

**Foundations Class – The Grace Of God**

**Foundation Class  
“The Grace Of God”**

**Ken Stone Ministries**

## Foundations Class – The Grace Of God

### Part One

#### The Grace of God In the Old Testament

God has revealed His love and grace to mankind from the beginning. Contrary to both orthodox and modern views of theology, God is manifested throughout the Old Testament as a God of LOVE AND MERCY!

Let's understand the most basic characteristic of the nature of God. First of all, GOD IS LOVE. Everything God does flows from His love. When God grants His GRACE, it likewise is rooted in and flows from His love. Whenever He extends mercy and forgiveness, favor and blessing, kindness and forbearance, it is by HIS GRACE!

In the Old Testament there is one basic Hebrew word which has been translated "grace." That word is *chen*, which is pronounced *khane*. This word is derived from the root word *chanan* (pronounced *khawnan*), which means "grace, favor, goodwill, kindness, gracious and pleasant." The adjectival form of *chen* is *channuwn* (pronounced *khannoon*), which means "gracious." The Hebrew root word *chanan* means "gracious, to favor, to be favorably inclined, to pity, to be compassionate, to make acceptable." It can also mean "to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior, to be moved to favor by a petition or request, to show favor, to grant or give favor or to graciously show mercy and pity" (*Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*).

Let us examine the description of the Creation in the first chapter of Genesis to understand how God's grace was revealed from the beginning.

#### God's Grace Revealed From Creation

After God had created the heavens and the earth, He "saw everything that He had made, and indeed, *it was EXCEEDINGLY GOOD*" (Gen. 1:31). The word good is translated from the Hebrew *tolby*, which means "beautiful, bountiful, cheerful, fine, good, GRA-CIOUS"; its secondary meaning is "joyful, loving, mercy, pleasant, pleasure, prosperity, wealth, well or well-favored" (*Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*). When God looked upon everything He had made, He saw that everything was very good. It was a BLESS-ING! As viewed through God's eyes, His very Creation was a manifestation of HIS LOVE and HIS GRACE. As an expression of God's love and grace, we need to examine the Scriptural account of the creation of Adam and Eve. The very words of God reveal His love and grace: "And God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the

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fowl of heaven and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that crawls upon the earth.’ And God made man in His *own* image, in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female” (Gen. 1:26-27).

Of all the creations of God, only mankind was made in the image and likeness of God. This blessing, which was bounteously bestowed upon mankind, is a profound expression of God’s supreme love and grace. To further demonstrate His love, when the Lord God made Adam and Eve, He personally formed them with His very own hands. This act reveals that the Lord God intended from the very beginning to have a personal, intimate relationship with them.

No other creature was formed by the hands of God. All other created things and beings were brought into existence by the word of His command, through the power of His Holy Spirit. “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created” (Psa. 104:30). Of the creation of the heavens, the Scriptures reveal: “By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psa 33:6). Again the Scriptures confirm, “O praise the LORD! O praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts. Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light. Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD, **for He commanded and they were created**” (Psa. 148:1-5).

However, in the account of the creation of man, notice what the Scriptures record for us: “Then the LORD God [*Elohim’s Jehovah*—a literal translation from the Hebrew] formed man *of the* dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7).

The very act of the LORD God Himself breathing the breath of life into the man reveals the intimate relationship that God desired to have with mankind. When God breathed the breath of life into Adam, God also imparted to him a special spiritual essence, called the “spirit in man” (Job 32:8; 33:4; Zech 12:1; I Cor. 2:9-11), giving him the unique ability to think and reason, hence to acquire knowledge and to make decisions based on that knowledge.

At the same time, God also implanted into Adam’s mind a fully functioning language in order that he might communicate with his Creator. Furthermore, in order to show the close, personal relationship of love that God intended man and woman to have as husband and wife,

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### ***In the Old Testament***

He personally formed Eve from one of Adam's ribs. "And the LORD God said, '*It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helper compatible [a counterpart, a sustainer beside him and complementary in every way] for him'..... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall over Adam, and he slept. And He took one of his ribs, and *afterwards* closed up the flesh underneath. Then the LORD God made the rib (which He had taken out of the man) into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, 'This *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. *She* shall be called Woman because *she* was taken out of Man" (Gen. 2:18, 21-23). In the same way that the LORD God had breathed into Adam the breath of life, He also breathed the breath of life into Eve and imparted to her the spirit of man and a fully functioning language.*

Of all the living creatures that the LORD God had made, only man and woman were created to give and receive love in a most intimate and personal way. That blessing was reserved for mankind alone. Through the process of procreation, all human beings are blessed with the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual ability to give and receive love. Greater still, only mankind was created to have a personal, spiritual, loving relationship with the Creator God. This special blessing of love and grace was not extended to any other fleshly being which the LORD God had made. Man alone was created in the image of God for the ultimate purpose of sharing the power and immortality and glory of God!

Thousands of years later, the Scriptural truth of man's divinely ordained potential was proclaimed by David, king of Israel, who was a man after God's own heart. He praised God for His magnificent Creation, and particularly for the creation of mankind. He wrote in one of his many Psalms, "O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! You have set Your glory above the heavens!....When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You came for him?

For You have made him a little lower than God [Hebrew Elohim, meaning God, incorrectly translated angels in the *KJV* and other versions; the Hebrew word for angels is *malak*] and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet" (Psa. 8:1, 3-6).

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THINK ABOUT IT! Adam and Eve, the progenitors of all mankind, were created in the image and likeness of Almighty God, with the potential to become like Him in every way. This awesome potential is the HIGHEST BLESSING and expression of His LOVE and GRACE that God can bestow upon the work of His hands! When we truly understand and grasp this fact, our love of God and appreciation for His grace grows deeper.

In addition to God's loving and gracious act in creating them in His image, God further expressed His love and goodness by blessing Adam and Eve. "And God BLESSED them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' " (Gen. 1:28).

What a blessing of love and grace that God bestowed upon Adam and Eve! They could create and produce children made in their own image through the wonderful, intimate act of love. Moreover, God gave to all mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve, dominion over all the earth. God in His gracious goodness created the entire world, and all that is in it, as a gift to mankind. A gift can also be called a grace, because it is freely given.

### **Adam and Eve Began Under Grace**

The Scriptural account of the Creation makes it clear that mankind was created in a state of grace. From the beginning, God placed Adam and Eve in a physical and spiritual condition of grace and blessing by the act of creation and by His personal presence with them. To help them maintain this personal state of grace and to ensure that they would always know their Creator and be able to commune with the LORD God Himself, in His personal presence, He specifically created and sanctified the seventh day as a perpetual day for rest and fellowship with Him.

The weekly seventh-day Sabbath is more than a memorial of God creation. From the beginning, God blessed and sanctified the seventh day as the Sabbath day, as an act of kindness and goodness for all mankind, so that mankind could fellowship with Him as Creator. "And by *the beginning* of the seventh day God finished His work which He had made. And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:2-3).

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God created and sanctified the seventh-day Sabbath specifically for mankind. Jesus Christ, Who was the LORD God of Creation, made this fact absolutely clear when He declared that He and He alone was Lord of the Sabbath day. He declared, “**The Sabbath was made for man [mankind], and not man for the Sabbath; therefore the Son of man is LORD EVEN OF THE SABBATH**” (Mark 2:27-28). When we understand the observance of the first Sabbath in the light of other Scriptures, we can learn a great deal about the grace of God. The Scriptural record in Genesis 3 reveals that Adam and Eve were personally taught by God. They saw God face to face, they talked with God and walked with God—before they had ever sinned. Most certainly God had personally rested and kept the very first Sabbath with Adam and Eve. They kept this first Sabbath with God in a perfect state of grace in His presence. There can be no doubt that God had instructed them on that first Sabbath. What a marvelous day that very first Sabbath must have been! There could be no greater grace than being in the presence of and

being taught by the LORD God Himself—their very Creator! The Scriptures do not tell us how long it was after their creation before Adam and Eve sinned. But until they sinned, they undoubtedly kept the seventh day Sabbath in the presence of the LORD God, their Creator. The Scriptures make it clear that the creation of the seventh-day

Sabbath was an everlasting expression of God’s loving grace to man-kind. Because God desires to bestow His love and grace upon us, God has commanded that we keep His Sabbath by resting every seventh day in order that we may be instructed in His Word and may have fellowship with Him. Those who fully understand the purpose of the seventh-day Sabbath know that Sabbath keeping is an acknowledgment of the love and grace of God, not merely the fulfilling of commandment or law.

### **God Has Given Free Choice—Free Moral Agency**

God further revealed His love and grace to Adam and Eve by creating paradise for them to live in. It was called the Garden of Eden. God provided everything for them. “And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life also was in the middle of the garden, and the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**” (Gen. 2:8-9).

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After placing Adam in the garden, God instructed him and set before him choices. “And the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but you shall not eat of the tree of *the* knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it in dying you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:15 -17). By creating the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, God revealed that even greater grace was available to Adam and Eve. The Scriptural truth is that eternal life, symbolized by the Tree of Life, is the ultimate destiny of mankind. It is for this purpose that God created Adam and Eve in the beginning. When God placed them in the Garden of Eden, He gave them free access to the Tree of Life. If they had eaten of this tree, God would have revealed to them the way to spiritual salvation and eternal life. The Word of God reveals that spiritual salvation and eternal life are God’s supreme acts of love and grace toward man-kind.

