

Christianity Clarified Volume 14

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman, with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Introduction to Grace, Part 1. Most of us who have been around any time at all know the difficulty in learning certain new things. Especially is this true when it involves unlearning as well as learning.

Unlearning something old is harder than learning something new. This is because the old tends to be ingrained or deeply seated in our psyche. Things we are just now learning tend to be deposited on our exterior mind, but things we have held and believed for perhaps decades or even all our life are entrenched.

They have sunk deep down into our being and often defy being rooted out, especially by some new belief that wants to displace them. And so it is with the subject of grace.

Before the concept of grace can be accommodated in the thinking of most people, one must be prepared to unlearn or say goodbye to the old concept, which is the very opposite of grace.

[1 : 17] And that is really difficult. Part of the difficulty is ego and part of it is intellectual. Intellectually, a quantum leap is required in order to reverse ourself from a previously held belief to its very opposite.

That is no small order. We said reversal, an about-face, not a mere adjustment or mental modification. An intelligent person does not make this change in his thinking easily.

And as for the ego's involvement, that too is formidable. It is wounding to our ego to discover we have held an entirely erroneous idea, perhaps our entire life, and we were wrong all the while and never had a clue.

It is humbling and hard to believe that we overlook something so important for so long that we just didn't get it. And to add insult to injury, it may have been even someone younger who pointed it out to us, perhaps even one of our own children, or, God forbid, a grandchild.

But what do they know? I'm the seasoned wise one here. These young pups don't begin to know what I know with my learning, years of experience, etc., etc.

[2 : 37] See what we mean by the deflating of our ego, wounding our intellectual pride? Who wants that? Well, everyone should want it. Bruised ego and all that comes with it, if it is a case of unlearning error and learning truth.

Injury to our ego is a small price to pay for embracing the greatest concept one can contemplate. We are speaking of the glory and wonder of the grace of God and how it positions itself so as to contradict the very most ingrained concept of man.

And that solidly embedded concept is the human merit system. This is the most commonly held idea known to man. It pervades all of humanity in all cultures, languages, and locations.

That human merit or perceived human goodness finds acceptance with God, and it is our most seemingly logical but most devastating untruth.

We must abandon or perish for maintaining it. This is so critical. We shall see upcoming. Introduction to Grace Part 2 It isn't at all unusual to hear a familiar response from people who have heard the gospel for the first time, or at least for the first time that they actually understood it, and that familiar response is, that can't be.

[4 : 14] That's too good to be true. And why do they say that? Because it certainly does sound too good to be true. There's no denying that. But that doesn't mean it isn't true.

Perhaps the greatest reason the gospel sounds too good to be true is because it is closely related to the word we are now considering, grace. Grace is married to the gospel, and grace, like the gospel, also sounds too good to be true.

Like everything that is true of God, there is no adequate definition of anything about him or his attributes. So all we can do is swim around in our human definitions regarding the infinite.

So it is with the word grace. It's commonly defined as unmerited favor or unearned benefits, undeserved blessings, and so on.

A favorite of many is grace in acrostics, G-R-A-C-E, God's riches at Christ's expense.

[5 : 23] Well, that too is accurate and contains both the blessings and the substitutionary element, Christ's expense as well. However one defines grace, it is really a hard sell to nearly everyone, especially upon hearing and understanding what is being said for the first time.

Grace militates against every human way of thinking, which is that of just desserts. The common idea is that we all get what we deserve, what we have earned, worked for, have coming.

After all, doesn't all of life work that way? At home, school, work, or in the neighborhood, or anywhere in the world, everybody operates on the merit system for payment, reward, and recognition.

It's all on the basis of human output, whether good or bad, and you are rewarded or punished accordingly. Yes, there is no doubt about that.

That is the way the world works. But what makes us think God works the way the world works? After all, the world works and functions as it does because it is a damaged and broken world.

[6 : 41] God doesn't fit those categories. He isn't damaged or broken, so let's not treat Him like He is. Matter of fact, it's precisely because the world is broken that God is operating with His grace.

He actually accommodates this broken world with massive infusions of His grace, the greatest display of which was in the sending of His Son to provide redemption for this broken world.

The need was great, but God's grace was greater. Marvelous grace of our loving Lord. Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.

Do you get the picture? Introduction to Grace Part 3 It has already been admitted that no adequate definition of the grace of God is humanly possible.

We'll leave it at that and go on to various aspects of grace as the Bible reveals them. But before doing that, there is a question to pose. How or when did God's grace originate?

[7 : 54] What were the conditions that brought forth God's grace? Is it true that grace has no basis for being bestowed except where moral deficiency is present?

It appears that grace is needed only when there are moral offenses or infractions. The first time the word grace is found in the Bible is in regard to Noah, of whom it is said, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

We certainly know something about the days of Noah when moral infractions abounded a plenty, don't we? And earlier with our first parents and the episode about the animal skins to cover their nakedness in Genesis 3.

This was not merely due to a moral infraction, but the moral infraction. This appears to be the first time the grace of God was in demand, and God was forthcoming with His grace.

Again, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Grace has the ability to neutralize sin when coupled with faith. It's called justification by faith, and it is by or on the basis of the grace of God that it is made available.

[9 : 08] God supplies the grace, and we supply the faith. It would seem then that although God is eternal, His grace is not, simply because grace had no venue or basis for operation where there were no morally deficient subjects to benefit from it.

God, thankfully, is a God of grace. But the Bible never says God is grace in the way it says God is love in 1 John 4.

