

MERCY DEFINITIONS

Hebrew/ Aramaic Definition (Old Testament)

2603 Chanan - to *bend* or stoop in kindness to an inferior; to favor, *bestow*; caus. to *implore* (i.e. move to favor by petition):- beseech, x fair, (be, find, shew) favour (-able), be (deal, give, grant, (gracious (-ly), intreat, (be) merciful, have (shew) mercy (on, upon), have pity upon, pray, make supplication, x very.

2617 Checed - *kindness*; by impl. (toward God) *piety*; rarely (by opposition) reproof, or (subj.) beauty;- favour, good deed(-liness,-ness), kindly, (loving-) kindness, merciful (kindness), mercy, pity, reproach, wicked thing.

3727 Kapporeth - a *lid* (used only of the cover of the sacred Ark):- mercy seat.

Greek Definition (New Testament)

1653 Eleeo - *compassionate* (by word or deed, spec., by divine grace):- have compassion, (pity on), have (obtain, receive, shew) mercy (on).

1654 Eleemosune - *compassionateness*, (as exercised toward the poor) *beneficence*, or (concr.) a benefaction:- alms (-deeds).

GRACE DEFINITIONS

Hebrew / Aramaic Definition (Old Testament)

2580 Chen - *graciousness*, i.e. subj. (*kindness, favor*) or obj. (*beauty*);- favour, grace (*ious*), pleasant, precious, [well-] favoured.

8467 Te chinnah - *graciousness*; caus. entreaty:- favour, grace, supplication.

Greek Definitions (New Testament)

5483 Charizomai - to grant as a *favor*, i.e. gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue:- deliver, (frankly) forgive, (freely) give, grant.

5484 Charin - through favor of, i.e. on account of:- be – (for) cause of, for sake, reproachfully.

5485 Charis - *graciousness* (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstr. or concr.; lit., fig., or spiritual; espec. the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; incl (*gratitude*):- acceptable, benefit , favor, gift, grace (-ious), joy, liberality, pleasure, thank(-s, worthy).

5486 Charisma - a (divine) *gratuity*, i.e. *deliverance* (from danger or passion); (spec.) a (spiritual) endowment, i.e. (subj.) relig. *qualification* , or (obj.) miraculous *faculty*:- (free) gift.

5487 Charitoo - to *grace*, i.e. indue with special honor:- make accepted, be highly favoured.

Preface

Grace:

New Testament, Ephesians 2:8: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”* Strong’s Greek Definition 5485 Charis... *“the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude, acceptable, benefit, favor, gift.”*

The root of the word is an interesting word. It comes from the word *Charis*, which is where we got our word *Charisma*. What is the difference between a charismatic Christian and all the other ones? Charismatic Christians believe that God has power and He’s going to do something. God has power and something is going to happen. An evangelical Christian says, “I believe in God and I believe in His power but nothing may happen or something may happen. I’m not sure but I believe in God. The root of that word is grace, as a gift, endowment, power, favor, bestowed for action. Grace: graciousness as in gratifying; spiritually especially the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life. God influences the heart of the person and then that influence is reflected in the life of the person. If grace is only unmerited favor, then it means that God shows you compassion since He withholds the punishment you deserve. While greater grace says: *because I am so kind to you, “I am going to effect you on the inside to the point that it will be reflected in your life.”*

Specifically, a spiritual endowment; what is an endowment? It’s, “I want to go to college” - Here’s the money, or in this case, here’s the power to go. What kind of power is it? It’s spiritual power. An endowment is what the government or your family leaves to you. You’re

going to inherit, and be able to use the endowment as your own. Receiving of a gift, that once you have it, you can apply it to your estate as you need. You are granted a gift of power. Grace means you receive a Religious qualification. In other words, He's going to qualify you to do what He wants you to do. Miraculous faculty is included in Grace as a free gift. We have been walking around in the Mercy of God, and He has been kind, but we have been using a definition that slaps God in the face, for it says, "I will take your Mercy but I don't want your gift." God is saying I'm not going to save you just to save you, I'm going to give you a gift so you can save yourself. I'm going to give you a gift so that you will be empowered to receive everything you need to build the Kingdom of God! You are saved by Grace through Faith, and because of your Faith in believing in this empowerment, you now have the ability to supernaturally do something about this planet, something about your passions, something about your problems, something about your family, your children, your body, you can do something about the devil. He's giving you the power to get it done! And what do we say? We're saying thank God I'm saved by His unmerited favor. You can have the Mercy of God and you can still be a prisoner to all of the work of the devil your whole life and never ever really receive the fullness of Grace. You are not fully saved by Grace unless you receive some endowment of power, a supernatural ability to do something - live in the sufficiency of Grace. You may make Heaven but you may have been in hell on earth. Without the full meaning of Grace your life could be one of poverty sickness, death, disease and defeat. You could get beat up your whole Christian life because you didn't know that; not only did God show you His Mercy but He gave you the ability to be

