

JESUS: GRACE AND TRUTH IN ACTION

**John 1:17-18; Romans 11:6; Ephesians
2:4-7, 8-9; Luke 18:13-14, 16-17; Psalm
23:6; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

What the Master Teaches Us

By

**Ric Webb
Pastor-Teacher**

**Heart's Journey Community
9621 Tall Timber Blvd.
Little Rock, AR 72204**

**Website www.hjcommunity.org
Main 501.455.0296
Blog rrwol.blogspot.com**

Opening.

In John 1:17 the Apostle tells us, that **“the Law was given through Moses; grace and Truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”** The verb John employs, *ginomai*, means- ‘to come into existence.’ “Moses gave us the Law,” John said, “Moses gave us the means by which we recognized our condemnation before God, then pointed us to the One who could remove it. But *Grace* and *Truth*, the perfect balance only God could maintain, came into existence *by means* of Jesus Christ.” The Living Bible has: **“For Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice, while Jesus Christ brought us loving forgiveness as well.”** And so much more than that; **“I have come that they may have Life, and have it to the full,”** John 10:10b {NIV}.

In v. 18 of this same Gospel John wrote these words: **“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father** [*monogenes*- ‘the One and the Only, uniquely born’], **He has explained {Him.}”** In the phrase, **“He has explained Him,”** you have a very important choice of words here. *Ekeinos* is an emphatic pronoun referring to the Son of God. *Ekeinos* is always used to point out a certain distinction, i.e., to emphasize the uniqueness of the person being referred to. The verb translated **“explained”** is *exegeomai*, from *ek*- ‘out of’ and *hegeomai*- ‘lead,’ so- *lead* or *draw out* the meaning of something in *explanation* and *interpretation*, to *unfold the meaning*. The Greeks used it as a technical term in the mysteries for the interpretation of things sacred and divine. The noun form of this word is where we get *exegesis*- ‘draw out from the text the meaning of what is there.’

Here’s what I want you to see: this is the exact same construction as Paul’s declaration in Titus 2:11 that **“the grace of God has appeared.”** *Exegeomai* deals with an in-depth explanation like a report or a narrative, which is a picture perfect description of the Father’s heart and will towards mankind. And what’s the one word which sums up above all others the heart and mind of the heavenly Father? **Grace.** Grace in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Rev. Ric expanded translation: “Grace has *exegeted* the Father so that all can understand Him; Grace has *explained* the Father’s heart at the Cross; Grace has made known to us the meaning of the Father’s will by His life of sacrifice, of service, and of joy in suffering on our behalf.”

Right there we have the final word on the plan and policy of *Abba*. **It’s all grace and only grace.** From the aftermath of man’s fall in the Garden {Gen. 3:14-21} to the Millennial Reign of the King of Kings {Isa. 11; Rev. 20:1-6} His plan has always been grace... and it always will be. The word **“grace”** comes from the Greek *charis*, and we could simply and easily say that *charis* is the most magnificent word in all of Scripture. The grace of God is so potent and so powerful that its consequence on the life of His Children cannot be overestimated. Get this down. **You cannot ‘waste’ too much time in the presence of grace.**

Essay— Grace, Grace, Grace.

The outcome of grace at work in our souls is grace observed in our lives. It's another way of saying that those who love and live by grace are delightful people to be around; they are charming companions, humble and unpretentious people {and genuinely impervious to others' pretentiousness}. These are men and women of faith, hope, and love who are comfortable in their own skin. They are at ease being *exactly* who they are because they recognize that this is *exactly* who God designed them to be. They're not interested in perfect impressions. They're not out to deceive, deride or demand; they're out to seek the "**face of Christ**" {2 Cor. 4:6} and to follow their Hero by a willingness to lay down their lives as a sacrifice for others.

Today, we see so many Christians who spend so much time talking about 'dying for Jesus' that they never get around to living for Him. And that's a tragedy, because we are here for one reason and one reason only: **to invest our lives in the lives of others.** Ask yourself this question: Is this the ultimate aim of my life? Is this the summit of my scale of values: **service to the Cause of my King** {to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love others as myself}? Cause if it's not, maybe I'd better rethink my place in the Plan. Maybe I'd better slow down for one moment, cease from all my striving and straining for renown, recognition, and reward in the world, and decide who or what my god really is. Maybe now is the right time, today. Maybe "**now is**" as Paul said, "**THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,**" maybe "**now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION'**" {2 Cor. 6:2}, the day when I decide who's going to rule and reign over my life from here on out: the God of the *Word* or the god of this *world*— Revelation 19:13; 2 Corinthians 4:4. One thing I know is this. Gratitude for grace will bring a man to the point of giving everything he has to the Cause for which Christ came {Lk. 19:10}, it will bring a woman to the place of giving everything she is for the Son of God "**who gave Himself for**" her {v. 14}.