God's love has to be eternal because it was utilized with perfection among the three persons of the Trinity, all of whom are eternal beings.

Yet, there being the absence of any sin or moral deficiency, grace was unnecessary in eternity, while love was necessary, and shall remain as the indispensable commodity of eternity.

John 1 reminds us that the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And why was it He came? That's the moral deficiency thing again.

[10 : 17] The world was and is saturated with it, and subsequently, God's grace is needed all over the world. It is dispensed everywhere it is called for when the gospel of grace is proclaimed and people respond to it.

When they do, the Spirit of God rushes forth to lavish this incredible grace of God upon its undeserving recipients, and they are saved by grace through faith.

Only those who know they are undeserving of God's grace can have it. This acknowledged need of a Savior brings forth repentance and faith in the God of all grace, who promptly dispatches it when called upon.

The God of all grace The Apostle Peter uses an expression in the fifth chapter of his first letter that is very thought-provoking.

He refers to God as being the God of all grace. At first glance, this may appear to be hyperbole, that is, an exaggeration that is intended to overstate a matter for the sake of emphasis.

[11 : 31] The Bible does use hyperbole, and other figures of speech found in literature. But if we think in literal terms, however, rather than in figurative, we may be closer to the truth.

It appears that in saying, God is the God of all grace, it is in reality a literal truth. This would mean, no matter what grace or favor man would bestow upon his fellow man, its point of origin was in the person of God himself, who is the God of all grace.

That is, all the grace there is, is that grace which originated and resides in the person of God himself. He is the God of all grace.

Any time one wants to bestow grace upon another, he must obtain it from the only source of it. This, of course, would include any and all who do not even recognize God.

No matter. He is still the sole source of all grace, acknowledged or not. We are speaking of a very sufficient deity. When we consider grace to be beneficence, kindness, blessedness, and, of course, graciousness, the God of creation has a corner on it.

[12 : 45] He is the only and ultimate source or supply as the God of all grace. This requires, of course, that any person acting in a gracious manner toward any other derives the graciousness he imparts from the only source that provides and deals in grace, the God of all grace.

God has a monopoly on grace. He also has a monopoly on power and wisdom as well. Men have both power and wisdom as well as grace, but they have none of those in any independent fashion.

Neither wisdom, power, nor grace reside in man as a point of origin or source. Any display of any of these attributes of God come from God to man.

Man may then exercise them toward another, but only because God is the source and he gave them the ability to do that, the ability to reflect God's grace in his treatment toward another.

Such a person may not even know or understand that it was the God of all grace that apportioned his grace, making it available for humans to use toward humans.

[14 : 04] We heartily concur with the Apostle Peter. Anytime, anywhere, anyone bestows grace or acts in a gracious manner toward another, he was able to do so because he obtained that grace from the God of all grace, even though he did not know it and probably wouldn't believe it if he were told that the God of all grace was behind the grace he extended to another.

We, of course, are not speaking of the grace of salvation, but of grace and gracious acts in general. The Throne of Grace The writer of Hebrews in chapter 4 speaks of a source where absolute authority, benevolence, and provision are located.

He refers to it as the Throne of Grace. A throne, whether ancient or modern, earthly or heavenly, conveys the meaning of power and authority.

If it's the throne of God as opposed to earthly monarchs, then it's absolute power and authority. This is that throne, and it is the throne of grace.

The reason we are to appeal to that throne is to obtain mercy and that we may find grace to help in time of need. Note, if you will, that mercy is needed only when justice is deserved.

[15 : 34] Mercy is the withholding of what is justly deserved, and we surely need mercy. And then, to find grace to help in time of need.

There is the deficiency. Time of need. Why would we go to the throne of God? That's a very scary thing to do. Yet, it is because that's where the grace originates.

It is from this one on this throne. God dispenses it from His seat of love, power, and authority. When we come to Him, call upon Him, we are automatically admitting our lack and our weakness just by being there.

And He meets us in our need with His all-sufficient grace. He does have an unending supply, you know. Never worry about God emptying His coffers of grace.

We need only be concerned about people who do not avail themselves of it. Additionally, we are to come to this throne of grace because Christ, our High Priest, has offered Himself as our sacrifice, and is fully equipped and morally qualified to meet all our needs.

[16 : 50] Furthermore, we are not to come timidly, nor reluctantly, but confidently, or as the King James puts it, boldly. How so?

Because we have a perfect right to go there and approach Him, since He has purchased that right for us. We are not being cocky nor arrogant, but grateful, yet bold, because we are heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ.

We are co-owners of the place. We go boldly and unashamed because we have been made accepted in the Beloved. This is the throne of grace.

The throne of grace. What makes this a throne of grace and not a throne of judgment? Christ and His redemptive work makes this throne a place where grace is dispensed.

But it's only for believers like those to whom the author is writing. The throne of grace is where believers may boldly come to receive the help they need. There is a throne for the unbeliever, but it's a far different kind of throne.

[17 : 57] It's a throne where not grace but justice is meted out. It's called the great white throne found in Revelation 19, the last book of the Bible. Don't look for grace at this throne.

That's the throne of justice. Before which throne do you appear? Grace and truth came by Christ.

The greatest purpose served by the Mosaic law was to reveal man's true plight and point him to the only source who could remedy his situation. Paul addressed this in Galatians 3 when he referred to the law as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ.

The law could point to the remedy but could not provide that remedy. Christ came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Christ came as God's gracious remedy to the just condemnation of the law. He came to actually be the Savior, the vehicle through which God's grace could be provided and applied to all who believe.