However, God does not force His salvation upon mankind. The LORD God created Adam and Eve as free moral agents and gave them the power of independent choice. Every human being has been given this capacity to choose. God has ordained that we must **CHOOSE** to love, serve and obey our Creator. In the beginning, God desired that Adam and Eve choose His way, which would lead to eternal life, as symbolized by the Tree of Life. But God did not force them to choose to serve and obey Him, nor did He restrict their choice, otherwise free moral agency would not exist.

In order that Adam and Eve might exercise their free moral agency by making independent choices, God also placed in the garden of Eden the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree symbolized the way of man apart from God, under the sway of Satan the devil, which leads to eternal death. **But God commanded Adam and Eve NOT to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.**

These were the two choices God placed before Adam and Eve. **THEY HAD TO CHOOSE** between: 1) God’s way of life, as symbolized by the Tree of Life, resulting in eternal life; and 2) their own way of life, as symbolized by the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil— cut off from God, removed from His grace, under the sway of Satan the devil—resulting in eternal death.

Although God had specifically commanded them not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve willfully chose to eat of it. When they ate of that tree, following Satan and rejecting God’s way of life, they cut themselves off from God and His blessings, and lost their original state of grace.

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As a result, they forfeited their right to the Tree of Life. Through their disobedience, Adam and Eve brought sin, misery and death into this world! Curses came instead of blessings, hatred instead of love, judgment instead of grace, sorrow instead of joy, war instead of peace, and death instead of eternal life.

In addition to the sentence of eternal death being passed on to all human beings, a sinful, hostile nature also was passed on to all mankind. The apostle Paul describes the rebelliousness of human nature against God and His law: “Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be!*” (Rom. 8:7). Paul calls this carnal nature which is inherent within our very beings “**the law of sin and death**” (Rom. 7:21-8:2).

Jesus Christ also revealed that human nature is inherently evil: “For from within, out of the hearts of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, guile, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; **ALL THESE EVILS GO FORTH FROM WITHIN, AND THESE DE-FILE THE MAN**” (Mark 7:21-23).

All mankind since the time of Adam and Eve—in every age, civilization and society—has rejected the way of God! The only exceptions are the few whom God personally called and who responded by choosing to love and obey God.

Every one who is personally and individually called by God must CHOOSE to serve Him and walk in His way. God will never FORCE anyone to love and obey Him. We must FREELY CHOOSE to love and obey God with our whole hearts and minds.

Because Adam and Eve chose to DISOBEY God, and did NOT obey His command, they lost God’s blessings and grace, and incurred God’s judgment. But the fact that God withdrew His grace from Adam and Eve, and brought judgment upon all humanity, does not mean that God’s character and nature had changed! Not at all! God was and is always the same! God was still a God of LOVE. God was still a God of GRACE. Even while He was pronouncing sentence upon Adam and Eve for their sins, God prophesied of the coming Savior and the grace that would come to all mankind through Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15).

After Adam and Eve lost their state of grace, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. By removing them from Eden, God cut them off from access to the Tree of Life. In spite of the fact that Adam and Eve had sinned, and that mankind in general was cut off from the way to eternal life, God still granted His

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blessings and grace to those few who truly sought Him and loved Him! Abel, Enoch and Noah were all blessed by God and accepted by Him, obtaining GRACE in His sight. The Scriptures record that Abel was righteous in God's eyes (Gen. 4:4, Heb. 11:4). Enoch walked with God and pleased God (Gen. 5:22, 24; Heb.11:5). The New Testament confirms that these two righteous men will be resurrected to eternal life, along with Noah and other faithful men and women of the Old Testament whose righteous acts are described in Hebrews 11.

In Old Testament times, only a faithful few received the grace of God unto salvation. The sin and rebellion of Adam and Eve cut off mankind from salvation and eternal life “until the seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Gal. 3:19). The vast majority of Adam and Eve's descendants had no hope of eternal life until the coming of the prophesied Savior, when the fullness of God's grace unto salvation became available to all who were called by God (Acts 2:38-39). As the apostle Paul wrote, “For God has given them all over to unbelief in order that He might [later, according to His plan and purpose] show mercy to all” (Rom. 11:32).

As a result of being cut off from God by choosing the way of sin and death under the sway of Satan the devil, mankind before the Flood became satiated with evil, violence and wickedness. “And the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts [and intents] of his heart *was* only evil continually. And the LORD repented that He had made man on the earth, and He *was* grieved in His heart....Now the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt—for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. And, behold, I will destroy them *with* the earth’ ” (Gen. 6:5-6, 11-13).

### **Noah Found Grace**

In the midst of this sinful and corrupt society, only one man remained faithful to God and found grace in His sight. “**But Noah found grace** in the eyes of the LORD....Noah was a RIGHTEOUS man and perfect [that is, spiritually sincere and mature] in his generations, for Noah WALKED WITH GOD” (Gen 6:8-9). By recording that Noah walked with God, the Scriptures make it clear that he was humbly and meekly obeying God. He was walking in “the way of the LORD.”

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**Here is a profound Scriptural truth: GRACE CAN NEVER BE IMPUTED WITHOUT OBEDIENCE AND REPENTANCE!** Noah found grace because he willingly loved God, walked with God, served and obeyed God. Noah also taught others about God's way. The New Testament records that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (II Pet. 2:5).

God extended His grace to Noah because Noah loved righteousness and willingly obeyed God's commandments. Noah was able to remain in God's grace and favor because he diligently obeyed God in everything. After God gave him the instructions for building the Ark, it is recorded, "Noah did so, according to ALL that God commanded him, so he did" (Gen. 6:22). When the Ark was completed, God gave further instructions about the animals. Again it is recorded, "And NOAH DID according to ALL that the LORD commanded him" (Gen. 7:5). Think for a minute! If God was about to destroy all life because of the sin and wickedness of human beings, do you think that Noah would have continued to receive God's merciful, saving grace, if he also had sinned with the rest of mankind (sin is the transgression of the law—I John 3:4), or if he had taken part in the corruption and violence which filled the world?

The answer is a resounding NO! From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible shows that to receive and continue in God's grace and favor, loving obedience to God is required. From the terrible destruction of the Flood, God reached down and saved Noah and his household alone. That was a tremendous act of GRACE! It was a blessing for all humanity! Had it not been for the GRACE OF GOD given to Noah, none of us would be alive today! And had it not been for the GRACE that God later extended to Abraham, none of us would have an opportunity for salvation!

### **Abraham Found Grace**

Abraham was called by God, which was an act of grace, and was commanded, "Get out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house into a land that I will show you. And I will make *of* you a great nation. And I will bless you [an act of GRACE from God] and make your name great. And YOU SHALL BE A BLESSING. And I will bless those that bless you and curse the one who curses you. And in you shall ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED [a prophecy of the coming grace and salvation through Jesus Christ]" (Gen. 12:1-3).

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Again, God was graciously reaching down to give a blessing to a human being who was willing to love and obey Him. Throughout the Scriptural account of his life, it is recorded that Abraham believed God and obeyed God. Because he loved God and walked with God, Abraham was called the friend of God. “And the scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Now Abraham **believed** God, and it was **reckoned to him for righteousness**’ [by God’s grace]; and he was called A FRIEND OF GOD” (Jas. 2:23).

The apostle Paul makes it clear that Abraham received God’s grace through his faith (Rom 4:3-5). Paul describes Abraham’s justification by grace as “the righteousness of faith” (verses 5-8, 13, 16). Did the state of grace under which Abraham lived mean that he was not required to keep the commandments of God? Of course not! Grace never gives anyone license or permission to ignore or reject the commandments and laws of God and to commit sin—which is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). The apostle Paul was inspired to write, “What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:1-2).

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach us that we cannot live under the grace of God if we continue to live in sin! It was as true for Abraham as it is for us!

In the book of Genesis, God said of Abraham, “For **I know him**, that he will command his children and his house after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment, that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19).

Because of this intimate relationship based on love, grace and faith, God had confidence in Abraham. God knew Abraham, and Abraham knew God! That is what grace is all about! We must come to know God—His love, His grace, His goodness, and His mercy.

God’s act of grace toward Abraham is a model for Christians today. Paul was inspired to write, “And if you *are* Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to *the* promise” (Gal. 3:29). Like Abraham, we can come to know God by walking in faithful, loving obedience to Him.

### **Abraham's Ultimate Test**

What was the ultimate test required of Abraham so that the blessing of God's grace would be passed on to all generations? The Scriptures record that God instructed Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac, whom he had received as a miraculous act of grace by the personal promise of God. Having faith that God was able to restore Isaac to life, Abraham proceeded to follow God's instructions. By his faithful and willing obedience, Abraham proved that he loved God more than any person or thing in this world. "And they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. And he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the wood, upon the altar. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called to him from of heavens and said, 'Abraham! Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I *am*.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, YOUR ONLY SON from Me' " (Gen. 22:9-12).

As a result of Abraham's obedience, God gave this blessing and promise of the grace to come: " 'By Myself have I sworn,' says the LORD, 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I WILL BLESS YOU, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore. And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, **BECAUSE YOU HAVE OBEYED MY VOICE**' " (Gen. 22:16-18).

Abraham continued in loving, steadfast obedience to God, and he died in the faith. After Abraham's death, God passed His blessing of grace on to Isaac, "**Because Abraham OBEYED My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws**" (Gen. 26:5). Again, the Scriptures teach us that there can be no grace without obedience.