content and victorious. He didn't keep it to Himself, He gave it to you!!! His graciousness shows up on the inside if we get this revelation and let Him put it inside of us.

God says it's a special endowment, spiritual, a divine influence upon the heart, and then it has to be reflected in life. Acceptable, benefit, favor, gift, grace – I realized when I got called into ministry that my biggest problem wasn't with God and the ministry, my problem was, that since I was never taught about Grace, I figured - I didn't qualify. I was like, "Lord, you could use a donkey but you surely can't use me. I have done too many things in my life, there's no way you could use me." And the devil kept pounding that into my head! I felt so guilty, so unclean that I would say, "I'm not worthy to speak Your Word, sing Your Word, or do anything." I was disqualifying myself because I didn't know that God's Grace qualified and empowered me. *Whoever He cleansed, He empowered and qualified. If God qualifies you, you are sure enough qualified.*

All the related definitions:

Root: *Charo* – an action verb, to be cheerful, calmly happy, well off. As a salutation upon meetings or departing, be well, farewell, be glad, God's speed, greetings, hail or rejoice. So people who are going to church who are being somber and dead are not exercising their Grace. The Grace of God says to be happy, joyful, cheerful, rejoice; be happy! If we are in the Grace that God has given then the Body of Christ should not be in the grip of the spirit of depression. Fear runs rampant thru the pews as in the world. A few nights of holy laughter is not enough. We need the greater revelation. God's Grace makes us happy and blessed.

Charos Mia: to grant favor or rescue, to deliver, to forgive, to grant or to give freedom to. We're not subject

to, we're empowered to be free and be forgiven. AMEN.

Other definitions in Hebrew:

Grace: Kindness, and favor, or objective beauty favor, grace, pleasant, graciousness, precious. The Old Testament meaning does not include as much power as in the New Testament since Jesus had not yet given to men the power over death, the grave and the works of the devil. The Old provides favor expressed as Mercy, kindness and politeness;

When Noah found Grace in the sight of God, it meant that God was going to be kind to him and honor his position. But obviously, God didn't give him a bulldozer, power tools or the power to bind all of the evil folk that were mocking him! Noah had to build the Ark with his hands with the knowledge of God, but no supernatural power. He watched as God brought the animals and supernaturally worked out every detail. God was mercifully dealing with the evil that confronted Noah but under New Testament Grace, Noah would have been expected to take a more active role as the Gospels and the book of Acts shows.

There's a demon possessed man who confronts Jesus in the New Testament. Lord Jesus gets out of the boat, and here comes the demon possessed man. Well, a cage didn't go up in front of Jesus to protect Him from the demons, Jesus went over to the demon possessed man and cast the devils out of him! He says, "I have the power to deal with this, I'm commanding this legion of devils to leave this man." God protected Noah and did the work, but under the New Covenant - Mercy provides Grace, which gives the favored one power to act as an ambassador for the Kingdom, not just a recipient of Mercy.

The Old Testament 8467

Graciousness, intrigue, favor, supplication. Well, that's very different than the meaning in Greek. In the Greek, it's not supplication, it's empowerment or endowment of power. That comes from *techinoff*, kindness to an inferior. To favor or bestow, to implore, to favor by petition, to besiege, to show favor, able; give, grant, gracious, to intrigue, to be merciful, to show mercy upon.

Old Testament: have pity upon. What Christ made available to us was not centered upon Him having pity upon us; He was saying, "You can do what I did!" "Come on, join the team!" He is compassionate to the point of blessing us with great ability.

