

## Growing in Grace

### Lesson # 10

#### “Grace: Up Close and Personal”

[Taken from The Grace Awakening by Charles Swindoll. (Dallas: Word, 1990). Chapter 10, pp.195-210]

#### I. *GROWING IN GRACE IS A PROCESS*

God has an agenda for the life of every believer, it is that each will be progressively molded into the image of His son. Each day of our lives and each experience of each day; is designed to progressively fit us to be citizens of heaven. God is daily working in our lives to perfect our character and bring it us to completion.

There are a number of Scriptures that illustrate this principle, (Romans 8:28-29, Philippians 1:6, 3:21, Colossians 3:9-10). Let's examine them.

Romans 8:28-29

*“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

Philippians 1:6

*“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”*

Philippians 3:21

*“who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*

Colossians 3:9-10

*“Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, (10) and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...”*

There are three things that we need to acknowledge about the process of growing in grace.

1. It takes time
2. It requires pain.

3. It means change.

## II. SOME AREAS IN WHICH WE NEED TO CLAIM GRACE

Five Areas That Need Attention In Most Believer's Lives.

### 1. CLAIMING THE GRACE TO BE WHAT I AM

(THE ISSUE OF INSECURITY). 1 Corinthians 15:6-11

*"After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.(7) After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. (8) Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. (9) For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (11) Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed."*

Grace was very important in the life of Paul. He recognized that it was grace made him who he was. Grace gave him the courage to be who he was. Grace energized him to accomplish what he did. What grace did in Paul's life was that it enabled him to live without comparison to and competition with his peers.

Sometimes insecurity surfaces in the form of perfectionism. Do you know any perfectionist? I am afraid that I am one! I realized that I have some perfectionist tendencies. I have heard a perfectionist described as *"a person who takes pains and gives them to others."*

### 2. CLAIMING THE GRACE TO LEARN FROM WHAT I SUFFER

(THE ISSUE OF WEAKNESS). 2 Corinthians 12: 7-11

*"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. (8) Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. (9) And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Our world prizes strength whether it be – physical strength, financial strength, political strength and military strength. Paul however had a different take on strength. Paul says that weakness has a way of making us rely far more on God than our strengths do.

This passage speaks to the hurt that medication won't relieve, prayer will not remove and complaining doesn't help. The basic problem is learning to live with our own humanness. It is

grace to be made *“content with our weaknesses.”* That of course is weaknesses in both our - dispositional makeup and in our physical bodies. Paul had to learn to deal with his *“thorn in the flesh.”* It was grace that gave him the ability to be *“content with his weaknesses.”* In fact not hiding or denying our weaknesses makes our feel closer to us. Vulnerability invites people in, it helps them to identify with and feel comfortable around us. Grace helps us to admit our own personal struggles. Grace in weakness enables us to be instruments of power in God’s hands (v. 10).

I read a beautiful story of this kind of grace that we can all aspire to have. *“David, a 2-year old with leukemia, was taken by his mother, Deborah, to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, to see Dr. John Truman who specializes in treating children with cancer and various blood diseases. Dr. Truman's prognosis was devastating: “He has a 50-50 chance.” The countless clinic visits, the blood tests, the intravenous drugs, the fear and pain--the mother's ordeal can be almost as bad as the child's because she must stand by, unable to bear the pain herself. David never cried in the waiting room, and although his friends in the clinic had to hurt him and stick needles in him, he hustled in ahead of his mother with a smile, sure of the welcome he always got. When he was three, David had to have a spinal tap--a painful procedure at any age. It was explained to him that, because he was sick, Dr. Truman had to do something to make him better. “If it hurts, remember it's because he loves you,” Deborah said. The procedure was horrendous. It took three nurses to hold David still, while he yelled and sobbed and struggled. When it was almost over, the tiny boy, soaked in sweat and tears, looked up at the doctor and gasped, “Thank you, Dr. Tooman, for my hurting.” [Monica Dickens, Miracles of Courage, 1985. [www.christianglobe.com/](http://www.christianglobe.com/)*

*Illustrations/faith]*

**3. CLAIMING THE GRACE TO RESPOND TO WHAT I ENCOUNTER (THE ISSUE OF ABRASIVENESS).**  
Colossians 4:5-6

This grace has to do with our response to people. While we cannot control the all the things that happen in our lives, we can control how we respond to them.

In Colossians 4:5-6, *“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. (6) Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”*

Paul here tells the believers at Colossi that their speech is to be gracious, but not so fearful of offending someone that it is tasteless.

*“Salt”* in this passage probably carries with it the idea of *“good taste, tactfulness, well-timed words”*. Tact certainly is a skill that we have to learn. It has been said that *“Tact is like a girdle. It enables you to organize the awkward truth more attractively.”* [as quoted by Charles Swindoll p. 205]

An illustration of tact is seen in the life of the former President James Madison. *"In his old age, President James Madison suffered from many ailments and took a variety of medicines. It is said that a longtime friend from a nearby county sent him a box of vegetable pills, one of his own home remedies, asking to be informed if they brought relief. In time he received one of those gracious and carefully worded letters for which Madison was noted. It went something like this: "My dear friend, I thank you very much for the box of pills. I have taken them all; and while I cannot say I am better since taking them, it is quite possible that I might have been worse if I had not taken them."* [Source Unknown. [www.christianglobe.com/Illustrations/tact](http://www.christianglobe.com/Illustrations/tact)]

#### 4. CLAIMING THE GRACE TO STAND FOR WHAT I BELIEVE

(THE ISSUE OF COMPROMISE). Hebrews 13:7-9

One of the greatest challenges that believer's of today face is the need to be able to stand up for what they believe. In the world outside the church there is the constant temptation in the workplace to just concede, to stay quiet when the subject of faith surfaces.

The writer of Hebrews says, (Hebrews 13:7-9), *"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. (8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (9) Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them."*

#### 5. CLAIMING THE GRACE TO SUBMIT TO WHAT I NEED

(THE ISSUE OF PRIDE). (James 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:5)

It has been said that *"God designed the human body so that can neither pat our own backs nor kick ourselves too easily."*

Pride can be viewed as the root of sin, because it was the sin that lead Satan fall from heaven (Isa 14:12-17).

James 4: 6-7

*"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (7) Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

1 Peter 5:5

*"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

Let me give you some telltale signs of the presence of pride.

1. The preeminent need to be right.
2. Frequently argumentative.
3. Investing more in being heard than in hearing.
4. Stubbornness.
5. Irritability and Impatience.
6. Often angry.

Not open to correction. [Alfred Ells. "Getting Your Greens." Focus on the Family Magazine. February 2001. p. 9]