The New Testament reveals that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, is the promised seed of Abraham. "Now to Abraham and to his Seed were the promises spoken. He does not say, 'and to *your* seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'and to your Seed,' which is Christ....And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to *the* promise" (Gal. 3:16, 29).

The blessing of grace through faith in Jesus Christ is now being extended to all those whom God calls. Later in God's plan, after Christ's return, the blessing of grace will be extended to the entire world!

## **Lot Found Grace**

After God had manifested His grace to Abraham, He also showed His loving mercy to Lot, Abraham's nephew. Lot and his two unmarried daughters were saved from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah through grace. Lot knew that it was through the mercy of God that they were allowed to escape. After the angels had brought them out of the city, the LORD told them, " 'Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountain lest you be consumed.' And Lot said to them, 'Oh no, my LORD, behold now, your servant has found GRACE in your sight, and you have MAGNIFIED YOUR MERCY, which you have showed to me in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil overtake me and I die. Behold now, this city *is* near to flee to, and it is a little one. Oh let me escape there...' " (Gen. 19:17-20).

Lot FOUND GRACE in the sight of the LORD, Who granted his request and delayed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah until Lot and his daughters had safely entered the city of Oar. Through His graciousness, God spared Lot and his two daughters! Moreover, God would have delivered Lot's entire family from destruction if they had not rejected His grace. We can learn a vital lesson from the example of Lot's family. God's grace **MUST NOT BE TREATED LIGHTLY** or in a disbelieving manner, because that is, in fact, **REJECTING** the grace of God! Lot's sons-in-law perished because they refused to believe Lot and treated the warning from God lightly: "And Lot went out and spoke with his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, 'Get up and get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy this city.' **But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be jesting** [only joking]" (Gen. 19:14). As a result of their disbelief, God could not extend His grace to Lot's sons-in-law or his married daughters, who remained in Sodom with their husbands.

Lot's wife also rejected the grace of God through disbelief and disobedience. When she was leaving Sodom, she looked back, thereby disobeying God's instructions through His angels. Because she had rejected the mercy of God through disobedience, she was turned into a pillar of salt. "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she be- came a pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:26).

No one can tempt God, rejecting His goodness and mercy by disbelief, without reaping His just wrath! Christians today who are anticipating God's gracious act of saving them from the coming world- wide calamities should take heed to Jesus' admonition, "**Remember Lot's wife**" (Luke 17:32). Through her disobedience, she lost the grace of God and died.

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### Moses Found Grace

After the days of Abraham and his son Isaac, God's blessings were passed on to Jacob, whose descendants grew to become the twelve tribes of Israel. In His great mercy, God delivered the children of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. God raised up Moses to lead them to the promised land, and He gave them His commandments and laws so that they might continue to receive His blessings and grace.

Moses himself found grace in the eyes of God, when he pleaded with God on behalf of the children of Israel after their grievous sins of debauchery and idolatry, which they had committed while Moses was receiving the law on Mount Sinai for forty days and nights.

“And Moses said to the LORD, ‘Behold, You say to me, “Bring up this people”....Yet You have said, “I know you by name, and **you have also found grace in My sight.**” Now therefore, I pray You, if I have **found grace in Your sight**, make me see now Your way, that I may know You, that I may find **grace in Your sight**. And consider that this nation *is* Your people....For how shall it be known that **I and Your people have found grace in Your sight?**” (Ex.33:12-16). Moses was pleading with God for grace and for His presence to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘I will do this thing also that you have spoken, **for you have found grace in My sight**, and I know you by name’ ” (verse 17).

After promising Moses that he would see a glimpse of God's glory, viewing only His backside, God commanded Moses to hew two more tables of stone, like the first, and come to meet God again on Mount Sinai. “And the LORD came down in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

“And the LORD passed by before him and proclaimed, ‘THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, LONG- SUFFERING, AND ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH, keeping mercy to the thousandth *generation*, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...’ ” (Ex. 34:5-7).

The LORD God of the Old Testament revealed Himself to Moses as a God of MERCY and GRACE—not at all like the stern, wrathful God that theologians through the ages have depicted in their distorted view of the Old Testament. These verses in the Old Testament describe the very nature and character of God, which is eternally the same. “For I *am* the LORD, **I change not**” (Mal. 3:6).

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God the Father and God the Son, Who were both known as “the LORD” in Old Testament times, have always shared the same loving, merciful divine nature. “Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning” (James 1:17). “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). The LORD of the Old Testament Who revealed Himself to Moses is the same merciful God Who became the Lord of the New Testament!

### **God’s Love Toward Israel of Old**

In spite of countless passages in the Old Testament which re-veal the profound love and magnificent grace of God, most people envision the God of Israel as a hateful, vengeful God of wrath and destruction! For centuries, ministers and teachers have led the Christian- professing world to believe that a stern, implacable God gave Israel harsh, restrictive laws that were a burden and a curse. Your Bible re- veals the opposite!

Moses told the children of Israel just before they came into the promised land, “And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes— to fear the LORD our God FOR OUR GOOD ALWAYS, so that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* today. And it shall be righteousness for us if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God as He has commanded us” (Neut. 6:24-25).

God revealed Himself as a God of love and mercy in the covenant that He established with Israel and the blessings that He promised for obedience. “The LORD did not set His LOVE upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you *were* the fewest of all people. But because the LORD LOVED YOU and be- cause He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers....Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the FAITHFUL GOD WHO KEEPS COVENANT and MERCY [which comes from His grace] with them that LOVE Him and keep His COM- MANDMENTS, TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS....And it shall come to pass, **if you hearken to these judgments to keep and practice them, *then* the LORD your God shall keep with you the COVENANT and the MERCY** which He swore to your fathers. And HE WILL LOVE YOU AND BLESS YOU AND MULTIPLY YOU. He will also bless the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your land, your grain, and your wine, and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you. YOU SHALL BE

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BLESSED ABOVE ALL PEOPLE...” (Deut. 7:7-9, 12-14). These are indeed wonderful promises of God’s blessings! If Israel had kept God’s covenant and obeyed Him, God would have blessed them above all nations.

God Himself loved the children of Israel and commanded them to love Him. “Hear, O Israel. Our one God is *the* LORD, the LORD. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:4-5).

Jesus Christ, Who was the LORD God of Israel before coming in the flesh as the Son of God, taught that all the commandments and laws of God are based upon love. In response to the question as to which was the greatest of the commandments, Jesus answered, “You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *one* is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. **On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets**” (Matt. 22:37-40).

God has always desired loving obedience from the heart. In Old Testament times, God commanded the children of Israel to demonstrate their love for Him by continually walking in His way of life. “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear [in reverent awe] the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and **to love Him**, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes, which I command you today for your good? “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *belong* to the

LORD your God, the earth also, with all is in it. Only the LORD had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, you above all people, as *it is* today.

“Therefore, circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stiff-necked, for the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, the mighty and awesome God Who does not respect persons....You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve Him, and you shall hold fast to Him, and swear by His name. He *is* your praise, and He *is* your God, Who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen” (Deut. 10:12-21).

Throughout the Old Testament, as recorded in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, God manifested His love and mercy toward the children of Israel. They were in turn to love Him, to keep His commandments and to walk in His ways.

## **The Two Choices Given to Israel: Obedience and Life, or Disobedience and Death**

Just as with Adam and Eve, God set before the children of Israel two ways of life—and they were required to make a choice. On the one hand, He set before them His way of life and good; and on the other hand, their own ways of death and evil. “Behold, I have set before you this day **life and good**, and **death and evil**, in that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments so that you may live and multiply. And the LORD your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it” (Deut. 30:15-16).

It is abundantly clear that God loved the children of Israel and desired to bless them, just as He desired that they in turn love, serve and obey Him. But God also made it clear that they had to respond to God by loving Him and choosing to keep His commandments of their own free will.

God warned the children of Israel that if they did not choose to love and obey Him, and instead chose their own ways and served other gods, the result would be death and evil. “But **if your heart turn away**, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I denounce to you this day that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days on the land where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it.

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you *that* I have set before you **life and death, blessing and cursing**. Therefore, choose life, that both you and your seed may live, that you may **love the LORD your God, and may obey His voice**, and may cleave to Him: for He is your life and the length of your days, so that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob—to give it to them” (Deut. 30:17-20).

## **God’s Love And Mercy Does Not Abrogate His Judgment**

Because God is love, He is gracious and merciful. But the Bible reveals that God can and does execute judgment and vengeance. As God, Creator and Lawgiver, He alone has the power and prerogative to do so. Therefore when people sin, God must judge!

God specifically warned Israel that He would execute judgment for their sins. This is clearly revealed in the second commandment: “You shall not make a graven image for yourself of any likeness *of any- thing* that is in heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters beneath the earth. You shall not bow

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yourself down to them, nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love [through His grace] to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Deut. 5:8-10).

Foreseeing a time when the sins of the children of Israel would become great, God prophesied, “Vengeance and retribution *belong* to Me. Their foot shall slide in time, for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come on them make haste” (Deut. 32:35).

God executes His judgment as a last resort to bring sinners to repentance so that He may forgive them. When properly understood, even the punishment and correction that God administers is, in fact, an ACT OF LOVE AND GRACE. Throughout the course of history, the only ones ever to experience the full fury of God’s wrath have been unrepentant sinners and haters of God!

God has always been desirous to bless human beings because He loves them. Although God is not calling many to salvation at this time, He wants life to go well for people in this present age. In fact, God does not delight in the death of the wicked, although He shows they have earned death as the wages of their sins. “ ‘For I have no de- light in the death of him who dies,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Therefore turn yourselves [through heartfelt repentance], and live” (Ezek. 18:32).