[19 : 09] The demands for violation of the law was clear. It was death, always the wages of sin. When Christ died as man's substitute, he fulfilled a very definitive and impacting statement made by John in the first chapter of his gospel, saying, For the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

It's definitive in its contrasts. Moses, the lawgiver, is forever known by his receiving the law on Sinai and relating it to the fledgling nation of Israel.

And it was law, strictly law. It could only set forth the righteous demands of the holy, infinite God. Time and again, the law would prove to be Israel's downfall through their inability to conform to its demands.

The law could justify no one. It could not impart life. It could and did condemn. By the law is the knowledge of sin.

But the law could not deliver from sin. It could only reveal man's shortcomings and his desperate need for deliverance from the law's penalty. Christ exhausted the law's claim of punishment in paying the ultimate price.

[20 : 30] It was because of this payment in full that God could now act in a gracious manner toward the sinners we all are. And he could do so with his righteousness and holiness intact without any compromise or sully of it.

This makes God both just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus. This is how and why Jesus came and did what he did.

Man is now able to come to God through Christ because it is he who made God's grace available to us all. True, grace was operative in the Old Testament, also as in the case of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and many others, all of whom were saved by grace as well as we who are saved by grace.

But even their portion of saving grace was always predicated upon the promise of one who would come and pick up the tab for grace already dispensed.

In so doing, Christ was in every sense the bringer of grace and truth, in that he in his own person and work was the very personification of those great realities, grace and truth.

[21 : 44] The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We are so grateful. The God of Common Grace Matthew chapter 5 records a comment made by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

It is a telling example of what may be called common grace. It is that grace which God bestows upon all of humanity, regardless of their relationship to himself.

Jesus said, God makes the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, and he also sends rain upon the just and the unjust alike.

Of course, the sunshine and rainfall are only two examples of the many we would call common grace. Theologians have devised the term common grace to describe the grace and favor God bestows upon all of mankind.

One may well say that all God has provided for all of humanity for all times and all locations throughout the world are examples of common grace.

[22 : 54] During the times, this common grace does not appear operative. Times such as too much or too little of sunshine or rain, as in a drought or flood.

How shall we account for that? They appear to be times of common adversity. For the just and the unjust are both negatively impacted by too little or too much rain or sunshine.

Truthfully, we do not know to what extent and frequency God personally takes charge of weather conditions, or to what extent he simply allows the different facets of climate to work their way and produce what they will.

We do know of several times in biblical history when God commanded weather to do his bidding at his command. He simply interrupted what the elements were doing as a natural force with the abilities he had already given them, and then overruled them with his own ability.

In other words, the weather was just doing the thing he designed it to do as an act of his common grace. That was of general and common benefit for all mankind until he overruled it for the special benefit of particular men in a particular place.

[24 : 14] Christ did this when he stilled the wind and waves on Galilee. Our normal climates worldwide, the ocean currents, the trade winds, deserts and oceans, are all provisions of God's common grace.

Whenever the force of nature wreaks a catastrophe such as a tsunami, an earthquake, flood or hurricane, it is often referred to as an act of God, at least by the insurance companies, which is at best questionable.

It's questionable because we cannot say with certainty that it came directly from God. Perhaps the most we could say is that God did not choose to intervene so as to prevent the catastrophe.

If his non-intervention makes it an act of God, it can be labeled so only indirectly. Suffice it to say that God's blessings and benefits are bestowed upon mankind in a general kind of way that is common to all.

Our God is the God of all grace as Peter expressed it. In addition, our God is also the God of all common grace, which of necessity belongs to the greater grace, all of which resides in him and issues forth from him.

[25 : 35] The Ever-Present Grace Greeting You are encouraged to note the very frequent, nearly always present word grace in the New Testament epistles.

Almost all of them open with the writer expressing grace and peace unto you from God our Father. Some add, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Following the conclusion of the letter, each ends with, The grace or peace of God be with you.

Why do you suppose this is? Many would consider the use of these words to be nothing more than standard fare, just a customary way of opening or closing correspondence.

No doubt these words had become such a standard. But why? Why these words, grace, peace, mercy? Must it not have been due to their importance, their value, their meaning, that caused them to become standard methods of opening and closing communication?

It's as if one were to ask himself the question, What is the most important thing I can say to express greetings and felicitude to this person to whom I am writing?

[26 : 46] The same with the close, as the writer is verbally parting company with the addressee. What better parting could be expressed than to wish the grace of God be with you?

Can you think of any more valuable blessing to extend to anyone than that of invoking the grace of God upon them? We cannot. It would appear the writer of those various letters felt the same.

You could not extend to the recipient any greater prayer on their behalf than that of these God-possessed attributes to be bestowed upon them. Grace, mercy, peace.

What a triad. Unfortunately, the terms have become devalued because of their frequent and almost automatic habitual use. But my point is that while they have become customary and automatic, there is a reason for their having become so.

It is because of the original inherent meaning and significance of the terms. In our own usage of English, our letters are concluded with, Very truly yours or sincerely yours.

[28 : 01] They too are customary and standard. We are so used to seeing them they are hardly even noticed. Yet, their meaning should not be lost. Sincerely and truly, both convey the idea of the integrity conveyed in the contents of the letter.

Whether in a friendship or in a business letter, we want the recipient to know the message in the letter comes with honesty and truthfulness. Yet, we scarcely think along those terms.

