

SCRIPTURE RESEARCH

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FOREWORD

Mr. Douglas Falk (Doug) has requested that I write a paragraph or two as a Foreword to this article. I am flattered at his request and therefore submit the following.

On the evening of Friday, April 27, 2001, it was my privilege to sit under the teaching of Mr. Falk, who spoke on the subject, "What Is Grace?" His treatment of this doctrine had a profound effect on me, both as a freeing, living-life principle and a pivotal, defining paradigm for my spiritual "infrastructure."

In the mid-1960's, the former Director of Scripture Research, Inc., Mr. Russ Schaefer, wrote a series of four articles on this same subject (Scripture Research, Vol. 1, No. 2, 3, 4, & 5). In these various booklets, Russ went to great lengths in exegeting and expounding on the several magnificent "Grace" words (nouns, adjectives & verbs) as found and used in the New Testament. In this booklet, Doug puts the conclusions reached by Russ into a life-changing, Christian "dynamic."

As Doug states, we are indeed living in two worlds or spheres. One of these is in the Divine realm where our Heavenly Father, because of the work of His Blessed Son, has given us the Divine attitude (assuming that we will apply it) or "mind-set" by which we should conduct our daily lives. The other sphere is

of course, the contemporary world around us, with its secular/worldly leanings, including all of the numerous religious systems with their varied and, perhaps, sophisticated legalistic systems of "do's" and "don'ts," which are contrary to The Word of God.

As stated in The Scriptures, we are here by Divine appointment. Francis Schaefer once asked the question, "How shall we then live?" Doug's insights, as they speak to this same question, place the completed work of Christ our Lord on Calvary's cross as the defining and consummate work, by God, in reconciling sinful man to Himself. Because of the work of The Son, God is no longer angry with fallen man!!! The Father's justice was totally satisfied by our Lord's sacrifice, for He raised His Son from the dead! Had He not been satisfied with The Lord Jesus' work, there would be one more occupied tomb in the land of Israel.

What do we do or how do we respond to the GRACE and forgiveness that was poured out on us by The Father because of the work of The Son, if, indeed, our Father is totally satisfied? Succinctly, we are totally forgiven!!! And we should walk (in both spheres) with/in the "mind of Christ" (Phil. 2). How freeing and yet how daring! Do we really believe this? Doug takes us on this wonderful, theological/application journey.

Let this article take you on a bold and challenging theological journey into the application of GRACE in all of the facets and recesses (good and bad) of your life. Can you stand by faith ONLY in The Father's presence, not on your own merits, but only on the merits of our Savior's work at Passover, some 2000 +/- years ago?

Charles W. Asbell, President - Board of Directors -
Scripture Research, Inc.

IN MEMORY OF Mr. Nevin
Meyer Wetzel

The Board of Directors of Scripture Research, Inc. is taking this opportunity to acknowledge Mr. Nevin Wetzel, who served untiringly for many years. He has now shed this earthly tabernacle and is in the Hands of our Lord, Whom he loved and served. Nevin spent many of his formative years in Kansas City, Missouri. His father was a medical doctor, and his mother was a music teacher as well as a student of Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. Nevin graduated from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, in 1937. His academic interest at that time was in the pre-med field, as he planned to follow in his father's footsteps. However, circumstances dictated otherwise, and he chose a career in inventory and materials control. He was employed by such firms as Westinghouse Electric Corp., Los Angeles Police Dept., the Mack Truck Company, and several small manufacturing companies.

While in Kansas City, Nevin and his wife, Jo, were privileged to sit under the Bible ministry of Dr. Harold P. Morgan. There he worked with the Biblical Information Bureau, Inc. (BIB), headquartered in Riverton, New Jersey. He helped to distribute evangelical Biblical materials. In addition to the distribution ministry, Nevin authored several articles which appeared in *Questions and Answers*, the literary and publishing arm of BIB. Nevin also served as the Secretary for BIB, starting in 1942. In 1962, Nevin and Jo moved to Thousand Oaks, California. Having heard of the Bible teaching ministry of Mr. Russell Schaefer while in Kansas City, the Wetzels soon aligned themselves with the Ewalt Memorial Bible School/Scripture Research, Inc. When the two organizations merged in the mid-1960's, Nevin and Jo were asked to serve on the Board of Directors, positions they held from 1968 to 1999. In 1968, Nevin served as the Board's Vice-President. He held this position until 1976, at which time he was elected President of the Board, where he served until 1999.

Due to deteriorating health, he resigned from the Board in November of that same year.

During the 31 years that Nevin and Jo were on the Board of Directors, some 45 booklets and numerous tracts and other materials were published and distributed. Above all, Nevin's life reflected his belief in and love for our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved his fellowmen and was a testimony to everyone he met. Other Board members have stated that they never heard him say an unkind word about anyone.

What a void has been left in this world by Nevin's slipping past the bonds of this life. We will miss him, but, in reality, he belongs to The Lord.

Mr. Henry Falk

On July 8, 2000, Henry W. Falk passed the bounds of his earthly sojourn of 79 years. He was born on October 31, 1920, in Stapt, Germany. When Henry was four years of age, he, his two sisters and his mother came to the United States on "a steamer" to be greeted by his father, who was already in this country. Henry lived, respectively, in Chicago, Illinois, Miami, Florida, Hemet, California, and, finally, in Riverside, California. In 1945 Henry met and married Miss Lorraine Hanson. The two of them became the parents of eight children (two girls and six boys). In later years, twelve grandchildren were added to their family. The Henry Falks had deep Christian convictions and were determined that each of their children would graduate from Christian schools, as they were not going to, in their own words, send them "to the wolves" in public education. Henry and his wife took great pleasure in accomplishing this goal.

Professionally, Henry became a general contractor, building a total of 31 homes in the various cities where he lived. However, his greatest fascination and "love" was in the "world" of mechanical engineering and machining. He founded the Falk Tool & Engineering Company (located in Riverside, California), as he was an accomplished machinist. An expert in this area, he developed a very successful and unique process for repairing certain parts of helicopter jet engines. This company still operates and continues to provide employment for his children.

As to Henry's relationship to his Lord and The Lord's Scriptures, his family would often observe that his eyes would swell with tears when a particular truth of The Word would become real to him. He was especially touched by the image of Christ's being a Lamb in His sacrifice for us. He was not interested in hearing, "How is The Lord treating you?" or "What lessons was The Lord teaching you?" or "How are you suffering for The Lord?," as these comments, to him, were not fully proper. Upon hearing these, his response was quite predictable: "All that God can do is bless us!" Henry's experience with churches ran the entire spectrum of fundamental groups, but he became most comfortable with Scripture Research, Inc., led by Russ Schaefer. His desire to become more affiliated with SR resulted in his serving on the Board of Directors starting in 1972, a position he continued to hold up to his death in the year 2000. He never faulted the steps he took, but rather saw them as the necessary steps to truth. He was especially fond of Russ and was greatly impressed with the ability of Russ to speak on any topic of Scripture without so much as a moment's notice.

We on the Board of Directors wish to acknowledge the many and varied contributions and service that Henry made over 28 years to Scripture Research, Inc.

WHAT IS GRACE?

by Douglas Falk

INTRODUCTION

What exactly is Grace? Though Grace is unquestionably a foundational pillar of our faith (for how well we all know, "For by Grace you are saved..." Eph. 2:8-9), have we ever sincerely and honestly pondered this question and its ramifications? Generally, and really quite surprisingly, it seems we are not inclined to give such fundamental questions serious consideration.

