

The Staff and The Sword Ministry

Relationship Reports

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RELATIONSHIP



PART 8 GRACE WHO?

INTRODUCTION

As you draw closer and closer to Jesus, you will need to know and understand the function of GRACE.

But, Where does GRACE come from? GRACE comes by JESUS CHRIST.

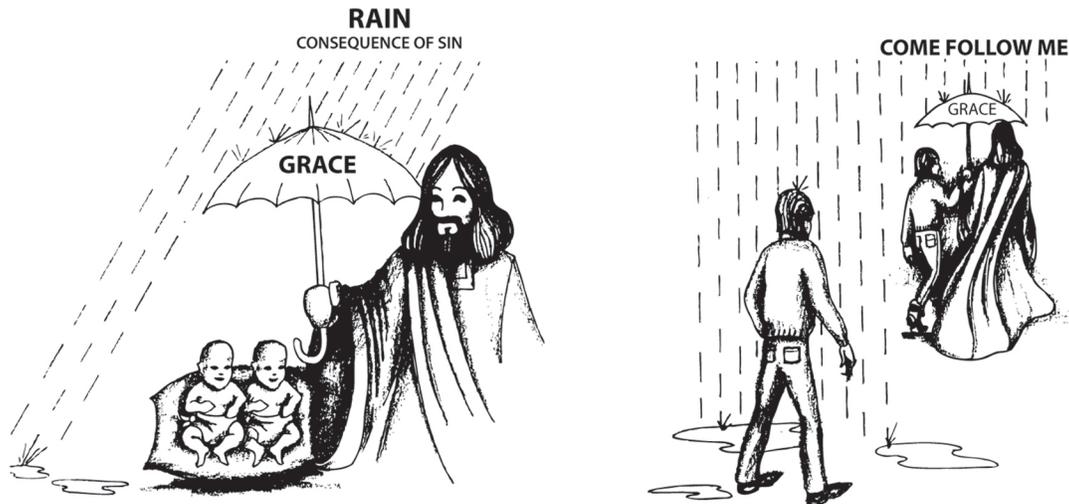
Who is GRACE? JESUS CHRIST.

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What is GRACE? Ah, to quote a phrase :”THAT IS THE QUESTION!” In fact, THAT IS EXACTLY THE QUESTION!



DEFINITIONS OF GRACE

OK—let’s look at some DEFINITIONS.

The Sunday School version of GRACE is: (G) God’s (R) Riches (A) At (C) Christ’s (E) Expense. Nothing wrong with that definition, except it that is does not tell us much that we can understand or why it’s needed or how it is obtained.

I can come up with one, just as true—GRACE is: (G) God’s (R) Righteousness (A) Accorded (C) Christ’s (E) Elect. That’s a little closer to the mark—it tells us GRACE had a distinct function.

So, what is the function of GRACE? Read on . . .

FUNCTION OF GRACE

Now it’s true that those who trust in Jesus have GRACE, but Christians slip out from under GRACE quicker than anything else, because they do not understand its function.

What is the function of GRACE? When a believer first believes in Jesus Christ, something the Church calls ‘born again’ and Jesus calls CONCEPTION—they have GRACE. In the sketch above, top left side we see two newly CONCEIVED babes, now the GRACE of Jesus covers them from the

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rain—shown as “consequences of sin”. They are free of the Law, and under GRACE through Christ Jesus.

Have you ever noticed how baby Christians get such quick answers to prayer, how they can do everything wrong and be blessed anyhow? Then, how after time, this changes? What happens is that as they mature in knowledge of God, they grow out of their diapers, and what was cute and overlooked by God because they were just babes, is no longer overlooked because God is now teaching them disciplines. The Bible calls it “chastisement”, which is God’s loving correction, and it more often comes when we stray from Jesus, thus out from under the umbrella of Grace and into the rain of “consequences” (AS YOU SOW, SO SHALL YOU REAP). Well, we learn not to stray because God will allow consequences to come, to correct us.

So, walking out from under GRACE is one way to lose it, but its not the only one. Another common way of losing GRACE, one seen from coast to coast in this nation, is to not answer God’s call. The sketch above, top right, shows the two babes as having grown to the pre-teen state, and Jesus' Call is “COME FOLLOW ME”. Thus, one Christian answers the call and follows after Jesus (taking up the cross, which is the self-sin nature); and the other does not (more common) and ends up in the rains of consequence and is out from under GRACE.

Thus GRACE is seen as being both STATIC and MOVING. It is STATIC when a Christian is a babe, thus is stays with you, covers you. It is MOVING when the Christian reaches the point where they can take up their cross (self nature) and follow after Jesus. Only the Christian that follows after Jesus stays under GRACE at this point—all the rest are in the rain.