We just glide over them without their meaning ever coming to mind. Frequency of their usage, just as in grace, mercy, and peace, cause us to not even notice them, much less ponder what they really mean.

We may be sure that even though they have become mundane and customary, when the apostle used them, they were far more than mere customary ways of beginning and ending a letter.

With that, we truly and sincerely agree. Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you. The Riches of God's Grace Ephesians 1.7 and 2.7 both speak of the riches of God's grace.

[29 : 21] How rich do you suppose that is? Think, if you will, of God possessing a storehouse laden with grace. How big and vast would that be? Can you imagine the storehouse getting near to empty?

God is almost fresh out of grace. He has dispensed so much grace on so many people for so long, His supply is nearly exhausted. If this scenario is correct, future generations may be in serious trouble.

Ephesians 1.7 says, We have redemption through the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of our trespasses. He also says, The imparting of these, the redemption and forgiveness, are in accordance to the riches of God's grace.

How much grace has already been distributed on those who have lived up to now? And we are still drawing upon it. What is the capacity of that storehouse of God's grace?

Will there be enough to go around for those yet future? Such a threat is unthinkable. Can the infinite eternal God be in short supply of anything?

[30 : 29] Except one thing about which He has warned us as being limited. And thankfully, it is not His grace. God's supply of grace is available and ready to be extended so long as there are people who need it and petition God for it.

No one has ever approached God with repentance and acknowledgement of their sin and seeking the grace of God through Jesus Christ, only to be told, Well, I'm low on grace right now.

A new truckload will be coming in next week. Come back then, after I've been restocked, and I'll see what I can do. The sufficiency of my grace has to be rationed out, you know.

No, no. The riches of His grace implies its inexhaustibility. It's the riches of His grace, not the limits of His grace.

It ranks right up there with the riches of His mercy, also mentioned in Ephesians 2.4, right along with God's riches in grace in verse 7. His riches in grace and mercy are in abundant supply.

[31 : 36] An inexhaustible supply, because both assets reside in the being of God Himself, and He will be around. There is but one reality involving the infinite eternal God that is limited.

We do not know how near it is to being exhausted, but there is a termination point to it, and when it is reached, everything will change. Justice will be forthcoming rather than grace and mercy.

The days of grace will end. Who knows how close we are right now to the expiration date? What is that reality that God has placed a limitation on?

It is His long-suffering. God's patience does have a limit. His Spirit will not always strive with man. We don't know how long things can go on as they are, but it would be unwise to think God's patience and long-suffering are without end.

They are not. Today is the day of salvation. There are no guarantees of tomorrow. Grace is not intellectualized.

[32 : 53] Numerous great theologians and preachers of years gone by have offered a keen observation about the grace of God. It is thusly, If one preaches the grace of God as it is actually taught in the Scriptures, be prepared for a ready rejection of your message.

It won't sit well with nearly everyone, especially upon their first exposure to it. The reason is because the message of grace simply contradicts the thinking of man in his natural fallen estate.

The unsaved person thinks and reasons with a fallen intellect. While some pride themselves with their advanced learning, intellectual prowess and such, they have no idea their logic system is warped.

When man fell, he fell in the totality of his humanity. His intellect fell along with the rest of him. None of us have escaped the full effects of the moral failure of our original parents.

Its consequences pervade the entirety of our being. Academia cannot cure it with its advanced degrees and superior intellects. Superior as when compared to those of lesser intellects, but warped and skewed just the same.

[34 : 08] Their mutual fallenness will prevent both from reaching valid conclusions about things that matter most. This is especially true concerning connecting with God.

No matter how smart man is in his fallenness, he cannot reason his way to God. This is precisely why God in his grace gave us the Bible.

God is known by revelation, not by intellectualizing. The God of creation is the self-revealing deity who has disclosed himself in the scriptures.

Today, this concept of disclosure is almost automatically rejected by those hearing this explanation. Christians who love the Bible and have accepted its message about Jesus Christ, the cross, the empty tomb, and all that is involved in their salvation, are amazed that truly intelligent people reject this message.

How is it that someone so smart rejects the gospel and just doesn't get it? There's the problem. Understanding and embracing the gospel is not a matter of a high IQ.

[35 : 16] In fact, that may even be a hindrance because many are so overly impressed with their own intellect, they automatically reject the simplicity of the gospel.

They consider it being beneath them. This very issue is addressed in 1 Corinthians 1. Paul the Apostle asserts, Since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Paul refers to the foolishness of the message preached because he is speaking as one, having heard and rejected the message of Christ crucified as foolishness. He did that himself.

Now he describes the very same message as the wisdom of God. He readily understands how it is foolishness to those perishing, and he rejoices that the same message is the power of God to those who are saved.

Amazing. Amazing grace in so many ways. A More Than Adequate Grace The grace of God biblically taught will not be readily received by many, especially upon their first hearing it.

[36 : 37] The Apostle Paul had to contend with the frequent objections that were raised when he preached salvation by grace. The accusation was that he was actually encouraging men to sin by preaching his message.

It was true that Paul had stated, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. If this be true, said his opponents, then the way to realize an abundance of grace is to commit an abundance of sin.

If the formula for obtaining maximum grace is to commit maximum sin, then the more we sin, the more grace we will receive. But in Romans 6, Paul's retort to this perverted thinking was, God forbid.

Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. The word in the Greek is meganoito, and it is the strongest negative in the Greek language.

How shall we who died to sin still live in it? He is not saying that one who has died to sin can no longer sin, because the rest of Romans refutes that notion.