It seems the common inclination is to treat the answer as something that we all somehow automatically agree with and answer to, and yet find ourselves never really defining or solidifying. We are prone to treat the issue as a "given," as if somehow everyone simply understands from the beginning what is meant. We don't ask of others, and others don't ask of us. This is an "unwritten rule" that we honor without even being aware of what we are doing. We are quite agreeable in moving on to other matters, those which seemingly have the "real significance" or more "immediacy" in our lives.

Perhaps, too, if we are honest with ourselves, we often feel inadequate with such issues, and therefore are inclined to leave the answer to "the pros." That is certainly the easy way out, is quite tempting, most assuredly is readily available, is certainly encouraged, and rarely are we encouraged to ponder such questions ourselves. This elevation of another, however, is exactly what Paul did not approve of, as

when he said, "Get up, for we are men like yourselves."

Why not just look up "Grace" in a common dictionary and be done with it? Is not that, after all, what dictionaries are for? Would we then have the proper definition? Would that satisfy us? Is it, in fact, as is the common Christian definition, "unmerited favor"?

Perceptions and/or Misconceptions and Grace

Consider the following situations as they relate to Grace and its ramifications:

A driver commits a traffic violation by exceeding the speed limit, and is pulled over by a police officer. The driver is guilty, does not have a bona fide excuse, and is without a doubt "caught." Yet, the officer, for no particular reason, does not issue a citation. Is that Grace? Would it not be "unmerited favor," and therefore fit the common definition?

What if asking to not receive a citation was necessary. Would that be Grace? Then would it not be merited, if only slightly? What if the officer had a "reasonable" reason, such as the driver's having no previous record of citations? Would that be Grace? What if the driver had a bona fide alibi, such as an emergency? Would that then not make it an example of Grace, since the driver, in fact, had a "right" to violate the law but, yet, the officer also had a "right" to issue the citation?

Is it Grace only if justice is withheld for no reason, but not if there is a valid reason? If Grace is favor, is withholding justice the only means of showing Grace? Do we most often think of Grace as not getting what we deserve, or do we think of it as receiving something we didn't earn? Or are they the same?

A student may ask for "grace" regarding a grade. Perhaps he is lacking the few extra points to achieve

an "A" and is effectively asking for those points to be added to his score. If the instructor simply added the necessary points, would that be Grace? Is not this "unmerited favor"? What if the instructor granted the points because the student had much "good effort," or because of outside family discord. Would it now not be Grace, because the points are now "merited"? What if the student were given the opportunity to "make up" the work, did so, and now the points are added. Would that be Grace, since, in a sense, he "earned" the points? Would it be the proper thing to do? What if you were the parent of the student? Would you encourage the grade increase, or would you discourage it? What if you were a fellow student, who worked hard and just barely, but honestly, earned your "A." Would you protest?

In the case of the traffic violation, the question is:

"Can we get the offense subtracted from our account, and can we somehow not receive what we really deserve?" In the case of the student, he did nothing wrong, and there was no violation. He just came up short. So the question is: "Can we get something added to our account; can we somehow receive what we do not really deserve?" Is not the general perception of salvation that Hell is subtracted from our account (which we really do deserve) and Heaven is added to our account (which we don't really deserve)?

Can Grace in some way be earned? If it can be earned, even in the slightest manner, how can it still be Grace? Just how "pure" is the Grace of salvation? Do we not say that we are saved by pure Grace? Yet, if it is not earned or deserved, does it then become cheap, become taken for granted, become trampled on, become, in essence, worthless? After all, do we not cherish and protect more things that we have earned and worked for, rather than things that are freely given to us? It has been said: "That which we receive too easily, we esteem too lightly."

If we are late on a payment due, and are not charged a financial penalty, is that Grace? It is, after all, called a "grace period." Is it Grace if the delay is given only under "extenuating" circumstances?

Does Grace require a "line" to cross, or a "level" to achieve? What if neither existed? What if completely and unexpectedly, and for no reason other than you just happen to be there at the time, someone walks up and hands you fifty dollars. Is that Grace, or is it foolishness?

Does Grace require a law? If there is a law, must that law be broken for the exercise of Grace? Did the law set the stage for Grace to be expressed? Conversely, can Grace be given where there is no offense?

What if Adam had not sinned, if sin were not an issue? Would God be able to show Grace? Would He "need" to? Would He be confined to not being able to show Grace at all?

Is Grace Unmerited Favor ?

On a personal note, when growing up, this author was taught that "Grace equals the unmerited favor of God." Of course, as is common-place, this definition was never really questioned. Now, given my understanding of this great theme, the author would not use it again. However, in some sense, it is right. Yet, in a very real sense it is at the least incomplete and, at the most, wrong. Consider yet more questions.

If Grace is indeed "unmerited," are there absolutely no conditions on the part of the recipient? Are there conditions to be met before Grace can be given? How about conditions/obligations that must be met after Grace is given, in order to maintain our "Grace status"? Is it truly and absolutely "unmerited"? Does that mean Grace is given purely randomly and without reason? Concomitantly, does that mean Grace is

given despite the reaction of the recipient? If not, then it becomes merited, at least in some sense, does it not?

Can Grace be rejected, or is it extended regardless? If it is not merited, then how can it not be extended? Is it an action based solely on the giver, one that is determined within the giver's own mind and counsel? Is it a gift? Must it be received? Does not even the necessary act of receiving it attach merit to it, even if so very minuscule? Must the receiver know he has received Grace? Must he be thankful? Acknowledgeable? Must he respond accordingly? If so, can it truthfully be called "Grace"?

If there is absolutely no merit, what does that make God? Does it not make Him irresponsible and reckless with His favor? Will He not be "taken advantage of"? Does it not cheapen His favor, make it perhaps even worthless? Yet, if there is merit in even the slightest degree, then can we really call it "Grace"?

Grace and Human Relations

Let us consider Grace at the human level. Can we mimic the Grace of God? Is our grace/favor of simply a different level, or is it rather of an entirely different kind, a difference in mere quantity, or indeed quality? When we show grace/favor, does it not come with certain, perhaps unspoken, obligations? Consider Luke 6:32-34 (AV):

For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive,

what thank have ye? For
sinners also lend to sinners,
to receive as much again.

To illustrate, there is the familiar childhood story of the mouse's talking an elephant out of stepping on him by making the claim, "Who knows, maybe later I may be able to return a favor to you." This was said much to the amusement of the elephant; however, the elephant was only to find out later that the mouse could indeed return the favor. For later the mouse had the opportunity to chew away at the net that had trapped the elephant, thereby freeing the elephant from the trap.

Within human relations, non-returned favors invite the wrath of the favor-giver, to the point that the favor-giver would not hesitate to take back the favor, given the opportunity. We might say, "You owe me nothing," which could be true, but what if the opportunity arose to reciprocate the favor? Would we not hold it against the person for not showing us favor in return? Perhaps we would say, "You might not owe me anything, but see if I ever do a favor for you again." Maybe we might be able to carry this on for a while, but, eventually, even the most forgiving would say, "Enough is enough. No more favors for you!"

After all, what would we think of the mouse had he not freed the elephant, given the opportunity? How do you think the elephant would have treated the mouse, had he been able to get loose some other way? Exactly how "pure" are our favors to others?

Bargaining With God

(Divine and Human Relations and Grace)

Are we not taught from childhood that God operates on us in such a manner? You do a favor for me, and I will do a favor for you. Treat others as you would like to be treated. What goes around comes around. Do

we attempt to coerce others into a particular action by asking, "What if Christ did not have enough time for you?," as if we are obligated to Him. Are we forever at the bargaining table with God? Will His favor to us be withdrawn unless we reciprocate? Is He obligated to do favors for us to the extent that we do favors for Him? Are we obligated to do favors for Him to the extent that He does favors for us? I give this, I get that. However, if I give THIS, I'm going to get THAT! Is God pleased with this form of thinking and behavior? More to the point, is God's Grace of the same quality as our grace?