Grace As An Action Word

I am going to give you an example of what changed my life. I have in my hands, every account of the word Grace found in the New Testament, the King James Version. I am going to demonstrate how different the Bible reads by taking the other definitions of Grace over what we were raised on-unmerited favor. These are in the order that they appear.

Luke 2:40: *“And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.”*

Let’s read this using unmerited favor-----

*“And the child grew and became strong in spirit,
filled with wisdom; and the
Unmerited favor of God was upon him.”*

What does God - Jesus the Christ need unmerited favor for, if He’s without sin? His sinless life and pure heart surely qualified Him to walk into Heaven. So it can’t be that’s what it is. Let’s look at it this way: And the child grew in favor and Grace... gifts and power 5485: *“and the grace of God was upon Him.”* The favor of God, the kindness, the pardon, the ability to rescue, deliver, to grant, to take favor in, account of, spiritual, the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in life. What did Jesus have? He had the divine gratuity; God’s going to give a divine gratuity, deliverance from danger and passion; Jesus may have been tempted, but not so temped by His passions that He sinned. He didn’t go into the temple with a sword and chop up those guys, the money changers. He had divine ability of self control. It’s a reflection in life including gratitude, acceptable benefits, gifts, liberality, thanks, worthiness. He had a divine gratuity of deliverance from danger and passion, a spiritual endowment, religious qualifications - Jesus had a miraculous faculty.

“And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Was Jesus full of unmerited favor? No, come on now, He was full of Power and Truth. He was full of ability, spiritual ability, and a special endowment from God to do special works.

John 1:16: *“And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.”*

That would be, we received unmerited favor for unmerited favor. We received the favor of God with the endowment of power upon the favor of God, with even greater endowment to do even greater acts of power.

Romans 12:6: *“Having then gifts differing,”*

Well how did we get them?

“according to the grace that is given to us.”

So in other words, we have gifts according to the Grace, according to the endowment of power, according to the influence upon the heart to do great works, and to have it manifest in our lives. Different powers have been given to us according to what we are able to do and believe we received.

“That is given to us“

If it's just unmerited favor, then why does Grace include prophecy?

“Let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;“

Romans 15:15: *“Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace given to me of God.”*

Well, what is Paul saying? Paul is saying I am writing to you in boldness by the influence upon my heart has empowered me with such as surety that I am qualified, that I have the favor of God, and the power of God to demonstrate that power of God that I can write to you with

boldness because I'm standing in a bunch of Grace here! I'm overflowing with Grace so I can tell you where to get on and where to get off...

Here's another thought--

Unmerited favor comes upon you because God is kind to you; Grace is in a different place - where is it? *"In you."*

2 Corinthians 12:9: *"and He said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* Jesus, who went to the Cross, who has great power, sitting at the right hand of the Father; Jesus is saying, "... guess what Paul, when you're weak on the earth and you can't get it done, My unmerited favor guarantees you'll come to be with Me in Heaven, but in the mean time when you need some sure enough power on earth you can have access to My Kingdom Power. I'm imparting to you, -- GRACE, My Grace is sufficient for My strength is made perfect in your weakness, Paul, when you're weak, I'll give you some favor, some empowerment, some Grace, some ability, I will affect your heart so power can be manifested in life to change your world. I will empower you to do something about your situation. "

2 Corinthians 8:6: *"in so much that we desired Titus, that as he had begun so he would also finish in you the same grace also."*

He's saying I'm going to send you Titus who's got some power. And what's he coming for? He's coming to see to it that the power that he's got shows up in you.

2 Corinthians 8:7: *"Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."*

Realize who you are in Christ Jesus and what He has provided. Then you will go ahead and accomplish what you want in His Name, for He has put many desires into

your heart. We are walking around in this darkness getting beat up by the devil continually not realizing who we are in Christ Jesus. We're walking around in unmerited favor when God wants us to be walking around in His Grace and His empowerment, which unmerited favor has provided. Church, it's time, we've got to rise up and accept our inheritance in Christ Jesus. We keep getting out of the limo! He called us to live a limousine life and we keep getting out and hitchhiking and begging a ride. Lord have mercy!

Hebrews 13:9: *"For it is good that the heart be established by grace."*

Grace Obtained
Mercy and Grace Together
Gifts & Offices

"May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's; But the earth He has given to the children of men."

