

Grace by Stephen Cartwright (School of Christ)

*“Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved,
How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.” John Newton*

The writer of that hymn was a man that had earned his living in the slave trade, he was a wicked cruel man, but when the grace of God touched his life he was a changed man, never to be the same again.

Today we are going to be looking at the subject of grace, I want to at the beginning to make a distinction between grace and mercy, the mercy of Lord is the unmerited favor of God; it is because of His Mercies that we are not consumed. Everyone in this place stands where they are only because of the mercy of God. We all deserve Hell but because of His Mercies we have been given life and breath to stand here today. The very air we breathe stands as evidence of God’s mercy, before we were saved we were rebels, outcasts from God’s family, we denied the Lord by the way we lived our lives. Yet he sustained us, he allowed us to live giving us opportunity to come and lay our lives down before His Lordship, he was so longsuffering.

The grace of God is different as it has different roles it teaches, inspires and leads in a better way of living; it is the divine influence of God. Paul the Apostle said he did not frustrate the grace of God, but the grace of God worked effectively in Him.

Romans 6:1, 2 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue to sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

Titus 2:11-14 *For the Grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, & godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Grace needs to be redefined in this day & age.

Many are preaching the gospel nowadays that is just tickling men’s ear’s, there is very little desire to truly walk holy and there seems to be even fewer people to tell us how to walk holy.

Too many people the material things of this world have become their preoccupation. You don’t have talk with someone long before you realize the desires of their heart, what it is that occupies their minds and their thoughts.

The Apostle John said that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. If we are Christians our fellowship will be around Christ it is the only thing that links us together, you may be worlds apart in education, ideas and jobs but our fellowship is not built around that, it is built around the Lord Jesus Christ and the experience of our lives.

To bring a biblical definition of grace to our minds let us go to the Bible for our standard in the passage we have read in Titus it says that the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Putting it very simply the grace of God is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ He is the only one who brought salvation to the human race, He is the only one who grants a man or woman entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven, it is only through the shed blood and the Cross of Christ that man may be born again. You cannot separate Christ from salvation for He is SALVATION. You receive salvation you receive Christ. This is very important because you cannot separate the two, can you take Christ and worship idols? No! Can you take Christ and commit adultery No! Christ would never do those things and if Christ is Salvation can you take salvation and do all kinds of wickedness MOST DEFINITELY NOT! It is a contradiction in terms; therefore will the grace of God which is the person of the Lord Jesus graciously allows us to walk off into sin. NO!

Where grace is wrongly perceived and believed it amounts to a denial of the Lord Jesus Christ, grace that is cheapened in this way justifies sin without justifying the sinner. Grace supposedly does everything therefore everything can just remain as it was before.

If this is the case then let us who call ourselves Christians live like the rest of the world, let us take the world's standard in every sphere of our lives and don't presume that we can in any way live free from sin.

A True child of God cannot live that way because Jesus said "my sheep hear my voice" also John said that we have an unction that teaches us concerning all things. Any Born Again Christ that has come under the hearing of this false grace has had the Holy Ghost speaking to their souls that it is not right. There is an inborn desire in every True Child of God to walk holy, righteously, pure and it takes a great amount of self restraint to go back and live the way he used to live. The message preached nowadays is all geared toward the world with its get rich schemes and enjoying life in a worldly sense.

This kind of grace does not free us from sin, it may look to bring freedom in its fleshly indulgences but we end up enslaved once again by our own lusts just as the sow goes back to wallowing in the mire and the dog returns to its own vomit.

The epistle of Jude warns about ungodly men coming into the body of Christ and turning the grace of God into licentiousness, they promise freedom but the freedom is just the entanglement of sin and leads a course straight to hell. This grace promises the forgiveness of sin without repentance, there is no discipline, it is grace without the cross and ultimately it is grace without the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the parables of Jesus there is the one that he speaks about the Kingdom of Heaven being like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Again the Kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. This was realized when Christ called the disciples to leave all and follow him. The True Grace of God is the call of Jesus Christ to forsake and follow Him. The Apostle Paul wrote that he counted all his knowledge, training, his high social status he counted it as dung for the Excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such grace cost the disciples something to follow, they left all, once the word of Christ was spoken they saw a better way of living and yielded there rights to the one who held the universe in His Hands.

