ephesians 3:8

God *“gives grace”* that those riches of Christ might be *“seen”* in the believer.

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery....

Ephesians 3:9

Fullness of Grace

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

Notice that the *“glory”* which the apostles saw in the only begotten Son of God was that He is **“full of grace and truth.”** **Two verses later** John gives us this precious jewel, *“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace”* (**John 1:16**). Every child of God has, by new birth, received a **“portion”** of all that Jesus is **full of**. That is, **grace**. John said we have received *“grace for grace.”* There is no *“grace”* in Jesus, of which we did not receive a corresponding **portion**. There is no such thing as a child of God without love, joy, peace, etc. These are the fruit of the spirit. Need more love? Seek more **grace!** Need more long suffering? Seek more **grace!** We have nothing of God beyond the measure of grace which we have received, because all that He is **grace**. We receive nothing... we have nothing, apart from Christ. **All fullness** is in Him, and we are partakers of that **fullness by grace**. He *“giveth more grace.”* He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

There is a saying in the economic world that *“A rising tide lifts all boats, whether large or small.”* To the economist this simply says that in truly prosperous times both the rich and the poor are blessed. In the economy of Christ’s kingdom this is certainly true. The *“tide”* is grace. The *“boats”* are all spiritual values from the fruit of the Spirit to the work of the ministry. When the *“tide”* of grace is low, Christ is not seen in His people, love, joy, peace, etc are not manifest, and souls are not born into the kingdom. As grace increases, there is *“grace wherein we stand and rejoice”* (**Romans 5:2**). Let grace continue to rise, and there is *“grace whereby we serve God acceptably”* (**Hebrews 12:28**), and *“grace to labour more abundantly”*

(I Corinthians 15:10). Grace multiplies until there is “*grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see...*” (Ephesians 3:8-9). Finally, the apostle dares to speak the ultimate grace, “*that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:19). This “*fullness*” is the “*fullness of grace.*” This person “*reigns in life through Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:17).

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and GREAT GRACE was upon them all.

Acts 4:33

There were two things that were called “*great*” about the church in the book of Acts. Those two things were “*great power,*” and “*great grace.*” The Holy Ghost came upon them and they were clothed with power. The grace of God came upon them and they were clothed with Christ. The world around them could see both. Some loved and received them, others hated and rejected them, but none could deny either the “*great power*” or the “*great grace.*” With these two, they turned the world upside down in their generation. When these two come together in the church of this last day, we also will turn the world upside down. Our greatest lack in this generation is “*great grace.*” We have seen healings and miracles of every order. In our own ministry we have seen incredible miracles, the greatest of all within the past four years, yet “*great power*” alone has not brought the harvest that must come. How desperately we need **great** grace. Grace is the area of our increase. No one gets “*more of the Holy Ghost,*” or “*more of Jesus.*” God does not give Himself or His Spirit to man by measure. If you have been born again, you have Jesus Christ. If you have been filled with the Holy Ghost, you have the Holy Ghost. You didn’t receive “*just a little*” of either. Only grace comes by measure to the children of God. It is only grace that God gives more of. Only grace will grow, and multiply until we have “*abundance of grace*” and even a “*fullness of grace.*” All other things of God seem to increase with the increase of grace, but nothing of God increases without the increase of grace. Our great need is for grace. More grace. Grace multiplied, until it becomes abundance of grace. Only when “*great grace*” meets with “*great power,*” will we reap the “*great harvest*” which is set before us.