Please do not misunderstand. All this is perfectly right and proper in the realm of human behavior and interaction. This is simply how the world works, but does it carry over to the divine realm? Does God operate the same as we do, or is it of an entirely different nature? Is it indeed of such a different nature

from us that it is not even within our realm of possible action, response, or duplication? Is it possible for us to mimic? Are we in error when we present Christianity as simply an extension of our human relations? Does this not then define our relationship with God in the terms and conditions of our human relationships? Could this be proper?

What are the characteristics of God's mode of operating and dealing with His creation? Probably the best answer would be: "It depends." When considering this question, His 1) Holiness, 2) Righteousness, 3) Judgment, 4) Grace, and others must be a part of that same consideration. Having stated this, which one of these attributes takes supreme precedence? We cannot practically say that all are equal, for there are contradictions among them. Consider even just the potential conflict between Righteousness and Grace. Though there is potential conflict, this does not stop any attribute from being manifested when necessary and appropriate.

It is probably much like the manifestation of parents' characters to their children, where the dominant trait is one of Love. Depending on the situation, a particular character attribute will be needed, but that specific trait would not necessarily constitute a complete revelation of the parent's character. For a child to believe that the wrath/discipline of the parent is "all there is" without the knowledge of the parent's kindness/sympathy, or for them to not know of the wrath/discipline, but only of the kindness/sympathy, would be equally misleading. The same is true with God's mode of operating with us. Many traits are revealed, but one trait must be "the driving force" behind all the others, from which all the others must come. One trait must have the final say, to which all the others are in eventual submission. Consider again Righteousness and Grace. Upon consideration, it is the author's opinion that Righteousness can be viewed as springing from Grace, with no contradiction of terms; but the opposite, of Grace springing from Righteousness, would necessitate a contradiction of terms.

Grace and Biblical Usage

Consider Grace's definition. The word is perhaps most purely translated as an act producing joy or happiness, a benefit bestowed upon one who deserves the opposite. Sometimes it is better rendered "favor." "On the part of the giver of a favor: kindness; on the part of the receiver: thanks."

The word denotes especially God's Grace and favor manifested towards mankind or to any individual, which is a free act, and is no more hindered by sin than it is conditional upon works. It is the Grace of God, because it denotes the relationship assumed and maintained by God towards sinful man. (It [Grace] is joined with Christ, because it is manifested in and through Him.)

Nowhere in Scripture is a formal definition of Grace to be found. However, there are contexts where it is contrasted with three things. These are: debt, works, and The Law. Perhaps very surprisingly, it is never contrasted with wrath, punishment, or anger; for we generally consider one to be under either the wrath of God, or under the Grace of God. Consider the following:

Grace contrasted with debt as seen in Romans and Luke:

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (Romans 4:1-4, AV)

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave (lit: dealt graciously with) them both. (Note here how Grace cancelled a debt/offense.) Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most" (lit: deals more graciously). And He said unto

him, "Thou hast rightly
judged." (Luke 7:41-43, AV)

In the first scripture, that which is earned (worked for) cannot be granted by Grace, for it is earned. It is granted because there was a debt incurred. In the second scripture, that which is owed (a debt) is cancelled out through Grace. The option to Grace would be to simply earn the debt cancellation. In addition, it should be noted that Grace cannot be given due to a debt that requires it to be given; it cannot be given from a position of indebtedness, as if somehow it were "owed."

Grace contrasted with works as seen in Romans and II Timothy:

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (Romans II:5, 6, AV)

...Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (II Timothy 1:9, AV)

Grace contrasted with the law as recorded in Romans and Galatians:

For sin shall not have
dominion over you:

for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14, AV)

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Galatians 2:21, AV)

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:4, AV)

(Question: Does Gal. 5:3 apply to us today as believers?)

Consider the following two references:

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory: but not before God. (Romans 4:2, AV)

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8, 9, AV)

From these previous verses the formula is self-evident: To keep The Law is to accomplish works, is to earn a reward, is to be awarded according to a debt incurred, is to give valid reason to boast. Boasting is, of course, justified under proper conditions. But the Scriptures clearly state that there is no room for boasting or to glory (same word). Therefore, there is no debt incurred, there is no earning of the reward,

there are no works, there is no law to keep on our part to in any way "earn" salvation. In this manner, boasting is voided in its entirety. This is, of course, all well and good and quite welcome until we consider the personal implications, for there is not even enough room to boast that we are not boasting!

Now, boasting can be very tricky and evasive. It is not necessarily visible and, in fact, it probably rarely is. Almost entirely boasting is done within our mind, in the privacy of our own thoughts. We quite readily place ourselves higher or better than another, with very little substantial evidence. For example, let us not forget that if the test was changed the "grade" may very well change as well. We may inwardly brag or boast of our accomplishments, but what if suddenly the test were now an issue of unforgiven wrongs. Now, suddenly, perhaps we are at the disadvantage. We ALL must fight boasting every step of the way, at least as it relates to eternal values.

It would appear that after considering the previous passages, there is a key issue here that is easy to miss regarding the principle of Grace. This issue displays in stark reality the primary obstacle to understanding Grace, the difficulty in accepting Grace, the annoyance or irritation of Grace, and the dilemma in accepting Grace for ourselves. If this key issue has never been faced by each of us personally, then there is a real probability that we have not come face to face with the true and proper meaning and application of Grace. Though it sounds like an oxymoron, it is certainly true that Grace is hard to accept, at least initially and seemingly the more we understand it. A quite understandable reaction is to fear it and its consequences and, in turn, lessen or deny it.

Where then does all of the foregoing lead us? What is its significance, and how can the abstractions be removed, revealing the awesomeness and magnitude of Grace?

A postulate relating to Grace is in order: Salvation through Grace is not contrary to us, yet upon consideration we find that it is disagreeable to us, or at least to a part of us. Salvation through Grace speaks to us as humans at our most basic level, indeed at the very core of our being, but we don't realize or recognize it.

The Divine Design of God for Man

We were designed from the very beginning to be en-Graced with all of its plentitude and magnitude, yet we lost our way, and surprisingly find ourselves rebelling (not so much at "God," per se, but specifically to Grace), and that for the most part without even our knowledge or intent. We have a case of mistaken identity that makes Grace difficult and turns everything upside-down. We have mistaken the shadow for the reality, and the reality for the shadow, the reality being who we are, and the shadow being who we perceive ourselves to be.

All the time and energy and effort we spend to "prove" ourselves, or to show that "we fit," or that "we belong," or to "defend" ourselves, or to make us more "appealing," or others "less appealing" is wasted and nullified. This desire, since it comes from a false sense of ourselves, will never be satisfied. But "in Grace" we are proven, we fit, we belong, we find we have nothing to defend, we learn we are appealing, for that which is given by Grace cannot be otherwise, and always produces a rest and satisfaction that cannot be found elsewhere.

This is a satisfaction which speaks to us, to the very core of our being, to even the very level of existence itself. This speaks to and provides a peace which cannot be known through effort or works. All of this will be true, if we only will let Grace penetrate our thoughts. It is simply a choice of the will. It is not earned and therefore not open to questioning or doubt or boasting. In the end we find that all along we had

what we were striving for. It is the most unfortunate of all circumstances when we are unaware of this.

Grace and Divisions?

The perception we have of ourselves necessarily invokes divisions. These divisions permeate our thinking and our response to the world. The primal division which precedes all others is the division between what is "me" and "not me," between what is "mine" and "not mine," and all others follow without restraint. For example, we reference: our nation, our state, our city, our school, our street, our house, and our family. They indeed are ours in that they define us, for how could we define ourselves without divisions?