### **The Example of King Ahab’s Sin and Repentance**

In spite of all the blessings that God had bestowed upon Israel, the hearts of the people soon turned to the worship of other gods. As part of God’s judgment upon Israel, the nation was later split into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Many of the kings who ruled these kingdoms led the people even further into sin and idolatry. The most notorious of these evil kings was Ahab, who ruled the kingdom of Israel in the days of Elijah.

The prophet Elijah was sent on a special mission to pronounce God’s judgment of imminent death and destruction against King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel, daughter of the priest of Baal, for their grievous sins. “And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Have you killed and also taken possession?’ ’ And you shall speak to him saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours” ’ ” (I Kings 21:19).

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When Elijah went to Ahab and pronounced God's judgment against him, Ahab said to Elijah, " 'Have you found me, O my enemy?' And he answered, 'I have found *you*: **because you have sold yourself to work evil in the sight of the LORD. Behold, I will bring evil upon you and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab him who pisses against the wall, both bond and free in Israel.** And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and made Israel to sin.'

"And the LORD also spoke of Jezebel saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. He who dies of Ahab in the city, the dogs shall eat. And he who dies in the field, the birds of the air shall eat.'

**"But there was none like Ahab, who sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel"** (verses 20-26).

While it is true that God's judgment is always sure and never fails, it is also true that God desires and watches for repentance, that He may bestow mercy rather than judgment and destruction.

Although Ahab was one of the most vile, wicked sinners in all the history of the kings of Israel, he did not take God's warning lightly. Notice Ahab's reaction to God's powerful sentence of condemnation and death by the mouth of Elijah the prophet! **"Then it came to pass when Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth and walked softly"** (verse 27).

What a repentance! What a change of heart, accompanied by fasting and weeping! Because Ahab humbled himself and repented, God delayed the execution of His judgment. "And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'Do you see how Ahab humbles himself before Me? **Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days. But** in his son's days I will bring the evil upon his house' " (verses 28-29).

This scriptural passage is most instructive because it shows that when a person chooses to repent, even one as wicked as Ahab, God will honor that repentance. After the days of Ahab, God also honored the repentance of Manasseh, one of the most wicked kings of Judah, and restored him to his throne (II Chron. 33:1-13). The Old Testament shows that God always honors true repentance from the heart.

### **The Example of Nineveh**

While God dealt particularly with Israel and Judah as His chosen people, the Old Testament shows that God also honored the repentance of Gentiles who humbled themselves before Him. The book of Jonah gives an account of God's judgment against the Assyrians and of their repentance upon hearing God's warning through Jonah. Seeing their repentance, God deferred the execution of His judgment. "And the people of Nineveh [the capital of Assyria] believed God. And they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, **from the greatest of them even to the least of them**. For word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne. And he laid aside his robe from him, and covered himself *with* sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

"And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through [out] Nineveh by the decree of the king and his great ones, saying, 'Do not let man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them feed, nor drink water. But let man and animal be covered *with* sackcloth, and cry mightily to God. And let them each one turn from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

"Who knows? God may repent, and He may have pity and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we do not perish.' And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. And God repented of the evil that He had said He would do to them, and He did not do *it*" (Jonah 3:5-10).

Yes, the LORD God of the Old Testament, Who later became Jesus Christ of the New Testament, was a God of mercy and loving-kindness. He extended grace and forgiveness to all those who repented, whether Israelite, Jew or Gentile. This account in the book of Jonah is most significant because it shows that God has always required all nations—not only Israel and Judah—to keep His commandments. The character of God NEVER changes!

### **The Meaning of Grace in the Old Testament**

As we have seen, God extended His grace freely to individuals and nations who humbly sought His favor in Old Testament times. God granted His grace to Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the children of Israel, the Ninevites, David, and even kings Ahab and Manasseh when they repented of their wickedness. The Scriptures also record God's grace and blessings to those women who sought His favor, including Abraham's wife Sarah, (Gen. 21:6-7, Heb. 11:11, Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1:16; 2:12), and Hannah, the mother of Samuel (I Sam. 1:10-19).

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The entire Old Testament is a demonstration of God's gracious kindness and mercy. However, the grace and mercy which God granted during Old Testament times was in most cases limited to physical deliverance and material blessings. The Scriptures reveal that only a few in Old Testament times received God's Holy Spirit and were granted the grace of God unto eternal salvation. Nevertheless, God's blessing and grace was extended bountifully in the physical realm for those who loved God and kept His commandments. And mercy and forgiveness was extended to all who repented from the heart.

The Old Testament is a history of those who sought God with all their hearts, and received God's grace and blessing, as opposed to those who rejected God's grace and blessing, and heaped to themselves punishment and wrath for their grievous sins.

### **Grace Revealed in the Book of Proverbs**

What does the book of Proverbs reveal about the grace of God? The book of Proverbs is designed to show us how to receive the blessings and grace of God in our daily lives. When we learn to live God's way, we receive His grace and favor in all that we set our hands to do.

The book of Proverbs gives us understanding of God's grace under the Old Covenant as well as insight into the grace that He offers under the New Covenant: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding...A wise man will hear and will increase learning, and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsel...The fear [loving, reverent awe] of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *but* fools [who reject the love and blessings of God] despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father [for Christians, God the Father], and forsake not the law of your mother [Jerusalem in heaven above is the mother of all true Christians]: FOR THEY [all of God's instructions, commandments, statutes and laws] SHALL BE AN ORNAMENT OF GRACE to your head and chains [of God's blessings] around your neck" (Prov. 1:1-9).

Contrary to the teaching of pseudo-Christian theologians, the laws and commandments of God are not contrary to grace! Rather, they are essential to receiving God's grace and favor, just as the book of Proverbs reveals.

The book of Proverbs make it clear that God extends His grace to those who demonstrate their faith and love toward Him by whole- heartedly keeping His

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commandments. “My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commandments; for they shall add length of days, and long life, and peace, to you. Do not let mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck: write them upon the tablet of your heart; and **so you shall find favor** [grace] and good understanding in the sight of God and man. **Trust in the LORD with all your heart**, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:1-6).

These verses in the book of Proverbs show that God wants us to respond to Him with loving obedience that is based on faith and complete trust in His grace. Here in the Old Testament is a foreshadow of the New Testament teachings of the grace of God unto eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Proverbs confirm that faith and obedience work together in each believer’s life to keep him or her in continual grace and favor with God. This truth is revealed in the writings of the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament.

### **The Psalms Illustrate the Repentance Required to Receive God’s Grace**

Throughout the Scriptures, it is clear that God extends His grace only to those who manifest a humble and contrite ATTITUDE OF HEART AND MIND toward Him. God inspired the prophet Isaiah to reveal the repentant and yielded spirit that He always requires of a person before He extends His grace and lovingkindness: “...But to this one I will look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My word” (Isa. 66:2). This principle is amplified throughout the book of Psalms. The Psalms are filled with wonderful descriptions of God’s love, mercy and grace, and God’s acceptance of those who truly repent and humble themselves before Him.

One of the most heartfelt expressions of repentance is found in Psalm 51, where David confesses his sins to God and pleads for His forgiveness. When King David repented of killing Uriah the Hittite, and of his adulterous affair with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba, David repented with his whole heart. He prayed, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

“Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done evil in Your sight, that You

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might be justified when You speak and be clear when You judge....Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow....Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me” (Pa. 51:1-11). Because of David’s repentance, God in His merciful grace heard and answered David’s prayer, and David’s sins were forgiven.

Psalms 86 is another prayer of David which illustrates God’s bountiful grace and forgiveness toward those who repent of their sins: “Bow down Your ear [bowing down to listen, to forgive and bless, is an act of grace], O LORD, hear me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am holy [sanctified by God]: O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You [saving grace]. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I cry unto You daily. Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. For You, LORD, are good, and **READY TO FORGIVE, AND RICH IN MERCY TO ALL THOSE WHO CALL UPON YOU.** Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me...For You are great and do wondrous things; You alone are God. Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; my heart rejoices to fear Your name. I will praise You, O LORD my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore, for great is Your mercy toward me....**But You, O LORD, are a God FULL OF COMPASSION, AND GRACIOUS, LONGSUFFERING, AND ABOUNDING IN STEADFAST LOVE AND TRUTH.** Oh, turn to me, and have mercy upon me...” (Psa. 86:1-7, 10-13, 15-16).

The same attitude of love and repentance toward God is expressed in David’s words in Psalm 103: “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and ALL that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who **FORGIVES** all your **INIQUITIES**; Who heals all your diseases: Who redeems your life from destruction: Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies...

**The LORD is MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS**, slow to anger, and abundant in steadfast love....He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, for as the heavens are high above the earth, so is His mercy toward those who fear Him [in reverent awe]. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has

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compassion upon his children, so the LORD has compassion upon those who fear Him, for He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust....But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness is unto children's children, to those who keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them" (Psa. 103:1-4, 8, 10-14, 17-18).

Many of the Psalms recount the abundant blessings, loving-kindness and mercies that God bestowed upon the children of Israel, as well as His just punishment when they forsook their covenant with Him and broke His commandments. Some of these Psalms offer prayers of repentance and pleas for renewed mercy toward Israel. Other Psalms are filled entirely with words of praise and gratitude—extolling God for His bountiful mercy and His gracious lovingkindness not only toward the children of Israel but toward every individual who humbly sought His forgiveness, mercy, lovingkindness and favor.