“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT”

When Jesus asked me to go out and warn the nation of coming Judgment I felt unworthy and ill equipped to do that, Jesus would say, **“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT.”** In other words, as we follow Him to the best of our ability, weaknesses, shortcomings, sin nature and all, He covers us with His Grace.

When my own self-sin nature would emerge, and at times it has, it would only affirm my view of being unsuitable and unworthy of serving God; but each time Jesus would tell me, **“FINISH, MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT.”** I, like others, would often think, “I have to stop and get my act together,” but Jesus would have none of that in me, showing me to ‘come through trusting Him.’

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GO-AND-GROW or STOP-AND-SINK

GRACE when it moves before us (like the cloud by day, fire by night in Exodus), requires we keep up. The pace of movement is not such that one cannot keep up, it's that we constantly think we cannot go on a step further, but we can.

The question is more, "are we willing to yield to God's Will, Purpose, and Plan?" It's either a YES or a NO.

The Christian who stops to get their act together will sink, and backsliding is another word for sink. The fundamental view of "stop-get act together" is in the view that we ourselves can do a better job than Jesus, that we really do not need Him but can do it our all by our self alone. And, if a Christian that does stop following Jesus because of sin nature is acting up, and it seems control is being lost—they may indeed regain control over the sin nature.

APPEARANCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

But some Christians tend to fall trap to the APPEARANCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, because man can only REFORM, it's only God through Jesus that can TRANSFORM, and that takes FOLLOWING JESUS.

Take a look at the following Scriptures [emphasis added to all four Scriptures]:

- **“. . . FOR AS YE HAVE YEILDED . . . TO UNCLEANNESS AND TO INIQUITY . . . NOW YIELD . . .TO RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO HOLINESS.”**
(Romans 6:19).
- **“BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.”**
(Romans 12:21).
- **“LIKEWISE THE SPIRIT ALSO HELPETH OUR INFIRMITIES . . .”**
(Romans 8:26).
- **And He said unto me (Jesus to Paul), ‘MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE; FOR MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”**
(II Corinthians 12:9).

When we STOP following Jesus to REFORM ourselves, and often it takes the form of an "Appearance of Righteousness", we cease being YIELDED to the Holy Spirit of our choice. We will not be yielded to the uncleanness and iniquity that stirs up in our members and though we gain a visible control over it, it simply takes another form in our actions.

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AN EXAMPLE

Here's an EXAMPLE: A brother once told me how he had a problem with "lust" but got control over it, and was free of it. I asked his definition of "lust" and "sexual" was his reply. I pointed out that this was only just one dimension of "lust" and told him he had not overcome the problem but simply changed its form. What was evident to me was that this brother now had gone from the red horse of "sexual lust" to the blue horse of a "lust for food and sleep". "Lust" still had control over him, only it was not evident to him. Now he ate food with a compulsion and slept long hours well in excess of the physical need.

I do not ridicule "REFORM" in that lacking anything better. But, it is better than nothing. There is, however, a better something, and it's found in Following Jesus and being yielded, submitted and surrendered to Jesus Christ.

TRANSFORMATION

When we seek to follow after Jesus, we are in a respect yielded, yet I have found that through prayer, praying to be yielded, we do far better. In following Jesus, being yielded, I have found that when what's "evil within us" bubbles to the surface in the Fire of His Love and Presence is not so much overcoming us as it is coming out of us and leaving. GRACE covers us in this time and we learn overcoming evil with Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit most certainly helps us in ways both obvious and subtle. The process of TRANSFORMATION is gradual, and I doubt if many could take "instant change"—it would be like being hit by a bolt of lightning.

Jesus has in this way over the years transformed me in many ways, but there were and are areas that I'd not yielded to Him (unknowingly) and these had to do with the desires of my self nature, in and out of my free will. Therefore, even if it's our desire consciously to be wholly submitted and yielded to Jesus Christ, it's almost certain that in some areas where we have strong desires (long standing ones) that we are not yielded here because a free will desire is active.

Now in all of this (the FUNCTION OF GRACE) is to spare us, as we Follow Jesus, of the consequences of that active sin nature. And if it breaks loose in one way or another, the worse that happens to us is that we are humbled in seeing something in us that we hardly realized was there. So long as we cling to Jesus and Trust Him, and keep following Him, He not only by GRACE spares us the consequences of sin, but more, frees us of the compulsion to sin that more and more we do put on His Righteousness.

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KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD & EVIL

But, we need define EVIL and SIN in light of this consideration. The ultimate definition is when Adam and Eve desired to be like God (being tempted) and the forbidden fruit was “KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.” In so partaking, they made value judgments (naked for one) calling what God called good—evil. Naked essentially means “uncovered” and while they were COVERED BY GOD they needed no fig leaves. When they came out from under His cover, they saw they were naked, they no longer looked to God but to themselves as “a god”.