Each of us is certainly the one unique individual who shares ALL OUR divisions. Additionally, these divisions are complex. For example, we see ourselves as belonging to our city, yet within the city we belong to a distinct part of the city, yet at other times we don't feel as if we belong to the city at all, as if the city is contrary to us. These boundaries are in a state of constant flux. We may side with our neighbor one instant, as we fight the city (to which we belong), and at a moment's notice we might switch and find ourselves not agreeing with our neighbor should a confrontation arise. Countless boundaries are formed and removed instantly between husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, neighbors, friends, co-workers, etc. These divisions are certainly necessary, useful, purposeful, and beneficial in their context, but they are only a shadow of who we are. Unfortunately, they contribute to the difficulty of Grace.

When we form divisions, we must of necessity form walls as well. Walls to keep others out, AND the same walls to keep others in. The higher and thicker our walls, the more we find it necessary to form very close and binding bonds with those on "our side" and, in turn, the more difficult we make it to trust or form an

alliance with one on the "other side." Consider how this dual nature of walls is quite evident by observing the dynamics of a small group of people forming an alliance against all other people. Almost without exception, all in the group end up either giving or taking their lives for the cause of the group, whatever it may be. Everyone "inside" is trusted to a fault, and no one "outside" can be trusted in the least. With our walls we effectively do the same thing, for it is only a matter of degree.

However, walls need not be mutual, in that the other party may not be aware of them at all. In fact, these may be the most common walls of all. Unfortunately, these walls are the easiest to build (for mutual consent is not required), yet they are just as effective in creating (within our own mind) that certain self-satisfaction of having a distinction between ourselves and another.

Indeed, walls are not necessarily a result of forming a direct division between us and another, but are indirectly formed when showing favoritism to another. This division may not be even anticipated nor desired. The very act of favoritism creates an inherent division, a division that is welcomed at first by the recipient, but which leads to resentment, not only by those not receiving the favoritism, but eventually to those receiving the favoritism as well. Consider how much of this is played out in the life of Joseph. Parents, teachers and employers know all too well of the divisions resulting from favoritism. (All this is meant as an observation regarding how we operate between ourselves and another and not necessarily as a condemnation.)

We recognize our very being/self when we, usually momentarily, recognize the inherent similarities and connections between ourselves and everyone else. That there is a common ground of existence which each of us shares with all humans -- past, present, and future -- which is, in fact, a sacred existence

based solely on the fact of our mutual existence in creation. It is only when we look at another as an equal, regardless of age, gender, nationality, education, or any other division or "box" which we put others and/or ourselves into, that we touch our common true being.

This perception is based on pure being, pure existence, not on any developed differences, divisions or similarities that we contrive or manufacture. This is, at the same time, the most natural and the most unnatural perception. We must perceive our differences to even survive and make fundamental judgments, yet removal of our contrived divisions allows us to see the commonality between ourselves and others. Both, seeing our differences and seeing our similarities has its proper place. We err if we apply either where it does not fit.

We, of course, do not want to lose that sense of identity that we have gained and learned to protect at all costs. This identity comes from those differences that make us who we are (in our own eyes), for we feel we will in some way lose our being, our sense of self that sets us apart from all others. Yet, it is only when we see through and drop those differences that we grasp the identity that we have in Christ through His Graciousness to us. If nothing else, and perhaps above all else, Grace nullifies divisions, every last one of them. (Eph 2:11-22, Col 3:11)

This perception is similar to a child who does not want to let go of an object which has the potential of hurting him, yet the moment he lets go (but not before), he realizes that the letting go was not such a big thing after all (assuming it was replaced with something more desirable, but safer). In fact, often the child has no interest in that former object, as we too will have no desire of those former divisions, once we let them go. The trick is that we must let go of them first, before we no longer will desire them.

This perception is also similar to those things in our lives that we are so sure we must retain and preserve, but when we sell them, or give them away, or throw them away, we realize how much better off we are without them, and what a burden is lifted when they are gone. Then we wonder why we did not rid ourselves of such "clutter" earlier. What we saw as reality and our very identity, we are able to look back on as a mere shadow, as unwanted "clutter," but only after it is gone. Expect those divisions and differences to put up a "fight for their lives," for that is exactly what they are fighting for. It is only when we "let go" of ourselves (this is the "crux" of the issue) as we pretend to be and see ourselves as we truly are in Christ (and thereby simultaneously see as God sees) that we are able to apprehend the truth of the matter.

Let us be more specific, so specific that it might hurt. The part of us that wants to boast, create divisions, take credit, receive recognition, have importance, have an advantage, be right, is that same part that takes offense at actions or words of another, that feels insulted, that becomes enraged when another not only gets undue credit, but especially when another receives our credit. After all, is it not only fair that we receive what we deserve and others receive what they deserve?

When we let go of those longings, when they disappear, are given up, and we give in, then and only then comes that peace that passes understanding. In order to find ourselves, we must lose ourselves. Recognition has its place, but when it comes to salvation, recognition is elsewhere.

The Spiritual Tension Caused by Grace

If there is not a part of you, the reader, which is rebelling at what is being stated, then the correct words are not being used. If there is not a part of you that is agreeing with these words, the correct words are not being used. Personally, the author finds

himself "bouncing" back and forth between these two contrary positions. Yet, the author finds through time that the agreeing part becomes stronger, and the disagreeing part becomes weaker. Of necessity, there must be a struggle within each one of us. We want and do not want Grace at the same time. We are, after all, human.

What makes Grace so difficult to apply is that applying "non-Grace" principles comes so easily for us. The "non-Grace" approach is ingrained within us. It, concomitantly, is "natural," is readily agreeable with our old nature, our lower nature. As such, it is so very hard to resist, to not get caught up in. We must force ourselves not to think in terms of "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth." These things are difficult to clarify because it is not of law, where everything is right or wrong, black or white, either/or; but we must try anyway.

If we have not seen, nor dealt with, nor have overcome our negative response toward Grace, which we all share (for none, from the "dearest saint" to the most rebellious, is immune to having to deal with our rebellion against Grace), we cannot fully have the peace, contentment, and comfort Grace provides. This "over- coming" of the universal part of us which rebels against Grace is not a once-and-for-all event, but is rather a continuous process, one which requires constant diligence.

We all too easily and too often will slip into our "non-grace" mode of thinking and responding. This is usually due primarily to the influence that others have on us by getting us to think in a "non-grace" manner, either by what they do that we agree with or don't agree with, or by their interpretation of the world of what "should" or "should not" happen. We are far more accustomed and comfortable in thinking and responding in a "non-grace" mode, for it seems so right, comes so easily, can always be "justified," and is most likely the only mode we know. Therefore, we

often will begin thinking in that manner without even noticing what we are doing.

It is All of HIM

But it is only when we fully recognize that it (Grace) is truly all "of Him," and (thereby implying) that none of it is "of ourselves," that we grasp salvation by Grace (without works, without boasting), and lose and find ourselves simultaneously. We are to constantly keep this in mind, as our thoughts will play tricks with us, and will constantly remind us to be sure to get a little boasting in, to take a little credit, to get some recognition, to gain at least a little importance, and thereby create yet another division between us and another.

But none of this has significance in the eyes of The Lord. He is worthy, and He alone! At one and the same time, this is totally natural and unnatural. "We do not need to change to get Grace, but Grace, of necessity, changes us," and this is how it changes us. It compels us to "give up" that we might gain, and Grace does this in a "graceful manner," not against our will, in that we choose to "give up" of our own free will. It is what we initially don't want, yet it is eventually what we do want. We think we want to keep at least a little credit for ourselves, yet when it is all removed and we stand "in Christ" only, we are the most alive, most human, most as we were designed to be, and therefore most complete.