A Primer On Grace.

Charis was fashioned in the Classical Greek to describe both people and things, especially people in whom joy could be clearly seen and clearly found. One of the cognates of *charis* is *chara*- 'joy and rejoicing'— there are times when they were even used interchangeably. *Charis* spoke of things in which existed a real and genuine pleasure, in whom there was charm and beauty, a loveliness and symmetry; in the minds of the prophets and apostles in the 1st century {those who wrote the New Testament Scriptures (Eph. 3:5)} it came to represent the unmerited favor of God, what the Hebrews call *chesed* or "**loving-kindness:**" His faithfulness, loyalty, and love.

In the ethical schools of ancient Greece *charis* referred to a favor done freely without any expectation of return, without any claim whatsoever of obligation on the part of the recipient. Aristotle in defining this term for his students {one of whom was Alexander the Great} laid the entire emphasis on this very point: that it is conferred in freedom with *no* expectations, with no sense of obligation at all, its only motive being the bounty and generosity of the giver. Paul lays down a universal principle regarding grace

in Romans 11:6 saying, that if anything “**is by grace it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.**” Grace is a heart that loves in a way very few will ever understand, and unfortunately, even fewer will ever emulate.

In terms of Life in the Spirit of Christ your orientation to grace is one of the greatest stabilizers of your soul you could ever imagine. That point of reference rests on two pillars: [1] our appreciation and agreement with 1 John 1:9, the cleansing and forgiveness which is ours in Christ; and [2] our appreciation and agreement with the security of our salvation, the **security** which is ours in Christ.

There is a tremendous contrast between how *charis* was used in the world and how *charis* was used in the Word. In the time of Aristotle this unmerited favor was always bestowed upon a friend. Never upon an enemy {don't miss that}. In fact, a good man was defined by the Greeks as one who “does right by his friends and wrong by his enemies,” i.e., good to those who love him and evil to those who don't. When *charis* was drawn by the Holy Spirit into the language of the New Testament as the one word which can summarize the entire plan and purpose of God it took a giant leap forward, acquiring a new and profound meaning which it had never encompassed before. It came to represent all that the Father did through the suffering of the Son, for the eternal work which God finished ‘once and for all’ on Calvary's Cross. Thus, we see that **G.R.A.C.E.** represents ‘**God's Riches, God's Resources, God's Righteousness At Christ's Expense.**’

So, now that we have some idea of its essence, let's look at what grace teaches, at how Jesus trains us in His grace. This is grace in its actual practice, the ‘walk of grace’ in the Life of the Spirit.

How Great Is Your Need?

The first thing we learn is **how great our need is!** The question then becomes: How great do you personally sense that need? How intense is it for you in each desperate moment of this spiritual battle we fight and this Life of Love we live?

Ephesians 2:8-9 is the pivotal passage for getting a grip on this. In it Paul said, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God** [salvation is a ‘gift,’ unearned and undeserved]; **not as a result of works** [Meaning the efforts and energies of *man*, all the living and laboring of humankind. Why?], **so that no one may boast** [This passage teaches one simple truth: the recognition of our need for the grace of God, and just how awesome the scope of grace is in meeting that need.]. [V. 10 says:] **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works** [Not ‘by good works,’ but ‘for good works.’ We saw our need for grace in salvation in vv. 8-9 and now our need for grace in spirituality. Note this: *There is no divine production in life apart from grace.*], [and these are ‘works’] **which God prepared beforehand** [from the Ages of Eternity] **so that we would walk in them.**” This tells us very clearly in one final clause that the purpose of our lives is to “**walk in**” the “**works**” which He has prepared:

to live, to love, and to labor in the same way we were saved— by grace.

We live by grace in Time, we love by grace in life, and we labor by grace in the Cause. Notice a theme here? **It's all grace.** All of it. What does Paul say in Colossians 2:6? **“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, {so} walk in Him.”** We can't do it without divine power, right? The Holy Spirit is the *power* of grace. To way-fare and to warfare you need provisions, correct? The Word of God is the *provision* of grace. What happens when by faith {which is how man receives the provision of grace} we embrace the power of God and the provision of God to execute the plan of God? He rewards us in grace. The *Bema* is the Tribunal of Grace. Grace, grace, grace, and nothing but.