[37 : 49] What he is saying is that those who died to sin, that is, those who are crucified with Christ, still live as if they haven't died to sin. Just go on sinning to their heart's content, because in doing so, more grace will be dispensed to you.

He powerfully refuted the spin put on his preaching by his detractors. And when Paul speaks of grace abounding as a result of sin abounding, the point he was making was, no matter how great one's sin is, it is not greater than the grace of God.

However great and heinous and evil the sin, God's grace is so abounding and so great and so amazing, it is more than a match for overcoming whatever the sin in quantity or in kind.

No mere human can out-sin the infinite amazing ability of God's grace. The hymn writer had it right. Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.

There on Calvary's mount outpoured, there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. None other than Paul himself could offer his own testimony about the grace of God that overcame him.

[39 : 13] He who described himself as the chief of sinners. Paul admitted to the persecution, jailing and beating of those who believed in Jesus as God's Messiah and their Savior.

Yet, said Paul, the grace of God was greater than my sin. It's greater than anyone's sin and everyone's sin.

It's God's grace, and you can't top that. It is abundant grace, available grace, sufficient grace, rich grace, abounding grace, even to the chief of sinners.

Anyone thinking their sin, their past, their guilt, their shame is just too great for God to handle, should take great comfort in this truth. Not under law, but under grace.

So as to make certain of clarity and avoid possible misunderstanding, a principle is often set forth by explaining both what a thing is and what it is not.

[40 : 18] The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses this very methodology in Romans chapter 6. His statement will strike like a thunderclap. It still does, 2,000 years later.

People simply find it hard to believe. They did when Paul said it, and they still do. Of what principle do we speak? Get ready. Here it is. 6:14 of Romans.

This is a hard saying. Can this possibly be true?

Not under law, but under grace? Here are both the negative and the positive. Not under law, the negative, but under grace, the positive.

Both are set forth, lest one by itself be misunderstood. But it was put so plainly and precisely, it defied being misunderstood.

[41 : 18] Yet there would be some who would embrace this as antinomianism, that is, live as you please, do as you please, sin as you please, because the law no longer matters.

Aware that some would reach this ridiculous conclusion, the next verse is designed to head that off and kill it before it can raise its ugly head. The very next verse reads, What then?

Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? May it never be. Meganoito. This can never be twisted to allow a license to sin with abandonment, and only the most perverted thinking could take it that way.

Paul, as the entire context of Romans 6 will reveal, is telling them that the law, that is, the law of Moses, is the basis for the knowledge and revealing of sin.

As such, the law condemns, the lawbreaker. The law points to the violator and says, Guilty, guilty, guilty. That was the sentence you were under, and justly so.

[42 : 22] But Christ met the full demands of the law, which is death. He died for your sin, and he satisfied the righteous demands of the law by paying its penalty in your stead.

The law now has no more demands upon you, because its full penalty has been paid. You are free from the law, and all it demands, which you could not meet.

Listen to this beautiful commentary which Paul offers to this statement in Romans 6.14 with his follow-up explanation in 8.1-4. There is, therefore now, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did.

Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

[43 : 30] This is why we are not under law, but under grace. The Top Priority of the Gospel of Grace Perhaps none would dare dispute the singular individual who most eagerly, unashamedly, and tirelessly gave himself to the proclaiming of the gospel of the grace of God through Jesus Christ than this man.

This, Saul of Tarsus, this Saul later to become Paul the Apostle, a Jew, who brutally persecuted other Jews for their faith and belief that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the long-awaited Messiah, that Jesus was the one prophesied by Moses and the prophets thousands of years before he made his entrance as a babe in Bethlehem.

Just how seriously was Paul committed to this task, this former blasphemer, converted on the road to Damascus, whom God will inspire to write one-third of our New Testament?

How seriously did he take his calling? Let him tell you. On his third missionary journey, as recorded in Acts 20, Paul said, I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself in order that I may finish my course in the ministry which I receive from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

Can any of us begin to match this kind of commitment and dedication? Not likely. Of course, it meant so much for Paul to have received this commission personally and directly from Christ himself as opposed to the less direct way you and I as Christians today have received.

[45 : 21] Certainly, that was credible as a motivating factor for Paul. But equally, was he committed not only to the one who gave him the message, but the message itself, the good news, news without which people are perishing.

He was to solemnly testify or bear witness to the gospel of the grace of God. And did you get how he was to do it? It was solemnly.

Seriously. This good news is a no-nonsense message. It was a you'd better listen up and hear this well because your eternal destiny hangs in the balance.

That's solemn. No fun and games here. This is not a take-it-or-leave-it ho-hum message. One more religion. Take your pick.

This is the good news of and from God himself and you need to weigh it and evaluate it more than you have ever weighed and evaluated anything.

[46 : 26] And why was Paul so given and driven by this message of the grace of God? What possessed him to hazard and finally give his life for it rather than recant it?

One simple reason. It was true. Truth is not only worth living for, it's worth dying for.

I do not count my life as dear unto myself in order that I may finish my course which I receive from the Lord Jesus to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

All believers who ever lived after Paul, including us, are deeply indebted to this man, Paul the Apostle. Justified by His Grace Part 1 One of the most glorious liberating thoughts one can ever contemplate is that of not guilty, free from judgment and its punishment, absolve, release, and the biblical term reflecting the language of the court of the law of heaven itself is justified.

To be justified means God Himself has judged you and declared you to be righteous in His sight. How can this be in light of Romans 3.23 that sternly declares, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God?