Divine Grace Appropriated = Freedom

Once grasped, we have true freedom, for we no longer need to defend ourselves or seek to gain opportunities of boasting. We are now free from all of that. This is a freedom that no amount of defending or striving could ever provide. This is contrary to our initial impulse that freedom comes from gaining more. In reality, freedom comes from being willing to give up what we think we need to keep, or what we thought

we needed to defend, much like a child. A quotation my father liked is quite apropos: "Only a fool would refuse to give up that which he will lose, to keep from gaining that which he can never lose".

IN CHRIST is who we are, in our total being. All other definitions and divisions which we use to define and differentiate ourselves from others are secondary; they are of momentary importance and significance. They will eventually fade away and become only a shadow, to be seen as simply a "stepping stone," a shadow of the reality, to get to where we are in Grace.

On a different thought, when one of us does wrong, we all suffer and must all compensate. "It takes only a few to ruin it for everyone else" is a common justification for the implementation of some new rule or policy. This is not wrong and is generally quite proper. Yet, the Divine operation is, not surprisingly, the opposite. Here, one proper act of God, i.e., Christ, compensates for all the improper acts and attitudes of all (Romans 5:17-19 AV).

"What kind of a God would allow such and such to happen?" and "Life is not fair" are commonly heard expressions. Consider that when we speak of fairness in this way we are really speaking of some "law," usually unwritten. Upon consideration, the concept of fairness is seen as being no more than legalism, which is often adherence to "our law" or how we think things should be. Of course, we may readily quote Scripture to support our thinking, but it is still adherence to some law.

Grace and Conflict With The "Lower Nature"

We really cherish, we really do enjoy (speaking now from our "lower nature") to operate in legalism, but only when we are right. We enjoy the feeling of being "right," being "justified," being "better" than another (of course, we must always find another who is wrong, or we don't walk nearly as tall). We just dress it up and

make it seem right and correct by calling it fairness, by saying, "This is only proper." This "lower nature" (which enjoys boasting, receiving credit, creating divisions, finding faults, among other subtle and not so subtle traits) is translated in multiple ways.

A consideration of the "lower nature" and Romans 7:5, as seen in several NT versions: the KJV/1901, American Standard Version/New American Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, Concordant Version, Catholic Version, Amplified Bible translates it as: "mere physical lives"; Lamsa, Emphasized (Rotherham), Darby, Young's Literal Translation: "the flesh"; NIV: "sinful nature"; Williams: "lower nature"; Moffatt, Arthur S. Way: "unspiritual"; Good News for Modern Man: "human nature"; Bible in Modern English: "our sensuality"; Berkeley: "mere earthly way"; New Century Version: "sinful selves"; Contemporary English Version: "when we thought only of ourselves"; God's Word: "corrupt nature"; New Living Translation: "old nature."

If at any time we gloat that someone finally got what was coming to them, or, if they didn't now, at least for sure they will someday, when they will burn eternally, it is legalism, it is law, it is works, it is debt, it is by obligation -- it is not Grace! This is true even for the most hideous of offenses. When we find ourselves referring to "the consequences," we are thinking in terms of law, works, or debt. We are thinking contrary to Grace.

Consider the Book of Jonah. Perhaps the real significance of Jonah is not the story of the whale, but rather that Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh, not because he feared for his life (for he hoped to perish in the waters), but because he had the inclination that God would forgive them. THIS is what he feared -- that they would NOT experience the consequences that HE thought they should receive.

Is this kind of thinking REALLY any different than the concept that many in the world call "karma" – that, according to some innate "cosmic law," what good or what harm we do will eventually return to us, either in this life or the next? Is evoking "the consequences" any different than appealing to one's "karma"? "Karma" is certainly not Grace, for it is "an eye for an eye" and a "tooth for a tooth" taken to the extreme, even to the extent that "accounts" are carried on through centuries of lives.

Many of the world's religions, especially of the East, recognize the problem, the duality of this conflict that goes on (within us). To resolve the issue, they teach self-denial by seeking their "higher selves," denying their "lower selves," claiming it is but an illusion. By denying themselves from having their own way, theirs becomes solely a way of self-denial, in effect a religion of asceticism. Though they recognize the problem, they fail in the real solution, as they seek a solution from within themselves. This approach may appear nobler than others, but it is in essence not far removed from religions that seek favor by what they can gain or accomplish. Both perspectives seek to find either their hope or their nirvana through their own effort.

He Must Increase, We Must Decrease

Incidentally, it appears that Christianity, in general, has dealt insufficiently with the beneficial aspects of "denying ourselves," where it is commonly used solely as an excuse for not granting another his way. ("We can't all have our own way, you know. Think of the resulting chaos. We must learn to deny ourselves," i.e., "You can't have your way, but I will have my way."). However, the implications of the principle of "denying ourselves" are no doubt much grander than simple use as a control factor. Let us not forget that not granting another his desire, we are in effect granting ourselves desire. Of course, at some point someone will be denied his wish, but to use "denying

ourselves" as the principle of operation may not be the proper approach.

We have no problem with Christ's increasing, as stated in John 3:30 ("He must increase," AV). By the same token, so that there should be no contextual violation, the second half of this verse ("I must decrease", i.e., self-denial) must also be a part of the equation. We have no problem with the will of God being done. Consider Matthew 26:39:

And He went a little farther,
and fell on His face, and
prayed saying, "O my Father,
if it be possible, let this cup
pass from me: nevertheless
not as I will, but as Thou wilt."
(AV)

Let us not forget that "as Thou wilt" has the corresponding requirement of "not my will" (i.e. self-denial) as an implied part of the equation when we pray for the will of the Father to be accomplished. No doubt a major aspect of our self-denial is giving up the strong gratification of requiring that everyone "gets what he deserves." Notice, too, that self-denial is only half the equation. As mentioned, many religions speak and recognize "self-denial," even to the extent that it IS THE SUM TOTAL OF THEIR RELIGION, but they know nothing of "He must increase," nor of "Your will be done." It seems as though universally only one side of the equation gets noticed and the other is essentially ignored, whether in Christianity or in the world's religions. Both sides of the equation must be incorporated in our thinking, or the equation becomes unbalanced. Both must be used to gain the complete picture.

Grace and Fairness

It would seem that God operates in an entirely different manner than humans operate, not simply in a

matter of degree, but of and in its very nature. In the eternal sense, do we really want everyone to get what he or she deserves? Do WE want what WE deserve? Do we wish only for what we have truly earned, nothing more?

Do we REALLY want life to be fair? Probably not! We usually will say, "Life is not fair," when we don't get what "we deserve," or what is "proper," or others get more than "their share" of positive or negative events. But what about not getting the negative aspects of life that we all probably "deserve" as well? Then it becomes fine for life not to be fair. We seem to want it one way, but not the other. After all, we all have our reasons and excuses for our behavior and thoughts which certainly make sense to us, and why we should or should not get what we have or don't have, yet we will not grant others the same freedom of reasoning and excuses. After all, we certainly know all the complications of the lives of others as well as we know our own, don't we?

We get upset when a person does not get what he deserve, or gets more than he deserves, or gets what he doesn't deserve at all, but it is important to realize that this is entirely how God operates, for this is the essence of Grace.

Please do not misunderstand. The Grace principle is applied eternally. This does not mean that we should not think legally, lawfully, dutifully, at all. In reality, we must think and operate in a non-grace manner almost entirely! To operate a nation, a society, a culture, a business, an organization, a family, we need standards, we need obligations, we need rules, we need consequences, we need fairness, we need rewards, we need winners and we need losers, for this is how progress is achieved. This is how effort is measured; this is how we motivate ourselves and how others are motivated. We receive what we deserve, either positive or negative, according to our works.