Dependence on the Deity.

Grace teaches dependence. Is our willingness to rely on God's Power {the Spirit of Grace} complete, is our willingness to depend on God's Provision {the Word of Grace} absolute, and to trust in the Hope of Prayer {the Conversation of Grace} unmovable? How much reliance on self remains in our lives: what self desires, what self wants, what self can achieve and accomplish in its own strength?

Some of us are still trying to maneuver and manipulate our way through following Jesus the way we have through every other avenue of life. We're still leaning on our own intellect, still trying to forge ahead on the power of positive thinking, to win friends and influence enemies by our brilliant personalities. What we're offering the world in cases like this is a false self, an imposter, a *poser*. And all the while God is not impressed. When are we going to stop long enough to realize that 'universe' is not spelled Y-O-U-niverse, and you and I are not the center of it? It would save us a lot of time, a lot of turmoil, a lot of heartache and disappointment if we would stop trying to *prove* our worth in the eyes of God, stop trying so desperately to demonstrate our usefulness and ingenuity, and just let God be God!

Sin and Shame— the Enemies of Grace.

Grace teaches us about the enemies of sin and shame. So, who's the greatest sinner you've known? In the cold light of reality, a genuinely humble introspection into the deep places of your soul, who is it really? If the answer is anyone but you, then you don't understand grace. You see, you and I know what we're capable of, we know the sins and the evil and the attitude and the arrogance that pours out of our sin-nature {that is, if we're not blinded by self-delusion}; we can only guess at the sins of others. And maybe that's your problem: you spend so much time worrying and wondering about what everyone else is doing, you don't have time to deal with where *you are* in the Struggle of Life.

If you cannot look at yourself objectively in the light of the Word of God and in the light of grace you will never understand the attitude of humility expressed by the tax-collector in Luke 18:13, when **“standing some distance away, ...unwilling to”** even

“lift up his eyes to Heaven” he said, **“God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”** **“The sinner”** with the definite article attached to it. He distinguishes himself in this way because in his mind he was the only sinner he knew; he was the only sinner that mattered. It was *his* sins which drove him to Christ, and it was *his* faith which saved him. As Jesus said at the end of this parable, **“this man went down to his house justified [meaning righteous in the sight of God]...; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted,”** Luke 18:14. I love that. There is the promise of grace.

Cultivating Compassion and Magnifying Mercy.

Grace teaches us to cultivate compassion and to magnify mercy. When you see those in life who are hurting and who have no hope, ask yourself the question: Do I remember what the inner pain, inner grief, and inner sorrow is really like? It comes down to this, a superiority complex with others or a compassionate stance in life. But the choice is ours.

A Childlike Grace.

Grace teaches us child-likeness: not innocence, but incompetence. The Bible says in Proverbs 22:15a, that **“foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child....”** Once we recognize our inability and insufficiency in the things of eternal value, it teaches us the simplicity of child-like trust. We tend to think our way-faring and war-faring are so complicated, so deep and so profound, that who could possibly figure them out? When in reality it’s very, very simple: it is *trust* in the loving, gracious, merciful heart of our heavenly Father; it is “trust and obey, for there’s no other way;” it is surrender and submission.

After the disciples took the wrong initiative and began rebuking the parents, Jesus in Luke 18:16 **“called for them saying, ‘Permit the children to come to Me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it {at all,}”** v. 17. You have to understand something of the historical background to grasp just how much grace is contained in this single statement. Children in 1st century Palestine were considered, like the poor, the blind, the lame and the lazy, to be of no account. Certainly not evil, but simply not worth bothering with. Thus, the announcement that to enter the Gates of Glory in the Kingdom of God one must become like a little child, one must be willing to be last in order to be first, to serve rather than be served, would have come as a shock to the souls of its hearers.

What do we know about a room full of six year olds? It’s that children recognize they’re children. They know they can’t survive on their own. And because of that understanding they’re able to leave the burdens to their parents: they know these things are not their responsibility. They’re able to relax in the care of Mom and Dad. The child knows that he could not provide for himself, that he couldn’t buy the necessities of life, that he can’t cook and prepare his own meals; she knows she doesn’t deserve all this,

she just accepts it. This is part of their coming to understand who God the Father is and who the Holy Spirit is {through the roles of father and mother} so that one day they can come to understand who Jesus Christ the Savior is. That's more important than anything else we could ever teach.