[47 : 56] Well, it's only because of the verse that follows. 24 Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Did you get that? Our being declared justified by God is all because of Christ. Who He was and what He did is alone that which enables God to justify or declare righteous those who in themselves are anything but righteous.

It's all about substitution. It's all about the innocent dying for the guilty. Described as a gift of God's grace. A gift that Jesus paid for so God could give it to you and me.

We who are utterly undeserving. This is why this grace is so amazing and such good news. Justified, declared to be, pronounced to be, righteous, even though we aren't.

When we received the Lord Jesus Christ, He gave us what He is, His righteousness, eternal life, and so much more. And it was all a gift by His grace made available because of the redeeming quality of the death of Christ on our behalf.

[49 : 09] Who else did this? Who else would have been qualified to do this? Who else was anointed and sent by God to do this? Do you not see why Christians must insist upon the exclusivity of salvation through Christ alone?

We must because God does. All this incredible provision is a gift of His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

You will search in vain to find a like redemption in any other person or any other religious system, ancient or modern. Christ is the only person ever qualified to own the title Savior.

The question has been asked regarding the validity of the Christian faith and its insistence upon Christ's exclusivity. Here's the question. How can Christians be regarded as narrow or bigoted for receiving from Jesus Christ that which no one else even offers?

Indeed. This offer of salvation by grace earned and paid for by Christ Himself is then offered to those who will receive it as a free gift. What else can you call this but good news?

[50 : 21] The good news. And we can fully understand the skepticism and even rejection by a suspicious and jaded world. It does sound too good to be true. But God who cannot lie is the very architect of the entire affair of human redemption.

He delegated the task to His own Son to carry it out and appointed the Holy Spirit in charge of disseminating the message through the hearts and lives of those who believed it.

Justified by His Grace Part 2 Our ongoing efforts to clarify Christianity is due to the fact that despite its being around for 2,000 years, the misunderstanding, ambiguity, and confusion never goes away.

This, no doubt, is due at least in part to its offer of salvation on the basis of grace alone through faith or believing alone. We have noted this simply does not compute in the mind of so many who believe favor is to be gained only on the basis of personal merit.

The gospel of grace boldly declares you have no merit. Deal with it. And because you have no merit, no deservedness, the God of heaven, motivated by His love and grace, has provided a plan where you, without your merit, merit, can have the merit of His own dear Son imputed to your account.

[51 : 57] You will then stand before God, cleansed from your sin and wearing the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It becomes yours by recognizing and admitting you have no merit, but Jesus Christ does.

His merit, His righteousness, He imputes to all who by the simple act of their will place their faith and trust in Him. This is the gospel of the grace of God and it does run contrary to conventional human thinking.

Yet, it is clearly God's thinking and that's what matters. The Romans 3 passage cited earlier is echoed and reinforced by what the same Apostle Paul was inspired of God to write to a colleague by the name of Titus.

You'll find a quote in chapter 3. Please listen carefully and see if this is not the same gospel of the grace of God throughout. Here it is. God saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

There it is again, ever so clearly, this gospel, this good news of the grace of God. And by the way, the washing of regeneration?

[53 : 31] Please don't read baptism into this. No baptismal waters can reach us where we need to be cleansed. It's inside, deep inside our human spirit where our real person lives.

That's what needs the cleansing. And only the Holy Spirit can reach us there. This He does upon our believing in Jesus Christ as our personal sin bearer and Savior.

This, is the gospel of the grace of God. It is desperately needed by all and provided for all. For Protestants, for Catholics, for Jews, for Muslims, for atheists, and by and for whatever.

This, this personal salvation, appropriated solely on the basis of faith or believing in what God did through Christ, is what Christianity is all about. It cannot be clarified much more clearly than this.

saved by grace through faith. One of the most concise and definitive statements about salvation is found in the oft-quoted and memorized verse of Ephesians 2.

[54 : 43] For by grace you have been saved through faith. Sometimes these rich theological words are lumped together as though they are synonymous. They are not the same and each word is powerful and priceless in its own right.

While they often work together, grace and faith, each can also stand alone and each serves a specific function in our personal salvation. When the Apostle Paul states, By grace you have been saved, he is referring to the basis, the rationale, or the root cause of our salvation.

In other words, grace was the originating factor that brought our salvation about. What was it that prompted God to provide for our salvation?

It was the grace that is inherent in the character, nature, and person of God. This was the platform of our salvation, the rock-bottom base that is rooted in God himself.

Then we are told how the grace or graciousness of God gets applied to the individual person. His grace comes to us as it meets our faith going toward Him.

[55 : 58] God's grace stands at the ready to be activated or bestowed upon us as and when we exercise our faith in the gospel. In other words, our faith or our belief is the response we make toward God upon the hearing of the gospel.

God provides grace for regeneration and salvation and we supply the faith that causes it to be applied to our hearts when we believe. Think of faith as being the pipeline or conduit, the vehicle through which God's grace gets to us.

God's grace and regeneration comes to us and does the work of grace inwardly upon the volitional act of our faith, confidence, trust, reliance upon the person of Christ and His death and resurrection for our sin.

This makes our salvation a very personal matter, something one must do in and of himself. No one else can exercise this faith or belief for you.

This is so personal, simple, and basic, yet it escapes the understanding of many. And this is largely because they cannot fathom a salvation without meeting a myriad of conditions, making promises, praying more, behaving more, or doing more, of whatever.