Concomitantly, it is also quite proper to boast (in contrast to the non-boasting of Eph 2:8.9) if someone has done well, even though, generally, within the Christian faith, boasting and taking credit is shunned. Contrary to the "unwritten and false rule" that, "The less credit we take now, the more we will receive later," all future credit will be given to the only deserving One. Consider II Corinthians 9:1-4 (AV):

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf: that, as I said, ye be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

Living in Two "Worlds"

Within the world's perception of law and justice (and they certainly vary in all parts of the globe) is how standards are established, how offenders receive "what they deserve" and how "law-abiding-citizens" are protected; this makes it possible for society and individuals to accomplish their goals and ideals. We are designed to operate in this manner and we do so quite well (too well?), thank you, in this mode of operation. This is simply how the system works, and the sooner people learn to work within it, the better it is for themselves and society.

Those who work for the benefit of a society, of an organization, of a business, or of a family should receive positive consequences. Those who work for the detriment of these same entities should receive negative consequences. This is only proper and fair, was not designed in error, works quite well, accomplishes its purpose, is not wrong in its ends or means, and should be optimized...but is not Grace!!

It is the view of this author that, in order to gain the full properties of Grace, we must gain concurrent and proper use of the two perspectives, Grace and non-grace. To do this, we must live and think essentially on these two levels at the same time. We must view Grace for what it is, and contrast it with what it is not. One perspective is according to law, according to this world, according to our environment. This is simply how the world operates and works, and how it will always operate and work. This is the temporary modus operandi, but this is the one that puts food on our table, that gives us clothes to wear, that gives us a place to live. It is rightfully based according to our works.

The other perspective is according to Grace, the eternal modus operandi. This is the one whereby we are saved, the one which causes us to be "accepted in the Beloved," apart from our works. Attempting to operate in the "Grace" mode in our daily affairs is to invite disaster for ourselves and our families. To extend the laws of our daily affairs to the eternal is to not understand Grace and the essence of salvation. To perceive at either of the two levels, we must perhaps temporarily suspend the perspective of the other, having it "in the back of our mind," so to speak, but not acting on it.

The two views give us the opportunity to fully and completely move Grace out of the affairs which we face everyday and have it as an entirely separate perspective. This is in contrast to what is the only "other choice," which is to apply it in a simply less

restrictive manner than our non-grace affairs, thereby making only a difference in quantity, rather than an absolute difference in quality between Grace and non-grace. Concurrently, with these two views, when appropriate, we are able to invoke non-grace principles without feeling guilty about not responding in Grace, as perhaps sincere Christians are prone to do.

How often we find ourselves grading ourselves against another, and others against ourselves, usually without even realizing what we are doing. Whether with regard to income, talent, weight, looks, education, home, age, family, car, health, etc., we constantly say in our own minds, "Better than me, worse than me, or about the same as me." This is not necessarily bad, for we do need to "grade or compare" ourselves with others to see how we are doing.

Realize that all of it, though, is based on our sense of law and fairness, not Grace. When we find ourselves of necessity judging others, let us not think that, no matter how "proper" our grading is, this is the only way of perceiving the situation. To see from God's perspective is to see eternally, to see each through the principle of Grace, to see each as an equal, not better, not worse, not ahead, not behind. It is to negate all divisions, races, contests, and competitions. More specifically, all those mental comparative records which we keep between ourselves and others (whether they are "playing" or not does not matter), which we keep inside us, which we are continually updating, and by which we become encouraged and discouraged...ALL end in a TIE! With the continual and habitual aim of bettering ourselves against another, this becomes the supreme irony of us all.

When we are completely open to these truths, honest with ourselves, dropping all pretenses, then ending ALL contests in a tie becomes most appropriate,

comforting, and finally liberating. For deep inside, if we were brave enough to know others as we know ourselves, we would recognize that we are all really much the same. We are alike in the essentials and differ only in the superficial, but since our focus is almost entirely on the superficial, we see others as being much different rather than similar to ourselves. (Upon honest inspection we would see that we differ only in our means, not in our goals.) The effect of Grace is absolute equality, with which we certainly are not familiar and find a bit disturbing, but which is perhaps, after all, the most comforting of all.

Seemingly we can often speak of "Grace," but rarely are we really and truly thinking "Grace." Our thoughts are encouraged (from within ourselves, by others, and even from the day we are born) to think solely in a non-grace mode. We give Grace, at the most, only "lip service," because we try to fit Grace into our everyday lives, and it simply does not, will not, and cannot fit.

Why, then, the non-grace perspective at all? Aside from the fact that it is necessary in building society, consider that the real purpose of the non-grace mode is not to build society per se, but rather to clarify and solidify for us what Grace is by illustrating what it is not -- by providing a continual contrast -- for indeed we cannot really know or recognize anything without a necessary and sufficiently corresponding opposite. Consider that perhaps to appreciate Grace, we must first experience "non-grace."

It is common these days to see within "Christian circles" the letters WWJD, meaning, "What Would Jesus Do?" Those individuals should be commended for their spirit in wearing these letters, for they are an indication that they are willing to look to Christ Jesus for their actions. But, in reality, to answer the question, "What Would Jesus Do?," it must be realized that the question is not asked in a truly objective manner. It is not meant to be analyzed, scrutinized, and answered literally. Basically, what we

are asking is, "What is the proper thing to do in the circumstance in which I find myself?"

However, to look at the question in an analytical way, it must honestly be said, "I really don't know what He would do." It appears that whenever The Lord Jesus did act, He, in fact, surprised everyone. Just when someone, even His closest disciples, thought they had Him figured out, or in a corner, they were surprised by His response. By design, He remained unpredictable, and thereby "woke them up," because He wanted them (and us) to continually see that spiritual things are not perceived according to formulas and equations, but rather by His Spirit. Consider wearing the letters, WDGD (What Does God Do?). This would continually remind us to keep in mind God's perspective of Grace and forgiveness, while we habitually and necessarily operate within law, justice, and fairness.

The Divine "Roots" of Grace

The most unfair act of all time is the death of Christ. The most innocent One was put to death. Not only that, but the very means of creation itself, the very means of our existence, was put to death. The most hideous, repulsive, revolting, embarrassing, unjust death was extended to the most undeserving.

This is one argument people use to oppose the death penalty -- that an innocent person may be put to death. (Do any of our contemporaries reference the death of Christ as an instance of an innocent dying in questioning the death penalty?) However, even those who are put to death innocently at some time have done, said, thought something wrong or evil, whereas this could not be said of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. He was and is the most innocent of all, for as Hebrews 9:14 (AV) states:

How much more shall the
blood of Christ, who through

the eternal Spirit offered
Himself without spot to God,
purge your conscience from
dead works to serve the living
God?

He was without spot, flawless!

What of the simple and common traffic infringement?
How many of us can think of when we were caught
"unfairly" and acted so innocent. We can think of
every excuse in the book as to why the citation was
given unfairly, but, of course, we never mention the
times we were not caught when we should have
been. Yes, there certainly have been revolting,
hideous crimes committed against innocent people.
Mass murderers, random shootings, people slain for
no reason other than that they were of the wrong
nationality, or were in the wrong place at the wrong
time. Most of these were killed certainly not by choice,
but if perhaps some by choice, certainly none for the
benefit of an enemy -- but certainly none so unfairly
and unjustly as the death of Christ Jesus!!