Mercy = God in Action.

Grace shows us God in action. What do we call this, what name does the Bible give this? Mercy. His love, by the way, is the motivator of His grace. The apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:4-7 said, **“But because of His great love for us God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ [salvation] even when we were dead in transgressions— it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ [resurrection] and seated us with Him [ascension] in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus [making us complete and perfect in His Son, seated ‘at the right hand of the Majesty on High’ {Heb. 1:3d}], in order that in the coming Ages [and into Eternity] He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus,”** {NIV}.

Mercy and Grace— Together Forever.

Mercy and grace are eternally linked in the Word of God. Mercy naturally precedes grace. **Mercy must remove the condemnation we deserve before grace can bestow the blessing we cannot earn and could never deserve.** David in Psalm 23:6 wrote, **“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the LORD forever.”** In **“goodness and loving-kindness”** we have mercy and we have grace. Mercy deals with judgment; grace deals with blessing— the judgment that belongs to us, and the blessing that by all human reason should not, and yet does.

Grace— How God Works.

Grace shows us *Abba's* intent for dealing with His fallen creatures. In grace God, as Trinity— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit— does all the work, man receives all the benefit of that work. There is no room in grace for the arrogant intrusion of human works! None whatsoever.

Grace <> Works.

Grace and works are as far removed from each other as light is from dark or night is from day. Ex Catholic priest turned evangelist Brennan Manning writes, **“The ragamuffin”**— the spiritual beggar— **“who sees his life as a voyage of discovery and runs the risk of failure has a better feel for faithfulness than the timid man who hides behind the law and never finds out who he is at all. Winston Churchill said it well: ‘Success is never final; failure is never fatal. It is courage that counts.’”**¹

When Grace Is No Longer Grace.

Grace plus anything man can do is no longer grace. The “works” we noted in Romans 11:6 involve everything from the action itself to the motive, intent, and purpose behind it. I feel like we need to make something clear before we move on: when it comes to our wayfaring and warfaring in a fallen world, grace doesn’t mean there’s *no* human involvement, no interaction between us and the Spirit. All that God does in and through the lives of His own requires our cooperation *with* Him and our consecration *to* Him, a welcome embrace of His deep, deep work, a surrendering to His will. There is, in fact, a human involvement and interaction with the divine. That’s how our Lord’s warfare against the kingdom of darkness works: the sovereign will of God and the free will of man in perfect harmony. Note these two things.

- I. *The attitude behind works in salvation and security is always arrogance {self-righteous arrogance}.*
- II. *The attitude that accepts grace is always humility.*

Grace + Humility = Power and Perspective.

Grace plus humility equals power and perspective. The apostle Paul spoke in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 of the attitude that led him to victory in the Conflict of Christ.

“**And He** [Jesus] **has said to me** [Paul, and by extension each of us]: **‘My grace is sufficient for you** [*arkeo* means- ‘be possessed of *unfailing* strength:’ you don’t need anything else but My grace], **for** [My] **power is perfected in weakness** [Weymouth’s NT has, ‘for power *matures* in weakness;’ *The Message* has, ‘My strength comes into its own in your weakness.’ ‘Power’ is from *dunamis*- ‘dynamic spiritual power,’ the omnipotence of God brought to its fulfillment and completion in grace.]’ **Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses** [this is the purpose of boasting in my weakness] **so that the power of Christ may dwell in me** [Lit., *spread its tent over me, overshadow me*. This is the hand of the LORD mighty in Battle, extravagant in mercy, tender in touch, spread over the lives of His Chosen children: the ‘power of Christ’ is His Holy Spirit empowering every area of our lives.]. **Therefore** [based upon the fact that ‘His grace is sufficient, and an unending source of unfailing strength,’ and ‘His power is made perfect in my weakness’] **I am well content** [which means- ‘be well pleased,’ lit., *take pleasure and delight in*; Rev. Ric expanded translation:]: **I am well-pleased with weaknesses, I take pleasure from insults, I delight in distresses, I am content with persecutions, undeterred by difficulties** [with difficult people, difficult problems, a difficult circumstance or situation] **for Christ’s sake** [which means I *continue* to believe, it means I *will not* relinquish my trust in the heart of my *Abba*]; **for when I am weak** [and weary of my own failed efforts and ingenuity, my struggling and striving, and thus abandon every ounce of self-reliance], **then** [and *only* ‘then’] **I am strong** [‘strong’ in the strength of the Spirit, in the grace and love of Jesus and the fullness of the Father’s presence, power, and provision].” Then and only then, Paul’s saying, when grace has

conquered in the war of *soul* against *self* and arrogance has been abandoned for humility. Now God can demonstrate His power.