[57 : 18] But once the light of God's grace breaks through, one realizes it is all of God's grace that saves us and nothing that is required from us but our faith. It is then the believing person is really set free from the spiritual captivity that keeps us in bondage, a bondage accompanied by fear, confusion, uncertainty, and darkness.

We, upon believing, begin to grasp that this wonderful connection to the God of all creation is truly a reality and it's all because of who Jesus Christ is and what he did for us.

All we did was believe the record God gave of his Son. God did all the rest. Have you believed in Christ in this manner? And that not of yourselves.

The continuation of the magnificent expression in Ephesians 2 emphasizes the thought began in 2.8 which was For by grace you have been saved through faith.

This is the positive aspect of the transaction. Then, as if the writer under inspiration of God fears that someone might not grasp that powerful positive statement he follows with an equally powerful negative by saying And that not of yourselves.

[58 : 44] Just in case it didn't register with you that you did not get it that it was by grace and that not of yourselves. So, if the positive didn't get through to you, here is reinforcement from the negative.

Not of yourselves. Did someone still not get it? Then, the next line, another positive and another powerful spiritual jolt it is.

It is the gift of God. How about that? Need more? How about another negative? Not of works. Now, seriously, anyone unable to pick up on all this must be struggling with a problem of personal pride.

Someone who insists on having more to do with their own salvation than God requires or will even permit. Why would anyone insist on making a contribution that God does not want and will not accept?

Could it be that their having a hand in their own salvation would result in recognition that would accrue to their credit? The Apostle Paul addresses that also when he says, The reason it is by grace through faith and that not of yourselves is so that no one can boast.

[59 : 57] There are no human bragging rights among the redeemed. We undeserving sinners do get the benefits but none of the credit. Jesus paid it all and all the credit, honor, and glory rightly belongs to him.

What do we get? We get his grace, his forgiveness, his righteousness, his eternal life and it's all on the basis of what Christ did. All you did was believe what Christ did.

That is amazing. And that's why John Newton wrote a song about it and called it Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound That Saved a Wretch Like Me.

I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves.

As mentioned earlier, this marvelous plan of grace is far afield from typical human logic. Man has trouble seeing this plan of God because his experience in every other area of life is not on the basis of grace but on the basis of human effort.

[61 : 06] So the line in Amazing Grace speaks to this as well when it says, I once was blind but now I see. This was the spiritual blindness that prevents man from seeing the truth of grace.

Only repeated exposure to the gospel can clear away the confusion and obscurity that clouds truth and allow us to see clearly for the first time. Another songwriter stated, Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me.

It's the only legitimate prayer of anyone seeking truth. It is the gift of God.

God is a lover. 1 John 4 tells us God is love and because God is a lover he is also a giver. It has been said, you may give without loving but you cannot love without giving.

Not only is this a prominent characteristic of God but it is of humans too. Everybody who truly loves has an insatiable appetite to give to the object of our love be it our spouse, children or other loved ones.

[62 : 21] Giving is a demonstration of love. This is why a gift that someone gives us means much more to us than if we had gone out and bought the very same thing for ourself. Someone gifted us with it and that adds to its value.

There is no area where we should apply that more than with our salvation expressed in Ephesians 2. Paul the Apostle speaks of this salvation being provided on the basis of grace and appropriated by us on the basis of faith.

After denying that it has anything to do with our human effort he shouts triumphantly It is the gift of God and this phrase speaks volumes.

A clear distinction is made throughout the Bible between what is earned and deserved like payment and wages versus what is freely given as a gift neither earned nor deserved and we today make this very same distinction between a free gift and earned wages.

But can we carry over this analogy of a free gift versus earned wages into the spiritual? Does it apply here and if so how does it? Well it most certainly does not only does it but nothing else but it does apply and this by order of the gift giver.

- [63 : 37] Still multitudes are in disbelief at this prospect that the greatest single thing in all of humanity eternal life and the assurance thereof is a gift to have it you need only receive it as you would any other gift from any other source?

That can't be true. Why not? Well it's too big too valuable too important but don't you see this is what the Bible is really saying and this is precisely why it is called good news.

It is such good news there is nothing else like it in all the world. It is the very plan of God himself and nearly everything about it is counter to the way man would have done it.

But God made salvation the free gift of his grace. Elsewhere in Romans 6 it is stated the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Life's most valuable possession is life that is eternal and it's free. Let's be sure we do not consider something free to be something cheap.

- [64 : 54] Our free salvation was paid for very dearly through the sacrificial death of God's own beloved son and the son he was willing to be that payment that we may become the righteousness of God in him.

How do you get this gift of eternal life? How do you obtain any gift? Only by receiving it. Not of Works One of the most compact yet comprehensive passages in all the Bible sets forth such vital truth it commands an adequate treatment.

The truth herein is the very means of human salvation that is in establishing a connection with the creator God that results in forgiveness and eternal life.

In Ephesians 2 several truths are revealed cast in both a positive light and a negative light. Positively we are saved by grace through faith and it is the gift of God.

Negatively it is not of ourselves and it is not of works. But here is where the average person stumbles. He is committed to the illusion that you get only what you work for.

- [66 : 13] Salvation is a very costly thing so it follows he thinks that one must work hard extra hard to obtain it. But do you see any good news in that message?

The word gospel means good news but it is hardly good news if one must work or work hard to obtain it. How much must one work? How long need you work?

What kind of work must you do? Can you take any time off? How much? And where in the midst of all this work is there any good news? How would you know when you have worked enough?