Such grace is costly to us because it calls us to follow Christ. It is costly because it will cost a man his life, his ambitions, his desires, it condemns sin and above all it is costly because it cost God the life of his own dear Son, this is costly grace for we were bought with a price. It was costly for God then it certainly cannot be cheap for us

It is grace because it gives man the only true life worth living – A Life of Union with Christ. It is an affront to all that the gospel stands for to take the grace of God and bring it into a place where sin is accepted and justified within mans believing and thinking.

Wherever Christianity is popularized and accepted within the bounds of the world and society then comes the danger. Look at the Israelites when they were in the wilderness of testing, the hardships they endured seemed to be so unpleasant to them yet it ultimately caused them to go in one direction that is God ward, when they rebelled they were chastised, if they turned from God they had nowhere else to go, He was their only supply of food, water, shelter and warmth. If they left Him they had nowhere else to go, if a man, woman or family left Israel where would they go, they were a people despised with enemies on every hand. If they left the safety of Gods leadership they would end up in trouble.

However God did warn them that when they entered the Promised Land and they started to feed themselves, build their own houses, earn some money and he would give them peace on every side. That they were to take heed lest they fall snare to the deceitfulness of riches, the cares of this life, and lose their relationship with Him who had given them their blessing. Of course it happened after becoming self satisfied with the abundance of riches the ground produced much fruit for their living, it was now easy for them to leave God the warning that he gave, had come to pass in their lives. It happened time and again and stands as a warning to us all.

At the birth of the early Church and as Christianity moved throughout the world, many people of that early Church lost their family as martyrs who gave their lives for the sake of the gospel and the grace of God. It cost them something to receive that grace it meant persecution, it meant being misunderstood, churches were turned over, persecution was rampant against the Christians but the more they were persecuted the more they grew and the life was vibrant and Christ was made real to theirs hearts and lives, as many of them literally knew what it meant to follow Christ.

As Christianity spread it became more and more secularized and the realization of the costliness of the Grace of God faded away, it was now cheap and easy to be a Christian there was no cost to it, all you had to do was say a short little prayer believe that Jesus now answers to all your problems of sin and don't worry about your lifestyle because Christ has forgiven you, your sins past, present and future, don't be mournful or grieve over the sin you have committed just continue the way you are and one day you'll get to heaven. This is what has happened in our day and time we have lost the reality of the costliness of the Grace of God.

Preachers teaching throughout the land today, that a man can be in the grossest sin and yet because he said the sinner's prayer when he was a little boy everything is going to be O.K. and all in the name of Grace.

The K.J Bible teaches very clearly that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God and that to be truly born again is to be delivered from this evil age and made to sit with Christ in Heavenly places, this is present and actual and will bring forth fruit within the Christians life, a man who is born again abides in Christ and he who abides in Christ abides in perfection for Christ is perfect. In **Matthew 5:48** Jesus said *Be Ye Perfect*. In **1 Peter 1:16** God says *Be Ye Holy*. The Apostle Paul wrote in **Gal 5:16** *Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the Lust of the Flesh*. Paul also exhorted in **1 Corinthians 7:1** *To Perfect Holiness in the fear of God*. Also **2 Timothy 3: 16:17**, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*.

If we don't abide in Christ then it says in **John 15:6** *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned*.

Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 6:3** *If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strives of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself*.

Noah was perfect in his generations, Job was perfect & upright one that feared God and eschewed evil.

There is song sung nowadays which says I'm covered, covered, covered by His Blood. It may sound good but it is O.T legalism all the blood of bulls & goats could only do was cover sin. But the blood of Jesus Christ Gods dear Son cleanses from all sin and unrighteousness. The Blood is not a coat of paint applied externally to hide a heart full of sin and wickedness, but it is applied internally to wash away the filth and stains of sin.

Hebrews 7:19 *For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God*.

The True Grace of God produces within the heart of a human a desire to be obedient and do the Will of God. Remember Christ is the Grace of God. It is said of Christ in **Hebrews 10:7** *Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God*.

The Grace of God within our hearts will produce a desire and a cry that is to do the Will of God. What was the will of God for Christ, it was to die, and to lay down his life in obedience to the Father's will and thus demonstrating the Fathers hatred of sin & love for mankind. It was to produce sons & daughters fashioned into the image of Christ those whose hearts believe and obey.