### **The Prophets Describe God's Grace Toward Repentant Sinners**

Although only a few were called to receive eternal salvation in Old Testament times, the truth of Scripture is that God did deal graciously with all those who sought Him with their whole hearts and beings! As for those who rejected Him and refused to keep His commandments, upon them came God's wrath and just judgment! But even then, God's hand was always held out in mercy, whenever sinners would re- pent and turn to Him.

The prophet Ezekiel recorded God's plea to Israel: " 'Cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; **for why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies,' says the Lord GOD: 'Therefore turn yourselves [to God in heartfelt repentance], and live' "** (Ezek. 18:31-32). God again spoke His plea to Israel, this time affirming His words by His own life: " 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, '**I have no de- light in the death of the wicked,** except that the wicked turn from his way, and live **TURN YOU, TURN YOU FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS; for why will you die, O house of Israel?' "** (Ezek. 33:11).

God declares through the prophet Joel that even in the coming day of the Lord, God will plead with the wicked to repent: "...For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can endure it? 'Therefore even now,' says the LORD, 'turn to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with

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mourning. Yes, rend your heart and not your garments, and return to the LORD your God: for **He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and He repents of the evil**’ ” (Joel 2:11-13).

Throughout the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, God reveals that what He really desires from mankind is repentance and loving obedience! “Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. LET THE WICKED FORSAKE HIS WAY, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him RETURN TO THE LORD [through repentance], and He will have MERCY upon him; and to our God, for HE WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON” (Isa. 55:6-7). This prophecy in the book of Isaiah was undoubtedly used in New Testament times when the apostles preached repentance, grace and eternal salvation.

Although God extended the opportunity for eternal salvation to only a few before the coming of Jesus Christ, God has always desired love, mercy and grace, as the Old Testament prophets proclaimed. Their records of the very words of God clearly show that all accusations that the LORD of the Old Testament was a God of wrath and vengeance are utterly false!

The New Testament reveals that although the prophets of old prophesied of the coming grace, they did not fully understand it. The apostle Peter wrote, “Concerning which salvation [through grace] **the prophets who prophesied of THE GRACE that would come to you** have diligently searched out and intently inquired, searching into what *way* and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ *which was* in them was indicating, testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and these glories that would follow; to whom it was revealed that, not for themselves, but to us they were ministering these things, which now have been announced to you by those who have preached the gospel to you by *the* Holy Spirit, sent from heaven—into which things the angels desiring to look” (I Pet. 1:10-12).

From Genesis to the book of Revelation, the message of Scripture to sinners is to SEEK GOD and to REPENT OF SIN, and the gracious mercy of God will be poured out upon each one! God will reach out with His goodness, blessing and mercy to each repentant man and woman.

This message was preached with power when the New Testament church began. When those who were assembled for the Feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem realized that their own personal sins had killed Jesus Christ, they were deeply moved in heart and mind and asked the apostles what they should do. “Then Peter said to them, ‘REPENT, AND BE BAPTIZED each one of you

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IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST for *the* remission of sins, AND YOU YOURSELVES SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT “ (Acts 2:38).

This scripture and many other verses in the New Testament make it clear that under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit as a begetter from God the Father has been made available to all who truly believe on Jesus Christ. Everyone whom God the Father calls, and who believes, repents and accepts Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and is then baptized by full immersion in water—into the death of Jesus Christ—is granted the begettal of the Holy Spirit as the earnest of God’s promise of eternal life. Under the New Covenant, the grace of God is truly poured out upon the believer in a most profound way! Through this spiritual begettal with the Holy Spirit of God, the true believer enters into a personal relationship with God the Father and his or her personal Savior Jesus Christ.

In the following presentation, *The Grace of God in the New Testament*, we will discuss in much greater detail the gracious gift of God the Father and Jesus Christ through the New Covenant—the all encompassing, awe-inspiring grace of God unto eternal life!

### **Part 2**

## **THE GRACE OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

To understand the GRACE of God is to comprehend one of the most wonderful attributes of God; and is the KEY to a deep, personal relationship between God the Father and every Christian, through Jesus Christ.

The GRACE of God expresses the GREATNESS OF HIS LOVE and the richness of His mercy! To live within and under the GRACE of God is to experience and appreciate the fantastic LOVE of God and His merciful kindness.

Contrary to religious speculations, grace is not just a theological tenant or topic of argument; drawing denominational battle lines; in fact, the GRACE OF GOD means LIFE ITSELF! Without grace there would be no salvation, NO CHRISTIANITY... NO ETERNAL LIFE!

Indeed, GRACE IS THE FOUNDATION of true Christianity. The New Testament reveals that God the Father's GRACE is an ALL ENCOMPASSING quality.

The GRACE of God has tremendous meaning to those who really understand it. Through, Jesus Christ, God's gift of GRACE is granted so we may spiritually GROW UP unto Him, Jesus Christ—the SON OF GOD—who is the HEAD of God's Church, in ALL THINGS.

The Scriptural TRUTH is that God the Father, through His GRACE and salvation, will share His eternal life, existence and glory with all human beings who truly love Him with all their hearts, and minds and beings.

The potential of our destiny to become the literal sons of God through the GRACE of God is the most INCREDIBLE and least understood TRUTHS of the Bible. The apostle John wrote, "Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God! For this very reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is" (I John 3:1-3).

This is why Peter was inspired to admonish us to GROW in THE GRACE and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Rather, be growing in *the* grace, and *the* knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and into *the* day of eternity" (II Pet. 3:18).

## **GRACE IS BASED ON LOVE**

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Love is the basis for the relationship and fellowship between God the Father, Jesus Christ and the person who has been called to salvation. GOD IS LOVE. “The one who does not love does not know God because GOD IS LOVE. In this way the love of God was manifested towards us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this *act* is THE LOVE—not that we loved God; rather, that He loved us and sent His Son *to be the* propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. Yet, if we love one another, God dwells in us, and His own love is perfected in us” (I John 4:8-12).

Our relationship with God MUST be based on LOVE! “And you shall LOVE *the* Lord your God with ALL your heart, and with ALL your soul, and with ALL your mind, and with ALL your strength. This *is the* first [that is, the PRIMARY] commandment” (Mark 12:30). LOVE is the FOUNDATION of grace and without this foundation there is NOTHING!

As such then, GRACE is the primary quality or attribute; the first extension or expression of GOD’S LOVE. Therefore, GRACE, is the primary quality and function of the spiritual relationship and the fellowship between God the Father and the person He calls through Jesus Christ.

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT DEFINITION OF GRACE**

GRACE, as revealed in the New Testament, has a broad meaning and application. GRACE comes from the Greek word, “CHARIS”, which means: “God’s divine, gracious, favor and blessing; gracious care, help, goodwill, benefit, gift, goodness, benefaction and endowment” (*Arnt & Gingrich, Greek Lexicon*) Grace, therefore, is a multifaceted word, showing many aspects of God the Father’s gracious LOVE as mercifully manifested through Jesus Christ.

### **GOD THE FATHER’S GRACE ONLY COMES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

The GRACE of God, as revealed through Jesus Christ, was prophesied by the prophets of old. “In this you yourself greatly rejoice; though for the present, if it is necessary, you are in distress for a little while by various trials. In order that the proving of your faith, which is much more precious than gold, that perishes, though it is being tested

***In the New Testament***

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by fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ;

“Whom, not having seen, **you love**; in Whom, *though* at the present time you do not see Him, you believe, *and* rejoice with un- speakable joy, and filled glory; *and are* receiving the end of your faith—*even the* salvation of *your* souls; concerning which salvation the prophets who prophesied of THE GRACE *that would come* to you have diligently searched out and intently inquired, searching into what *way* and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ *which was* in them was indicating, testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and these glories that would follow.

“To whom it was revealed that, not for themselves, but to us they were ministering these things, which now have been announced to you by those who have preached the gospel to you by *the* Holy Spirit, sent from heaven—into which things the angels desire to look. For this reason, be prepared in your minds, be self-controlled, **and be fully hop- ing in THE GRACE** that will be brought to you at *the* revelation of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:6-13).

The first coming of Jesus Christ was an expression of love by God the Father revealing His grace and salvation through the birth, life, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. that is why John wrote that “By this act IS THE LOVE.”

“For God so LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him [the Greek: *pisteuon eis*, the one who is believing *into* Him. This belief is a profound interacting, dynamic faith and belief. This kind of belief is more than a mental concept, it is a spiritual interaction between the believer and Jesus Christ] may not perish, but may have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ is the full expression of God’s GRACE and truth. “And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, (and we our- selves beheld His glory, *the* glory as of *the* only begotten with *the* Father), full of GRACE and TRUTH...And of His fullness we have all received, and **grace upon grace**... THE GRACE AND THE TRUTH came THROUGH JESUS CHRIST” (John 1:14, 16-17).

A host of spiritual blessings flow to each Christian as a result of God’s LOVE

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AND GRACE! It is like being under a protecting cover or a sheltering umbrella. The blessings of God's grace include: God the Father's personal calling, love, repentance, forgiveness, justification, sanctification; the receiving of God's Holy Spirit, mercy, compassion, blessings, hope, faith, joy, salvation, redemption, keeping the commandments and laws of God in the spirit of the law, and finally God's gift of eternal life as a very spirit son or daughter of God the Father born into the Family of god at the resurrection!