*How so cosmically ironic, in all our finely tuned
legality, sense of offense, sense of obligation, sense
of right and wrong, sense of fairness, that the most
unfair and unjustified act of all time would become the
only act that was ever done to carry eternal meaning
and significance!*

Consider that the death of Christ was unjust. Consider
also that our partaking of that death for our benefit is
also unjust, for Christ got not what He "deserved" or
earned. We in turn get what we don't deserve or earn.
Is the most unjust, unfair, negative act justified by the
most unjust, unfair, positive act?

Grace, The Modus Operandi

[In The Life of The Believer](#)

Is this perhaps another perspective on Romans 10:4, where it is stated that "Christ is the end of law" (no def. article)? Is that law, our sense of debt, of consequences, of what is fair, of what is unfair, our complete modus operandi, which we learn from Day One, which forms our lives and relationships, completely, fully, and eternally nullified? And is it replaced with Grace, the fact that we find our acceptance entirely in someone else? Have we no basis whatsoever to boast or be proud, or rest in our accomplishments? We cannot point a finger at any one and say, "You are worse than I am," or "You are better than I am." Is not this one reason many stay away from "religion," because they think they are going to be made to feel inferior, that others will look down on them, that they will be at a disadvantage, that they will be "preached at"? But this is entirely the opposite of what the Scriptures say.

Does this kind of Grace, in some manner, require that kind of injustice, require that kind of law violation? Is there some kind of cosmic balance, some kind of cosmic equation that is solved here? Consider Christ's question on the cross in Matthew 27:46 (AV), where He poses the question:

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

No response is recorded. What kind of question was this that Christ asked? Was it not a question based on the fairness, the justness, the legality of what was occurring? Could it be there was no legal basis for a fair, just, or legal answer? Perhaps the crucifixion could not be justified in that manner, hence the silence, because it was absolutely unfair.

What about the common argument, "I was not in the Garden of Eden, it was not my fault, it is not fair that death should have been passed on to me, and why should I be forced to partake of someone else's action?" This is a good and fair question.

However, realize that it is one-sided. That is the "bad" unfair news. This is the other side of the equation, the "good" unfair news. It is suggested that in the act of the death of Christ, in all the supreme injustice placed upon Christ (which He did not deserve), and that in the corresponding act of our being granted favor as a result of Christ's death (which we did not deserve), our entire value system is nullified at its very core once and for all. This places us solely and completely within the work of Christ, nothing of ourselves, leaving no room to boast, no room to place ourselves above, or below, anyone else.

Further, it is also suggested that these two corresponding acts -- of Christ's receiving unjust treatment and our receiving unjust favor -- alone have eternal meaning and significance. How ironic (to us) that they both should be so entirely unearned.

As a side note, are we capable of showing this kind of Grace? Probably not! Such a Grace that is shown without any thought or expectation of some payback is inherently beyond us, for we are human, not Divine. No matter how apparently noble, no matter how apparently benevolent, no matter how apparently virtuous, no matter how apparently incorrupt, no matter how apparently altruistic, we will have, even in the slightest degree, the motive of being self-serving, even when we fool others into thinking we are not.

We know in our own hearts, while having the interest of others in mind, at some degree, large or small, that we are in fact self-serving and have our own interest in mind as well. From personal experience and reflection, teaching at a private school certainly carries a certain "nobleness" with it, but the benefits of such a choice cannot be left out of the equation.

However, do not despair! Please realize that we do not have to act in such a noble manner, for Christ acted in such a manner, and we partake in His action. We certainly can be thankful, respectful, and

honoring, but we cannot in fact duplicate it in our actions. It is this perspective of Grace, as something that is beyond us yet is done for us, that is the greatest magnification the work of Christ.

This is not being said with a motive of being negative towards humanity (but certainly, to be truthful, of humanity), but rather to glorify Christ. When the Scriptures tell us He emptied Himself, He did it in such a manner of which we are not capable. For He did it for us, and it is through Him that we effectively do the same thing. He did for us what we are incapable of doing for ourselves. Emphatically, the work of Christ's being made human and dying the death of the cross is the one truly selfless act in all and for all eternity.

We ask: "What of all the cruel acts of mankind?" "What kind of a God would allow such and such to happen?" "If your God allowed this to happen, I want no part of Him." "If your God is all powerful, why did He not stop this from happening?" Why do we "forget" to ask these very same questions as they relate to Christ? Seemingly we are so distracted with other events that we forget the one event of all time that has eternal significance. This distraction seems to be quite acceptable to us. Unfortunately, therefore, we miss the eternal perspective.

For answers, we can do no more than look to Christ, and see what the effects of His life and death impart to us. Concerning cruel acts, none was as cruel and unjust as the death of Christ. Consider that all other acts, just or unjust, must diminish when paired with the death of Christ. Yet, what sprang from it has the most beneficial and redeeming value. Consider that the most unjust act of eternity covered all acts committed within time, for within it there was no lack of punishment. As Russ Schaefer so elegantly related to us, to confess our sins is to see them as God sees them. And how is that, Russ? "Forgiven. Forgiven. Forgiven." For to see the offense already dealt with is

to see the offense forgiven, is to have God's perspective.

Consider an analogy of two one-dollar bills. One is new and crisp; the other is worn and ragged. They appear much different, but in reality they are worth THE SAME. Given the choice, we would prefer to have the crisp one rather than the other.

Concomitantly, we might feel a little cheated if the ragged one were handed to us. We no doubt would probably spend the ragged bill first. We most assuredly would not want to give it as a gift. Yet, we all know that they have the same essential value.

To the point, in Christ there is no difference between us. Don't think of yourself as better than someone else. On the other hand, don't think of yourself as less than others. Let us not forget their (and our) value and inherent worth, even if it is very difficult to do so and when it goes against our nature, for this is what Grace is truly all about. Unless we extend Grace to those that are most difficult for us personally, we are not extending Grace to anyone. Eternal grading should be based on what Jesus Christ has done for us, not what we can or have done for ourselves. Not until we are willing to forego any and all boasting, and not until we are willing to grant to others what has been granted to us, and not until we recognize all is of Christ and Him only, are we understanding what Grace is. "Not of ourselves, it is the gift of God."

Conclusion: Grace is Earned

As this article nears its conclusion(s), perhaps looking back at the first instance of the Grace principle, the human reaction to it, and the subsequent result is in order. For here can be found instruction regarding the implementation of Grace. Adam was told in Gen. 2:16 that of every tree of the Garden he may "freely eat." The word "freely" here corresponds to a figure of speech called "Polyptoton" meaning "many inflections" (see the "*Companion Bible*," Appendix 6).

This is a figure of speech which is used for emphasis. The literal translation would be, "Eating thou mayest eat," and is rightly marked here by "freely." The "*Emphasized Bible*" is in agreement here, noting that the word "freely" is given the highest possible emphasis rating. The same figure of speech is used in Ex. 18:18, literally, as, "A wearing thou shalt wear," emphasizing how for Moses to handle all the affairs of the people on his own was sure to wear him down; in Gen. 43:3, literally, as, "Protesting he protested," emphasizing how Joseph insisted that his brothers not return without their youngest brother Benjamin; in Gen. 43:7, literally, as, "Asking he asked us," emphasizing how earnestly Joseph inquired of their (his) father Israel.