James 4:6 says, “**But He gives a greater grace** [‘grace in super-abundance’]. **Therefore** [because He does give this phenomenal grace], **{it} says, ‘God is opposed to the proud** [He ‘makes war against arrogant’], **but gives grace to the humble.’**” James goes on to say in v. 10, “**Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you.**” This is a picture of divine promotion in the life of the humble believer, based on one condition: that we make the daily decision, that we choose with our own will, to humble ourselves in the face of His will.

To quote Manning again, “Getting honest with ourselves... does not distance us from God, but draws us to Him— as nothing else can— and opens us anew to the flow of grace. While” our Lord “calls each of us to a more perfect life, we cannot achieve it on our own. To be alive is to be broken; to be broken is to stand in need of grace. It is only through grace that any of us could dare to hope that we could become more like Christ.”²

Finale.

As a last and final point I want to give you an illustration, a living embodiment of grace in action: “A story is told about Fiorello LaGuardia who, when he was mayor of New York City during the worst days of the Great Depression and all of WWII, was called by adoring New Yorkers ‘the Little Flower’ because he was only five foot four and always wore a carnation in his lapel. He was a colorful character who used to ride the New York City fire trucks, raid speakeasies with the police department, take entire orphanages to baseball games, and whenever the New York newspapers were on strike, he would go on the radio and read the Sunday funnies to the kids.

One bitterly cold night in January of 1935 the mayor turned up at a night court that served the poorest ward of the city. LaGuardia dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench himself. Within a few minutes a tattered old woman was brought before him charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She told LaGuardia that her daughter’s husband had deserted her, her daughter was sick, and her two grandchildren were starving. But the shopkeeper from whom the bread was stolen refused to drop the charges. ‘It’s a bad neighborhood, your Honor,’ the man told the mayor. ‘She’s got to be punished to teach other people around here a lesson.’

LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the woman and said, ‘I’ve got to punish you. The law makes no exceptions— ten dollars or ten days in jail.’ But even as he pronounced sentence the mayor was already reaching into his pocket. He extracted a bill and tossed it into his famous sombrero saying: ‘Here is the ten dollar fine which I now remit; and furthermore I am going to fine everyone in this courtroom fifty cents for living in a town where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant.’ So the following day the New York City newspapers reported that \$47.50 was turned over to a bewildered old lady who had

stolen a loaf of bread to feed her starving grandchildren, fifty cents of that amount being contributed by the red-faced grocery store owner, while some seventy petty criminals, people with traffic violations, and New York City policemen, each of whom just paid fifty cents for the privilege of doing so, gave the mayor a standing ovation.”³ There is more grace expressed in that one action than most Christians display in a lifetime. **The grace of God operates at a profound level in the life of the humble believer.**

On the final pages of his opening chapter to *The Ragamuffin Gospel* titled ‘Something is Radically Wrong’ Manning writes:

Because salvation is by grace through faith, I believe that among the countless number of people standing in front of the Throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands {Rev. 7:9}, I shall see the prostitute from the Kit-Kat Ranch in Carson City, Nevada, who tearfully told me she could find no other employment to support her two year old son. I shall see the woman who had an abortion and is haunted by guilt and remorse but did the best she could faced with grueling alternatives; the businessman besieged by debt who sold his integrity in a series of desperate transactions; the insecure clergyman addicted to being liked, who never challenged his people from the pulpit and longed for unconditional love; the sexually abused teen molested by his father and now selling his body on the street, who as he falls asleep each night after his last ‘trick’ whispers the name of the unknown God he learned about in Sunday School; the deathbed convert who for decades had his cake and ate it, broke every law of God and man, wallowed in lust and raped the Earth.

‘But how,’ we ask. Then the voice says, **“They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”**

There they are. There *we* are— the multitude who so wanted to be faithful, who at times got defeated, soiled by life, and bested by trials, wearing the bloodied garments of life’s tribulations, but through it all clung to the Faith. My friends, if this is not Good News to you, you have never understood the Gospel of Grace.

Amen.

¹ : Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 194

² : Ibid., p. 85

³ : ibid., pp. 91-92

⁴ : ibid., pp. 31-32