### **WE ARE CALLED THROUGH GRACE**

God's calling is the beginning of His grace in our lives. God the Father personally initiates our calling, spiritually drawing us to Him with His Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ.

“No one can [Greek, *dunamai* to have the power or ability within oneself] come to Me (Jesus Christ) unless the Father, Who sent Me, DRAW him [to reach down and draw out, to select]...” (John 6:44).

Paul understood this and explains it very clearly: “Now we are duty-bound to give thanks to God always concerning you, brethren, who are beloved of *the* Lord, because God from *the* beginning has CALLED you unto salvation through sanctification of *the* Spirit and belief of *the* truth unto which He CALLED you by our gospel to *the* obtaining of *the* glory of our Lord Jesus Christ....Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God—even our Father, Who loved us and gave *us* eternal encouragement and good hope **through GRACE**—encourage your hearts and establish you in every good word and work” (II Thess. 2:13-17).

In Galatians 1:6, 15 he shows that he was called by GRACE. “[God the Father] called *me* by His GRACE.”

Here, the apostle Paul is showing that God's calling is accomplished *through* the operation of God the Father's GRACE. It is one of the functions of His mercy and gracious intervention in our lives.

## **WE BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST THROUGH GRACE**

Throughout the New Testament, *belief* in the Lord Jesus Christ is shown as *absolutely necessary* for *salvation*. John was inspired to write, “..these have been written, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you may have life through His name” (John 20:31).

From where does this belief in Jesus Christ come? Do we have it or possess it ourselves? How is it that we come to believe? Do we work it up? No we do not!

In fact, we cannot work up this belief on our own. We believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior through God’s GRACE! “...*and* after arriving he [Apollos] greatly helped those [in Achaia] who had believed THROUGH GRACE” (Acts 18:27).

So we see, that it is *through* God’s GRACE, *His* blessing and goodness, which makes this belief possible.

## **REPENTANCE AND GRACE**

God’s grace is magnanimously bestowed upon us by leading us to repentance. “Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the GRACIOUSNESS OF GOD LEADS YOU TO REPENTANCE?” (Rom. 2:4).

So, it is through God’s grace that we are lead to see the vile wickedness of our own human nature. We are able, with God’s Spirit, to comprehend the enormity and consequences of our sins!

Through the grace of God, He leads us to understand to the depths of our being what sin really is! The apostle John wrote a clear definition of sin: “Every one who is **practicing sin**, is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness” (I John 3:4).

When we, through God’s GRACE, realize that our sins caused the death of Jesus Christ; He grants us repentance. “And after hearing these things, they were silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also has God indeed granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

This kind of godly repentance is a result of God the Father’s personal intervention into our lives. While it might not be as direct as it was in Job’s life, where God personally talked to Job, nevertheless we can learn from his example and repentance. “And Job answered the LORD and said, ‘I know that You can do all things, and *that* no thought can be withheld from You...I have

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heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You [to understand God's greatness, goodness, mercy and grace as compared to his own sinful wretchedness]. Therefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:1-2, 5-6).

This kind of deep, sincere repentance is part of God's grace, and He alone can grant it to us.

### **GRACE AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

When we, upon repentance, *in faith*, accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as full payment for our sins, those sins are *put upon Him*, because He alone paid the price for our sins through His crucifixion, death and resurrection. When through the grace of God we are led to this repentance, we must then be buried into the *death* of Jesus Christ *through* water baptism.

Paul wrote of this death, "Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been conjoined together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness of His* resurrection.

"Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with *Him* in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer to be enslaved to sin; because the one who has died *to sin* has been justified from sin. Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom. 6:3-8).

At that point, every sin we have ever committed is *totally and completely forgiven through God's wonderful "GRACE"!*

"In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of HIS GRACE" (Eph. 1:7).

The apostle Paul wrote, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; **but we are being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**; Whom God has openly manifested *to be* a propitiation through faith in His blood, in order to demonstrate His righteousness, **in respect to the remission of sins** that are past" (Rom. 3:23-25).

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However, because we are still in the flesh and have the weakness of the flesh, temptations and the pulls of human nature are still active, so that we still find ourselves sinning, although we don't want to sin. But because we are still standing in this grace and have imputed to us the gift of the righteousness, God leads us to repent of our sins so that we may have forgiveness.

The apostle John wrote that we continue walking in God's way, the GRACE of God is *mercifully* and *unselfishly* extended when we repent and confess our sins. "However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

"If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...And *yet*, if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ *the* Righteous; and He is *the* propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*" (I John 1:7-2:2).

This merciful pardon and forgiveness of our sins, through the blood of Jesus Christ, reveals the goodness and graciousness of God the Father toward us. This is why we are not to continue to live in sin.

The apostle Paul wrote, "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** We who died to sin [through the GRACE and MERCY of God], how shall we live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1-2).

### **JUSTIFICATION THROUGH GRACE**

Justification is the act of God the Father by which we as sinners are justified of the penalty of sin. This process is called "the law of faith" (Rom. 3:27). Jesus Christ's life and His sacrifice are imputed to those who are called by God! Upon true, heartfelt repentance, baptism by full immersion in water, the laying on of hands for the receiving of the Holy Spirit, He forgives our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. We are then accepted individually as if each one of us were Jesus Christ Himself! This justification means that we have been put into right standing spiritually with God the Father in heaven above. God the Father Himself imputes, meaning He is granting to us the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is the **gift of righteousness which we receive through the**

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**abundance of the Father's grace** (Rom. 4:24; 5:17).

This is how a *repentant sinner* is justified from sins and put into RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD THE FATHER!

Of all the aspects of the, *manifold* GRACE of God, JUSTIFICATION with the subsequent *gift of spiritual righteousness* is most important, as long as we are living in the flesh.

“For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving all kinds of lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful *and* hating one another. But when the graciousness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we practiced, but according to HIS MERCY He saved us, through *the* washing of regeneration and *the* renewing of *the* Holy Spirit, which He richly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior; so that, having BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS GRACE, we would become heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7).

This is the free gift of grace through Jesus Christ. “But *should* not the free gift be even as the offense *was*? For if by the transgression of the one man many died, how much more did **the grace of God, and the gift of grace**, which *is* by the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto many” (Rom. 5:15).

He alone was perfectly righteous in the spirit of the law, in perfect love and perfect devotion to God the Father. He alone qualified. **Here is a profound spiritual truth:** NOTHING CAN EVER SUBSTITUTE FOR THE LIFE, SACRIFICE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST—**NOTHING!** That is why justification comes through grace by Jesus Christ.

### **JUSTIFICATION BRINGS RECONCILIATION**

The justification of past sins, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, reconciles us to God the Father. Not only does He forgive our sins, but God the Father actually imputes the RIGHTEOUSNESS of Jesus Christ to us.

“And all things *are* from God [the Father], Who has reconciled us to HIMSELF through Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of RECONCILIATION; which is, that God [the Father] was in Christ [John. 14:10], RECONCILING *the* world to HIMSELF, not imputing their trespasses to them; and He has entrusted to us *this* message of reconciliation...We beseech *you* on behalf of Christ,

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‘BE RECONCILED TO GOD.’ For He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] Who knew NO SIN *to be* sin for us, so that WE MIGHT BECOME *THE* RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD in Him [Jesus Christ]” (II Cor. 5:18-21).

God the Father *alone* can extend this gracious reconciliation to us. It is a gift of grace! Such a *special relationship* of having the righteousness of Jesus Christ freely imputed to us cannot be earned through any kind of works whatsoever. Jesus Christ has earned it for us! It is God the Father’s *free* gift through His GRACE!

“But God commends His own LOVE to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, therefore, having been justified now by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His own Son, much more then, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *this*, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Rom. 5:8-11).

Through the operation of God the Father’s love and grace He redeems us from the death of sin and through His grace and Holy spirit expands into eternal life, through Jesus Christ!

### **ADAM’S SIN BROUGHT DEATH GOD’S GRACE BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE**

Paul contrasts the sin of Adam with the justification of God through His GRACE. The *sin of Adam* brought *death* to all men; the GRACE of God will bring ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ.

“But *should* not the free gift be even as the offense *was*? For if by the transgression of the one man many died, how much more did the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which *is* by the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto many? And *should* not the free gift [of grace] *be* like that which came by *the* one who had sinned? For on the one hand, judgment *was* by one unto condemnation; but on the other hand, the free gift [of grace] *is by one to the* justification of many offenses.

“For if by the offense of one the one man [Adam’s sin] death reigned by the one, how much more shall those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life by the one, Jesus Christ.) So then, even as by the one transgression condemnation *came* unto all men, in the same way also, by the one act of righteous- ness [the life, crucifixion, death and resurrection of

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Jesus Christ] *shall* justification of life *come* unto all men.

“For even as by the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, in the same way also, by the obedience of the one *Man* shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, so that transgression might abound; but where sin abounded, the grace *of God* did superabound; so that even as sin has reigned unto death, so also might the grace *of God* reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:15-21).

In God the Father’s plan and in His time, as portrayed by the holy days, He will extend an opportunity to every person to receive the gift of forgiveness and grace unto eternal life.

### **CHRISTIANS STAND IN GRACE**

Christians actually stand in a “continuous” state, or *condition*, of GRACE before God. “Therefore, having been justified by faith [that is, put into right standing with God through the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus Christ], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we ourselves boast in *the* hope of the glory of God. And not only *this*, but we also boast in tribulations, realizing that tribulation brings forth endurance, and endurance *brings forth* character, and character *brings forth* hope. And the hope *of God* never makes us ashamed because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us” (Rom. 5:1-5).