Aren't those questions truly unanswerable? Little wonder because they are all invalid questions. The Ephesian text of chapter 2 clearly states our salvation is not secured on the basis of our works.

And we should be so grateful because all those troubling questions pose nothing but agony of spirit. if there were only some definitive way of knowing one way or another where we stand all those agonizing questions could be put to rest.

- [67 : 22] And there is. And it is definitive. And we can know one way or another. It's called the good news. Just getting answers is reason enough to call it good news.

And it isn't even about your works or how many or what kind. In fact, it has nothing to do with your working at all. It is not of works but of grace.

Of works would mean that you have earned. But of grace, it is the gift of God. There's that good news again. This same apostle Paul was raised up of God to proclaim and explain the gospel or the good news of the grace of God.

Listen to how he explains it in Romans 4. Says Paul, Did you get that?

His faith is counted as righteousness. Who counts his faith or merely believing as righteousness? God does. This isn't merely good news.

[68 : 34] It's exhilarating. It's liberating. It completely does away with all the unanswerable questions of how many good works, what kind of works, ad infinitum. It places the question squarely on the grace of God and whether one is a recipient of it through faith in Jesus Christ.

After all, he is the Savior and he alone is worthy of our trust. The well-rehearsed passage of Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 concludes with the irrationality of any grace recipient having grounds for boasting.

Leading up to this grand conclusion that deflates all human ego is, For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one should boast.

This clearly makes a Christian braggart an oxymoron. One cannot be a recipient of the unearned, undeserved favor of our Creator-Redeemer and possibly give himself credit for anything to do with it.

It is all of grace, and being all of grace, bragging rights are unthinkable and inappropriate. In fact, they are so inappropriate, it is hard to imagine that one who boasts of their contribution toward becoming a Christian has actually been a recipient of God's grace.

[70 : 00] To the Corinthians, Paul asks them in chapter 4, What do you have that you have not received? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Clearly, a Christian bragging over how he obtained salvation must make anyone question how such an one could even be a Christian. One doesn't need to know very much in order to become saved, but you do need to know this that is so powerfully expressed in the Ephesians 2 passage, By grace, through faith, not of yourself, gift of God, not of works, none can boast.

This is the bare minimum. If becoming a Christian solely on the basis of receiving a free and undeserved gift of salvation and eternal life from Christ, who purchased it for you by dying as your substitute, if that all sounds unreasonable and far-fetched to you, it's supposed to, at least to us mortals.

But to God, it is His consummate wisdom, far removed from what seems reasonable to us humans. Remember, what seems reasonable to men is the merit system.

Those who go to heaven must earn it and deserve it by their good deeds. Then, God rewards their noble efforts by allowing them in heaven. To the vast majority of people worldwide, that's what is reasonable to them.

[71 : 32] But to God, He utterly rejects this tainted and flawed effort of man to effect His own salvation. God loves us in such a way that He will not entrust our eternal life to ourselves.

He decided to arrange and care for it Himself in concert with His Son, Jesus. Only by deity alone being responsible for making salvation available, could God be assured it wouldn't fail of its completion.

Man could do nothing to provide for his own salvation. He can only accept or reject what God has provided. All bragging rights are thus excluded.

But the right to rejoice is not. Are you rejoicing over having received received the free gift of God's grace? You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman.

Anyone with a reasonable appreciation of the grace of God knows right away how extensive, profound, and involved the subject of grace to be.

[73 : 03] We cannot imagine doing the grace of God anything close to justice in a mere CD of twenty three-and-a-half-minute segments. Even with our upcoming CD number fifteen that also deals with the subject of grace, we are not saying we can do in two CDs what we could not accomplish in one.

Two will not do it justice either. All the doctrines revealed by our Lord in His Word are simply inexhaustible. Our conviction is, no matter how much time and devotion we give to any aspect of the truth of God, we have merely made a scratch on the surface.

So, though we are under no illusions of having fully treated anything having to do with divine revelation, still, there are subjects that are so key, so vital, and so richly filled with truth, they cry out for more attention.

Such are the words grace and faith. This being the case, two CDs of twenty segments each will be devoted to these critical terms, grace and faith.

The upcoming CD number fifteen will be the second relating to a clarification of the grace of God, while discs number sixteen and seventeen to follow will cover the subject of faith and our attempt at its clarification.

[74 : 36] Both grace and faith make profuse appearances in the Old as well as the New Testaments. So, the next offering of CD number fifteen will address the subject of grace with efforts to clarify its usage and meaning along subject lines such as the dispensation of grace, the grace of God brings salvation, the grace of God teaches us, growing in grace, hearts established by grace, grace sufficient in trials, being strong in God's grace, good hope through grace, speech salted by grace, grace given to the humble, abusing the grace of God, receiving the grace of God in vain, frustrating the grace of God, insulting the spirit of grace, turning grace into immorality, falling from grace, grace for dying, the apostle of grace, trophies of the grace of God, and lastly, grace people are gracious people.

There are few subjects so critical for gaining an appreciation of systematic theology and its workings, as regards humans at least, as the themes grace and faith.

Gaining a good grasp of these opens one up to the appreciation and connections of so much more. We trust you will see what we mean as you engage CDs number 15 up next, and then followed with numbers 16 and 17 and the subject of faith.

They will prove to be major eye-openers, we hope, for all who listen. And to you already familiar with a comprehensive understanding of grace and faith, please undertake these with a view to your refreshing yourself and reviewing what you already know.

The pleasure for providing and presenting these is all mine, I assure you. thanks so much for listening. Thank you. Thank you.