Though not in word, but apparently in principle, Adam was told, in a gracious manner, that he may freely eat of any tree. Of particular note is the human response to the permission to eat freely; for Eve, in Gen. 3:3, when defending the not eating of the forbidden tree, she significantly exclaimed the word "freely" AND inserted the additional restriction that they may not "touch it." Here, in a most concise and early example, we have the essence of religion: religion seeks to subtract from the freedoms we are given and seeks to add to our restrictions. All this was done under the quite understandable, yet incorrect, premise that, when making such changes, we are made stronger and our defense is strengthened. No doubt Eve reasoned that, by removing the essence of what they were given, and adding further restrictions to what was denied them, she thereby improved her position, in effect saying that simply taking what The Lord had provided, no more, no less, was not enough. However, as evidenced by the result, when such religious principles are used, her position was weakened, for "she did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

Perhaps it was not so much that Adam and Eve felt they had to contribute their own efforts and rules to their defense (thereby giving them reason to boast and taking some credit or fame), or they somehow possessed a "sin nature" (for where would the "sin nature" come from if they had not ye sinned?). Could it be that they only wanted to "test the boundaries" that were put before them (as is most commonly taught). Or could it be that they genuinely felt that what was provided was not enough (or was in fact too much?, as perhaps is the most common reaction to Grace?). Another possibility, might be, that they had not the faith to fully believe. Perhaps by focusing more on what they had (eat freely), they would not have desired to seek more or to implement further restrictions, and they would have been more inclined to please The Lord. For us as well, once Grace is internalized and focused upon, our desire is to please and give thanks, for that would be our true response from the heart.

Succinctly, then, Grace is favor! Generally, favors are granted because they are at least partially "earned" or "deserved" by that person, or for a possible future advantage or payback, or because of a friendship, or blood relationship, again earned by that person. However, Biblically, favor is granted not due to some debt owed, works performed, law kept or broken, but because of divine motives and carried out through Christ and Him alone -- not of ourselves, that we may not boast (in ourselves). A crucial aspect of Grace is that it is not only favor, but, of necessity, NOT of ourselves. It is not deserved (by us), it is not earned (by us), not granted out of debt, nor as an obligation, as in returning a favor. However, Grace is, in fact, earned; it is conditional. To answer our previous questions: God does not grant Grace without reason, God is not reckless in His favor, God does not grant Grace that is unearned or unmerited, God does not grant Grace randomly and haphazardly, God is not irresponsible in His granting of Grace. However,

Grace is not earned by us, or conditional on us. It is solely earned by and conditioned on and in Christ!

After all the questions (and some answers?) and the considerations of the Scriptures, we come finally to the real crux of the issue of Grace, the one that we would avoid more than anything. It is not "out there" to be found, but rather "in here" to be ousted, not to be gathered, but to be scattered, nothing to be gained, but rather to be given-up. It is not in some obscure passage of Scripture, nor in some mysterious interpretation, nor in some unique revelation, nor in some profound philosophical insight. Rather, it is in us, right here. In fact, it is our own heart.

The real question is: "Are we willing to give up our false sense of self, that sense that demands recognition, demands fairness, demands divisions, all with the necessary corresponding burdens we put ourselves and those around us through by living under such a rule. Or are we willing to see Grace for what it is, and thereby free ourselves of those burdens?" This is a choice of our heart.

If Grace is the most magnificent and precious of all, one would think we would desire to shout it from the rooftops. But we are confused, disillusioned, and disappointed when finding that we are quite reluctant to not only allow Grace to others, but even reluctant to allow Grace to ourselves. We do not want others to have Grace for, above all, we certainly cannot let anyone "get away" with anything! (Well, at least not anything that we are not allowed to "get away" with also, though we certainly have no problem in getting away with something not allowed to others!) And we do not really want Grace given to us for, above all, we need to boast/elevate ourselves, if only (oh, please!, oh, please!, oh, please!) in the slightest.

So the issue comes full circle, finding that Grace is really an issue of our very heart and that it cannot be known or extended without a change of heart -- a

change most difficult, yet once done, it is most easily accepted and welcomed.

- NO CHRIST, NO GRACE.
- KNOW CHRIST (and nothing else), KNOW GRACE.

Addendum

This article contains many questions, and perhaps fewer answers. It was written with the intent of adhering to the intent of Scripture Research, as understood by the author. That intent lives up to the name of the publication, *Scripture Research*. We wish to research the Scriptures and not necessarily become a reference source of knowledge. Consequently, as with all research, more questions are raised than answers provided. Though the title of this article is "What Is

Grace?" (note: Not "What Grace Is"), its purpose is not so much to provide an answer, but rather to invoke thought and questions within the reader as to the nature and ramifications of Grace. Our purpose is not to end thought regarding Grace, but rather to provide a window through which additional consideration of Grace can be pursued.

"Practical doctrine" is not always found in obvious places. Speaking of and encouraging our-selves and others to "walk the talk," to be kind, loving, helpful, thankful, forgiving, honoring, respectful, etc., certainly has its place and purpose. But knowing how we are to be and act has an empty ring to it, and sounds a bit Pharisaical, unless we can substantiate it with "why."

If we cannot or do not supply the foundation for our actions and character, but supply only the outward manifestations and descriptions of the Christian character, we are encouraging shallow actions -- actions based on an external demand, rather than

actions and character that come from the understanding and support of the heart. Without the foundation we are, in effect, treating ourselves and our peers as children, demanding specific actions, without sufficiently answering the "why" question.

Proper behavior best results from very few foundational truths. The particulars of our actions are to be worked out under the current conditions and circumstances, where we are free to operate as our enlightened hearts dictate. This provides power and empowerment to our actions, not shallow actions with no real substance.

True strength and revelation of character comes from actions that genuinely come from our heart, not from any perceived obligation or external coercing. Truly operating from the heart is, even logistically speaking, a necessity. To anticipate every scenario we as humans may find ourselves in, and then to dictate the proper resultant action would take volumes beyond our ability to sort through, and even then, conceivably, the actions still would not need to come from the heart.

This is illustrated perfectly by the multitude and variety of the laws of the "Old Testament." No one could obey them all, let alone remember them all, and even then they did not cover every circumstance. Remember the woman who was taken in adultery and was brought to the Lord for an interpretation of the proper action. The Lord responded in a manner that forced her accusers to consider their own hearts in the matter, rather than "the Law."

It is the author's belief that, although this study is not focused directly on behavior or "practical doctrine," it is indeed quite practical and beneficial to our character and everyday life. The study may, in fact, supply the "why" of our actions, and we may find ourselves operating from "the heart" with a different perspective than was anticipated. If, indeed, the study

is "taken to heart," the ramifications of Grace will undoubtedly appear in new, and probably surprisingly, many circumstances. It is left to the reader to respond as his or her heart dictates, for only then can this study be termed, in any way, a success.

Please do not misapply these Grace principles. Though eternally we are in the Grace of God, and though non-Grace principles permeate our actions on a day-to-day basis, do not use this as an excuse for not manifesting Grace in our daily affairs. Consider that showing Grace to another will often do much more for the giver and the receiver than would ever be accomplished using an "expected" non-Grace response. Upon reflection, perhaps we will note that a lost genuine opportunity to manifest Grace to another is more of a burden than any satisfaction we may receive from using non-Grace methods. Invoking non-Grace certainly is always justifiable and provides us with a certain "just" attitude of us or circumstances "over" another. Here we have formulated in our minds, through a series of cause-and-effect steps, the "proper" action to take that most likely will change the actions of another, or at least will justify our action. But extending Grace provides a basis where we are on common ground with another, where we connect with our heart, not our mind, and will more probably affect the heart of another, and through his heart his actions, rather than simply his actions. We influence the actions of another through actions we take on him; we influence the heart of another through our heart. Perhaps Grace is most welcomed, most memorable, and most effective when it is least expected, and less so if it becomes expected.

Douglas H. Falk,

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"All truth passes through three stages:

First, it is ridiculed.

Secondly, it is violently opposed.

Thirdly, it is accepted as being self-evident." -- Schopenhauer