Being in this continuous state of grace, the a free gift of God and is how we are able to stand before God in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

### **“YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED BY GRACE ”**

The New Testament reveals that there are *three* phases or steps of salvation. *All three phases of salvation are through* GRACE, because “you have been saved by grace.”

The ***first phase*** is being saved from our past sins as revealed in Ephesians the Second Chapter. What is being discussed is not the resurrection aspect of salvation, but the beginning phase of salvation; *being saved from our sins*.

“Now you were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you walked in times past according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the

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air, the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience; among whom also we all once had our conduct in the lusts of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and by the mind, and were by nature *the* children of wrath, even as the rest *of the world*. But God, Who is rich in MERCY, because of His GREAT LOVE with which He LOVED us, even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made us alive together with Christ. (For YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED BY GRACE)” (Eph. 2:1-5).

From **what** had they been saved? The context gives the answer! They had been *saved from* “being dead in trespasses and sins”, from “the wrath of God” and from “the prince of the power of the air”— Satan and his influence in their lives. This is the FIRST phase of the process of salvation, through God’s grace.

It is true, Paul projects forward to the completion of salvation, in anticipation of being in the Kingdom of God, but he shows clearly that it is to occur *in the ages to come*, and NOT then or now.

Continuing in verse 6, “And He has raised *us* up together and has caused *us* to sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,” But WHEN will this occur? Was it then, at that time? Is it now, at this time? When? The answer is given in verse 7! “So that in THE AGES THAT ARE COMING He might show the exceeding riches of HIS GRACE in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (verse 7).

Jesus told the apostles that they would sit with Him at his table after He returned and brought the Kingdom of God. “And I appoint to you, as My Father has appointed to Me, a kingdom; so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and may sit on thrones [sitting in the heavenly places] judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29- 30).

Christians after the resurrection will actually sit in the heavenly places with Jesus Christ after his second coming.

“And I saw thrones; and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed.) This *is* the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with HIM a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4-6).

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Paul wants us to understand that we cannot save ourselves by any other means whatsoever, it is the gift of God. “For by grace you have been saved [from your past sins and trespasses and Satan the Devil] through faith, and **this especially is not of your own selves; it is the gift of God**, not of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto *the* good works that God ordained beforehand in order that we might walk in them” (Eph.2:8- 10).

The GRACE of God OBLIGATES US to live and walk in those GOOD WORKS. What are those good works? Jesus clearly defined them for us in the sermon on the mount as found in Matthew Five, Six and Seven.

The **second phase** of salvation is the process of Christian growth and overcoming. As we *live* GOD’S WAY of *life*, by every word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are developing *godly character*.

Paul told the Corinthians that they were *being saved if they held fast and lived by the teachings of God!* “Now I am declaring to you, brethren, the *same* gospel that I proclaimed to you: which you also received; *and* in which you are now standing; by which YOU ARE ALSO BEING SAVED [Greek: *soozesthe*, “are being saved”] if you are holding fast *the* words [of the gospel] that I proclaimed to you...” (I Cor. 15:1-2).

This is the part of salvation which is to be worked out by the individual with the power of the Holy Spirit in them. This is done daily as he or she grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and lives in God’s way. “So then, my beloved, even as you have ALWAYS OBEYED, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION with fear and trembling. For it is God Who works in you both to will and to do according to *His* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).

Once we are under God’s grace, we are to strive to do God’s good pleasure. “For which cause also we are praying continually for you, that our God may count you worthy of *your* calling, and may fulfill *in you* all the good pleasure of *His* goodness, and *the* work of faith with power; so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the GRACE of our God and of *the* Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thes. 1:11-12).

The **third phase** of salvation is the resurrection at the return of Jesus Christ when we “shall be saved.” “For even when we were with- out strength, at the appointed time Christ died for *the* ungodly. For rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, although perhaps someone might have the courage even to die

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for a good man. But God commends His own love to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. “Much more, therefore, having been justified now by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His own Son, much more *then*, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:6-10).

Paul further clarified it when he wrote “...will appear the second time without sin unto salvation to those who are eagerly awaiting Him” (Heb. 9:28). At the resurrection the process of salvation will be complete. “Because of this, I endure all things for the sake of the elect in order that they may obtain *THE SALVATION* that *is* in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (II Tim. 2:10).

Just before he died, the apostle Paul knew his salvation would be completed at the resurrection. “From this time forward, a crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day [the day of the resurrection]—and not to me only, but also to all who love His appearing” (II Tim. 4:8).

We receive salvation through the grace of God. As we have seen the process is accomplished in these three phases. **One**, “You have been saved.” **Two**, “You are being saved.” **Three**, “You shall be saved.”

The ULTIMATE blessing of God’s GRACE is ETERNAL LIFE through the resurrection. This can only be comprehended as Paul expressed it, “The EXCEEDING RICHES OF GRACE”!

We need to deeply appreciate God’s LOVE and His GRACE with *all our hearts*. We need to draw *close* to God the Father and Jesus Christ in prayer, in worship, in thanksgiving for His *gracious* GOOD- NESS and His *loving* KINDNESS. We need to rejoice in God’s salvation which He extends to us.

### **CHRISTIANS WHO ARE UNDER GRACE ARE TO BE KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD**

With a partial knowledge of what Paul wrote in the book of Romans, most Protestants make the fatal mistake of assuming that law and commandment-keeping are no longer required. Hence, they wrongly reason that because the “righteousness of God” is imputed as a gift of God, that all the laws and commandments of God “have been done away with, abolished, nailed to the cross, or that Jesus Christ so perfectly fulfilled the law for us, that as Christians we have absolutely no laws or commandments whatsoever to keep—Christ did it all for us.”

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But such is not the case at all! The apostle Paul made that abundantly clear! He wrote, “Since *it is* indeed one God Who will justify *the* circumcision by faith, and *the* uncircumcision through faith, ARE WE, THEN, ABOLISHING LAW [or making the law of no effect, or nailing the law to the cross] THROUGH FAITH? **MAY IT NEVER BE! RATHER, WE ARE ESTABLISHING LAW**” (Rom. 3:30-31).

Here is how we are establishing law through faith and grace. As bond servants of Jesus Christ, standing in the grace of God, we are to live in this righteousness of God and conform to a higher spiritual standard in keeping the laws and commandments of God. No longer are we to keep the laws and commandments of God in the letter of the law— God requires that of everyone in the world. He requires a higher standard for us! We are to “serve in newness of *the* spirit, and not in *the* oldness of *the* letter” (Rom. 7:6). Jesus said, “If you LOVE Me, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS—NAMEL Y MY COMMANDMENTS” (John 14:15). Jesus continued on to show the basic spiritual condition of those who do not keep His commandments. “The one who DOES NOT LOVE ME does not keep MY WORDS; and the word that you hear is NOT Mine, but the Father’s Who sent Me” (John 14:24).

The apostle John further amplified how we are to keep the commandments of God based on love. “By this *standard* we know that we love the children of God; when **we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God; that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome**” (I John 5:2-3). The truth is that none of God’s commandments are burdensome, be- cause they are based on love (Mat. 22:37-41).

The Book of Revelation shows that commandment-keeping and the faith of Jesus actually go hand-in-hand. “Here *are* the ones who keep THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JE- SUS” (Rev. 14:12). this is a prophetic description of the true believers in God at the end of the age just before the return of Jesus Christ—the very days in which we are now living!

When it is properly understood, in the light of the New Testament, keeping the commandments and laws of God are part of God’s GRACE! Just as the apostle Paul wrote that through faith by grace “we are establishing law.”

Think for a moment! One of the aspects of the GRACE of God is to have Christ in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. “To whom God did will to make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Additionally, we are to have the

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mind of Christ. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

What does this mean? The answer is found in Hebrews. We are to have the laws and commandments of God written into our hearts and minds. “ ‘This *is* the covenant [the New Covenant through Jesus Christ, the **covenant of grace**] that I establish with them after those days,’ says *the* Lord: ‘I WILL GIVE MY LAWS INTO THEIR HEARTS, AND I WILL IN-SCRIBE THEM IN THEIR MINDS’” (Heb. 10:16).

Conversion of the mind, through the grace of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, removes the hostility and enmity of the carnal mind towards the commandments and laws of God. Then the laws and commandments of God can be inscribed upon the tables of our hearts. “In order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit; for those who walk according to after the flesh mind the things of the flesh: but those who walk according to *the* Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace, because the carnal mind *is* enmity [an enemy] against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:4-9).

Regardless of what men profess with their lips, those who are not doing as Jesus said, DO NOT even *belong* to Him.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but the one who is doing [practicing] the will of My Father, Who *is* in heaven.

“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesied through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And did we not perform many works of power through Your name?’ And then will I profess to them, ‘I NEVER KNEW YOU. Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness [the transgression of God’s commandments]” (Matt. 7:21-23).

As we can see from the Scriptures that the GRACE of God ob- ligates us to keep the commandments and the law of God in the spirit and the full intent of God’s laws and commandments as magnified by Jesus Christ. This is how grace truly establishes law.

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There is a final blessing of God's grace for those who are keep- ing the commandments of God.