From this time on, what God called wisdom, men call folly and visa-versa. The point being this, Adam and Eve had a RELATIONSHIP with God and were covered—GRACE. When they looked to themselves as being “like god” they were not covered and APPEARANCE was their concern. Thus ‘evil’ or ‘sin’ and looking to SELF or MEN are virtually identical. SIN is a rebellion against God, but it takes very many forms and again essentially its being SELF-CENTERED.

GRACE = RELATIONSHIP

So I see that GRACE = RELATIONSHIP, coming to know Jesus Christ and believing in Him, we are conceived, a Holy Seed is within us, our true self in Christ is growing. At a certain point, we as babes being under GRACE, grow to where we can Follow Jesus, taking up our cross (old self nature), if we do, we now follow GRACE and by Him see the sin nature overcome. However by APPEARANCE, men may say we are NAKED, judging God’s work in our life as evil, tempting us to run back and put on the “fig leaf”. If we do, we judge God, and this Paul the Apostle talked much about in Scriptures.

One cannot be “faint-hearted” in following Jesus. Yet, as we do HIS GRACE IS SUFFICIENT.

THE GRACE OF FATHERS & THE GRACE OF THE BODY

Abraham believed God, and was counted righteous for this. Abraham is called “father Abraham”, even Paul referred to himself as a “father” and it would not be incorrect to call Martin Luther of the Reformation a “father” as well. Some years back Jesus would tell me I’d be like Abraham and “father many children”. At the time, I did not grasp the meaning very well, thinking in the natural and spiritual both, wondering which (either/or).

But to put it into perspective, I came to realize that I had God’s GRACE long before I knew what GRACE was, and by that GRACE had FAITH before I had HOPE, which is Scripturally reverse order. So Jesus would tell me I was sent and called to a specific work, that I would learn, then teach this to a few and the few would teach the many.

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So it was I'd see that I had this GRACE (Individual Grace) to the end that all might have the opportunity of entering into a Corporate Grace (GRACE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST).

The rampant legalism in the Church today tells me its largely under LAW not GRACE. What the Church should be is a place where the bond of Love for one another be of prime importance, and except in and out of a living relationship with Jesus, and a life of prayer, such a bond of Love is virtually impossible.

The difficult and painful learning process I have gone through and am going through is not the most excellent way. Except for GODS GRACE that covered me, I would not have endured, and that unique GRACE, the Grace of a father type, is not made available to everyone as God's Plan is really to have the GRACE OF THE BODY become functional. Jesus does not want a bunch of independent mavericks apart from each other running around serving Him. Why?

Each of us are differently made by God, some are strong in this area, weak in that, none are alike. We function best together in Christ in a strong bond of mutual Love in prayer. When an individual follows Jesus, the sin nature is a problem—but in a loving Body of believers that look to Jesus and pray—that same sin nature would not manifest in the same way it does with an individual. Some are very weak, and in a BODY UNDER GRACE, others that have a stronger relationship with Jesus, can in a bond of love and prayer, bear some of a brother's burden of sin. Thereby all grow in Christ shoulder to shoulder. Each Christian is co-equal in Christ, and though some have an anointing to teach or whatever, they are not above brethren except in having a greater responsibility before God.

DIMENSIONS OF GRACE

Thus GRACE is seen to have many dimensions, it covers the babe until they can follow after Jesus, and covers those that do Follow Jesus. By God's anointing and call on some, it's unique, but designed to bring all Christians under a GRACE FOR THE BODY that all might grow in Christ in and out of a unity of love and prayer.

UNDER GRACE vs. IN GRACE

But lastly, being UNDER GRACE is a temporary thing, not permanent. For as our relationship with Jesus deepens (the more you look to Jesus, the more you look like Him), we come to the place where union with Jesus becomes possible, and then we are IN GRACE. So being UNDER GRACE is only designed by God to cover us until we can be "IN GRACE."

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IT'S STILL ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIP

But, what does this have to do with the HOW OF RELATIONSHIP? Again, the closer you draw to Jesus the more you will see that this sin nature in you is very active and more so than you thought. As we yield the more to Jesus' help in overcoming these weaknesses, we need understand that the function of GRACE is to cover us in this time of TRANSFORMATION. This does not mean that we do not have to repent of sin in any form, for the basic definition of repentance is a turning away from sin (SELF) and a turning to God through Jesus Christ (RELATIONSHIP).

Thus, we can now see that REPENTANCE is a progressive turning away from SELF and a turning more and more to JESUS, and in this transition, we are to know GRACE covers us.

God bless,

Chuck-JOHNEL