Belief and obedience are linked; to believe is to obey,

E.G. You believe that the light switch will turn on the light. That is true but you can stand there believing all day but until your faith becomes action that light will remain switched off and we will be in darkness. Your belief is made practical by your action, and a person who believes in Christ and hasn't changed is not truly believing. The devils believe and tremble, they know there is a God, all the time Jesus was upon the earth the devils fell before him acknowledging that He was the Son of God. They believed they knew He was the Christ.

Yet we have produced a deformed believing in this day and age that a man who is a drunkard, adulterer or Idolater says he believes stays in his sin and everybody slaps him on his back and says he on his way to heaven. The poor man has no better faith than the devil himself and is on his way to hell.

When God Levi to follow him there was no question of belief involved, a commandment was given, & if Levi truly believed that this was the Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth. Then he would submit himself and yield to the will of the Father.

The children of Israel stood on the banks of Jordan the first time and because of unbelief they did not gain entrance to the promised land, and were sentenced for 40 years in the desert, how was their unbelief demonstrated **by their disobedience**. If they had believed God they would have entered the promised land.

The commandments of Christ must be allowed full reign within our lives.

As Christians it is futile to say you believe and not obey his commandments.

For Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all them that **OBEY HIM!**

Just because a man says he is under Grace does not negate from the fact that he is to serve, love and obey. To say that were under the grace of God and our lives are not marked by the Kingly rule of Christ within our hearts is folly. Paul said that by the grace of God he was what he was and that grace was not without effect, the grace of God in Paul's life changed the man, he was holy, he was an apostle to the gentiles, a man beaten many times, and he was hated. All because of the grace of God that worked effectively in him.

The O.T law was given to Moses by God who gave it to the children of Israel it was written upon the tablets of stone. The Law was a schoolmaster leading people to Christ. The Law reveals the sinfulness of mankind it is God's standard and requirement, when that Law is held to a man who is lost in sin it reveals to that man his lost condition. There has been no man who could fully obey that law while unsaved. The Law is not unholy neither is it unjust in its demands,

Paul wrote in **Roms7:23** *Wherefore the Law is Holy and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

There was only one who could fulfill the law of God that was the Lord Jesus Christ, man could not obey it because his heart was evil and wicked it may have an appearance of being good yet deep within it is full of dead men's bones. Whited sepulchers whose cup is clean but inside is full of covetousness and envy. Man could never come to God's standards because he is sinner doomed to destruction to the place of torment where the fire is not quenched and their worm dieth not.

Christ came as the promised seed fulfilling the law of God pure, holy, just & good. He came as the standard of God's Righteousness, Holiness and conduct upon the earth. He made the way for man to come once again to the place of acceptance before the Father that acceptance was through the grace of God that divine influence upon a man's heart that produces a life of obedience and desire to do God's Will.

The tablets of stone could never do it; a stony heart could never fulfill God's righteousness, that stony heart had to be turned into a heart of flesh upon which the Law of God could be written by Holy Ghost of God.

This is the work of the Grace of God, no longer a legal obedience doing something because I had to do it, but a heart that delights to do the will of God a soul that is filled with the Love of God and wants to do that which is pleasing in the Father's sight.

1st Peter 5:12 *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.*

Peter wrote testifying that they stood in the True Grace of God and if there was a true grace then there was also a false grace. I want us to look carefully today to see if we stand in the true grace of God.

Q.1 Have you perceived the grace of God as something that will allow you to continue in sin, Paul wrote:

Romans 6:14 *For Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law but under grace.*

Dominion means Lordship, Jesus said if a man commits sin he is the servant of sin John 8:34.

If we are continually walking in sin then the true grace of God has not been fully realized in our lives, it is time to look up and receive of that grace that delivers us from our sins. This demonstrates and glorifies the work that Christ has done that his grace can set us free, free to do His Will.

Q.2 Have you been bombarded with compromising people who make excuse for living how they want to? Jude wrote in Jude 3 that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Don't lose heart stand fast in the liberty whereby Christ has made you free. Be ready with an answer for the hope that lies within you.

Q.3 Does it seem that there are very few that are truly walking after Christ, then don't give up hope he is coming back. Lift up your head for redemption draweth nigh, be steadfast in your heart if none go with Him still I will follow.

Hallelujah!