“Blessed *are* those who keep His commandments, that they may have the right to *eat of* the TREE OF LIFE, and may enter by the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

### **GOD GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE**

Grace cannot be earned, but God *willingly* and enthusiastically gives it to the humble; those who seek His will. “But He gives greater grace. This is the reason it says, ‘God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble.’ Therefore, subject yourselves to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners, and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded! Be grieved and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into grieving, and *your* joy into mourning. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you” (Jas. 4:6- 10).

As we yield ourselves to God in repentance and humbly seek His will and His way, God's grace will be poured out to us. This happened with the early Christians and apostles as recorded in the book of Acts. “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled was shaken; and they were all filled with *the* Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul...And with great power the apostles testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and GREAT GRACE was upon them all” (Acts 4:31-33).

This is the kind of GRACE we all need in our lives— individually and collectively.

### **GOD'S GRACE CAN BE PERVERTED AND REJECTED**

Contrary to the teachings of some theologians and religionists, a person can *reject* the GRACE of God. Such a rejection can happen in two ways.

The ***first*** way one can fall from GRACE is through sin and the rejection of God's salvation, his birthright in the kingdom of God. “Looking diligently lest anyone fall from the GRACE of God [by not yielding to God's correction]; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and through this many be defiled; lest *there* be any fornicator- tor or godless person, as Esau, who for one meal sold his birthright; because you also know that afterwards, when he wished to inherit the

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blessing, he WAS REJECTED; *and* he found no room for repentance, [no way to change his mind], although he sought it earnestly with tears” (Heb. 12:15-17).

The **second** way one can reject God’s GRACE is by turning grace into license to do evil and sin. It is a PERVERSION OF GOD’S GRACE. False teachers entered stealthily into the congregations of God in order to pervert the grace of God and turn it into licentiousness— indulgences to sin. Notice Jude’s warning when he wrote to the brethren: “Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, exhorting *you* to fervently fight for the faith, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints. For certain men have stealthily crept in, those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, **who are perverting the grace of our God, turning it into licentiousness** [proclaiming God gives grace to do evil], **and are personally denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ**” (Jude 3-4).

This is the lawless grace, which denies the need to keep the commandments of God. This is the same kind of grace that Catholics and Protestants believe and teach. The leaders of Christianity today need to remember the words of warning that Jesus spoke to the scribes and Pharisees during His ministry. Like these self-righteous leaders of the Jews, the leaders of the Christian churches have adopted traditions and dogmas that conflict with the commandments of God. A close examination of the history of Christianity will show that the traditional doctrines and practices of the churches of this world are not the teachings of Jesus Christ. True Christianity, as originally taught by Jesus Christ and His apostles, was subverted from within by false teachers of lawlessness. The teachings of these “ungodly men” that Jude and Peter wrote about were passed down in the writings of the “early church fathers” and were accepted by the Roman church as authoritative traditions. Through the centuries the Roman church grew in power, using its influence to stamp out every remaining vestige of the true teachings of Jesus Christ. After a power struggle between the bishop of Rome and the bishop of Constantinople, the church split into the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches.

As the influence of the Orthodox church dominated the East, so the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church molded the thinking of the entire Western world. The authority of the Catholic doctrine and tradition was not seriously challenged until the time of Martin Luther. When Martin Luther rejected the corruption and lawlessness of the Roman Catholic Church, he appeared to be seeking the truth of God. He labored diligently to translate the scriptures into the German

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language so that the common people could read and learn from the Word of God. But the religion that developed as a result of Martin Luther's teachings, known as Lutheranism, did not restore the true teachings of Jesus Christ. The reformation that Martin Luther initiated was never completed, because he rejected the Second and Fourth Commandments.

As a result, the new religion that he founded began to promote another form of lawlessness. Luther taught that a person who had been saved through the grace of God could not lose salvation, regardless of the degree or intensity of the sins that might be committed. This perverse teaching is clearly expressed in a letter written by Luther: **“Be a sinner, and let your sins be strong, but let your faith in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where righteousness can exist...No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery a thousand times each day”**

The word of Martin Luther reveal the depth of lawlessness to which many religious leaders have descended. **This teaching is the epitome of the perverted “grace” that Jude condemned, which rejects the commandments of God and grants license to commit sin with no limitations whatsoever. Luther’s teaching concerning murder and adultery is diametrically opposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ, Who magnified and greatly expanded the application of the Sixth and Seventh commandments.**

The promoters of lawlessness have succeeded in deceiving the vast majority of professing Christians into accepting a false grace. As the New Testament shows, this distorted view of grace does not lead to salvation. In the Judgment Day, the teachers of lawlessness, who have been honored as religious leaders and have even done noteworthy deeds in the name of Jesus Christ will be rejected: “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy through Your name? And *did we not* cast out demons through Your name? And *did we not* perform many works of power through Your name?’ And then I will confess to them, ‘I never knew you. **Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness**’ ” Matt. 7:22-23).

The workers of lawlessness will depart into the lake of fire to suffer the judgment of eternal death, from which there is no resurrection: “But *the* cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and **murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is *the* second death**” (Rev. 21:8).

## **HOW WE ARE TO LIVE IN GRACE**

Because God's GRACE and blessings lead to eternal life, how then should we be living? God inspired Paul to write the answer for us in Romans the sixth chapter. He shows the complete way of life we are to live in absolute, loving dedication to God the Father and Jesus Christ walking in obedient faith through grace.

1. "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? 2. **MAY IT NEVER BE!** We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?

3. Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? 4. Therefore, we were buried with Him through the baptism into the death; so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life.

5. For if we have been conjoined together in the like-ness of His death, so also shall we be *in the likeness of His* resurrection. 6. Knowing this, that our old man was co-crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin; 7. Because the one who has died *to sin* has been justified from sin.

8. Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9. Knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him.

10. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives unto God. 11. In the same way also, you should indeed reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord.

12. Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof. 13. Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; rather, yield your- selves to God as those who are alive from *the* dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. 14. For sin shall not rule over you because you are not under law, but under grace.

15. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** 16. Don't you realize that to whom you yield yourselves *as* servants to obey, you are servants of the one you obey, whether *it is* of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17. But thanks *be* to God, that you were *the* servants of sin, but you have obeyed from *the* heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you;

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18. And having been delivered from sin, you became *the* servants of righteousness. 19. I speak from a human point of view because of the weakness of your flesh; for just as you *once* yielded your members in bondage to uncleanness, and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, so now yield your members in bondage to righteousness unto sanctification.

20. For when you were *the* servants of sin, you were free from righteousness.

21. Therefore, what fruit did you have then in the *things* of which you are now ashamed? For the end result of those things *is* death.

22. But now *that* you have been delivered from sin and have become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end result *is* eternal life.

23. For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:1- 23).

Now we can clearly see how we are to live our lives before God the Father. We are to do so as if we were alive from the dead; in willing, loving yieldedness to God to live according to the will and grace of God.

The fullest expression and description of the manifold GRACE of God, which bring out every facet of God’s glorious GRACE, is found in Ephesians the First Chapter. Every thing that the apostle Paul speaks of in this chapter is part of and is an expression of God the Father’s GRACE through JESUS CHRIST!

1. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by *the* will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and to *the* faithful in Christ Jesus:

2. Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ;

4. According as He has personally chosen us for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world in order that we might be holy and blameless before Him in love;

5. Having predestinated us for sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will,

6. To *the* praise of *the* glory of His grace, wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*;

7. In Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace,

8. Which He has made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence;

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9. Having made known to us the mystery of His own will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself;
10. That in *the divine* plan for the fulfilling of *the* times, He might bring all things together in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth;
11. Yes, in Him, in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestinated according to His purpose, Who is working out all things according to the counsel of His own will;
12. That we might be to *the* praise of His glory, who first trusted in the Christ;
13. In Whom you also trusted after hearing the Word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, after believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,
14. Which is *the* earnest of our inheritance until *the* redemption of the purchased possession, to *the* praise of His glory.
15. For this cause, I also, after hearing of the faith in the Lord Jesus that is among you, and the love toward all the saints,
16. Do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;
17. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you *the* spirit of wisdom and revelation in *the* knowledge of Him.
18. *And* may the eyes of your mind be enlightened in order that you may comprehend what is the hope of His calling, and what *is* the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,
19. And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the inner working of His mighty power,
20. Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from *the* dead, and set *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,
21. Far above every principality and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named— not only in this age, but also in the *age* to come;
22. For He has subordinated all things under His feet, and has given Him *to be* head over all things to the church,
23. Which is His body—the fullness of Him Who fills all things in all” (Eph. 1:1-23).

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For those who are living under the grace of God, he or she is to continue to love God the Father and Jesus Christ, live in His grace by faith and live by every word of God as magnified by Jesus Christ. Then at the resurrection each faithful person will receive the greatest gift of God the Father's superabounding grace—eternal life in glory and splendor.

What a wonderful blessing that God has granted this magnificent gift of righteousness—the very own righteousness of Jesus Christ through His grace—being written into our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit of God the Father! What a tremendous expression and demonstration of God's love and grace for us! May this inspire us to love God the Father and Jesus Christ even more and to make our calling and election sure!

For those who desire to be under the true GRACE OF GOD, then you need to repent of your sins to God the Father, asking His forgiveness! God the Father will extend His GRACE to you, if you seek Him with ALL YOUR HEART. Then you need to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and accept His sacrifice as full payment for your sins, asking God to blot out your sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Next, you need to be baptized, according to the biblical command, and be buried by baptism into the death of Jesus Christ! Only then can God's saving grace be imputed to you for eternal life through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

God the Father, and Jesus Christ, are waiting to extend grace and eternal salvation to you.