Psalms 115:15,16

Most books about **Grace** will leave you feeling humble. This book hopes to leave you feeling empowered. The traditionally accepted definition of **Grace** as unmerited favor causes us to feel gratitude for God's kindness to us. This makes us humble and feeling significantly smaller. Understanding **Grace** as God intended is not only humbling, but adds a greater degree of empowerment. **Grace** gives us an "I can do" "I will do" "I must do what I'm called to do!" attitude of power. *"My **Grace** is sufficient for you,"* Jesus told Paul. Jesus was saying, "I've empowered you with enough of Me to free yourself!" Paul was crying out as a victim and Jesus was telling him stop whining, I have made you a victor - a victorious overcomer!"

A demon possessed man runs into a church and causes a disturbance. Most churches would immediately call a cop. If a church understands **Grace**, they will know that they are the cops. We will explore how **Mercy** and **Grace** came to us; what they are and how to use them to the Glory of God.

God's plan for man is in the Scriptures. Every problem we might have is solved in the Word by Godly wisdom. **Mercy** is God's loving kindness to us, which is His name and His nature. When God shows **Mercy** to us, we

respond with gratitude because we know we don't deserve such favor. Why would He choose us to be blessed when our sin disqualifies us? 2 Peter 3:9 – *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* God's desire is that none would perish, so Jesus Christ was sent with the promise that of those who came to Him, none would be lost. Jesus Christ is the Instrument that puts away sin. We are unholy, unworthy, and often unwilling to be saved. Yet God does favor (choose) us to be blessed, delivered, rescued, set apart. We notice that God's economy in the universe reflects His wisdom. God wastes nothing - all energy is recycled. Water falls to the ground, is used, evaporates and returns to the sky and the cycle repeats. A tree dies, breaks down, becomes dirt, feeds insects and reproduces more trees. We see wisdom and economy in natural and supernatural matters as well. Consider the adage, “give a man a fish, he eats one day. Teach a man to fish, he eats a lifetime.” The adage should go on to say, “and feed others and teach others to fish.” Jesus wants us fed, but would prefer us becoming fishers of men. This is the higher goal of saving souls. Recycle “lost souls”; change, renovate, let die and get them re-born – nothing wasted.

The plan of salvation is wise in its design. Everyone saved becomes an evangelist to another. This is possible because each one can teach one. Jesus leads us to Himself as the source of salvation and by His example. One Man's death pays the sin debt for many; by their Faith millions are saved. If you will believe He paid your debt, then He did! God permits a righteousness by Faith for payment of sin. This is amazing - *“the Word became flesh and dwelt*

among us" (John 1:14). Not only does this work for salvation, but it works also for **Grace**. If we believe Jesus Christ provided **Grace** for us, then we will have it. If we have the wrong definition of **Grace** then we will appropriate something but it will not be the Grace Jesus died to give us. Then, when we teach others this Grace in error they will not walk in the fullness of what God had for us. So the Holy Spirit calls us to revisit our theology to make sure we are "rightly dividing the Word of God." We can lead people into salvation that is based in Faith, but has self imposed limits that shrink and distort the plan and original intent of the Lord. *Grace that is only unmerited favor leaves the end times church blessed, but not empowered to defeat or bind the enemy.* God's wisdom is for the power of the Cross - which is repentance and sanctification to be joined to the power of the grave - which is victory over the works of the enemy. And these gifts have passed down from generation of believers to generations of believers. This is God's wisdom: to make a way for many, who by righteousness alone would be lost but can be saved and empowered by *GRACE!*

Mercy and Grace make a way for us to use Faith to obtain what we cannot achieve by the flesh. We have salvation and Grace by Faith. If you do not agree, then you are still lost in your sin and your good works cannot save you. Ephesians 2:8 - "*Ye are saved by grace through faith.*" Romans 10:9: "*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved.*" John 3:16: "*Whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" Salvation is achieved by and through Faith. Grace is also received by Faith. What if we think Faith is wishing and hoping and that Mercy and Grace are only unmerited favor? This would be sad as we

wouldn't have the fullness of God's plan. God's favor offers complete dinners and we've been eating only the appetizer. All because we couldn't read the menu or didn't want to. The language of the Bible is Hebrew and Greek and the translations are right, but our use of them has been in accordance with our theological bias. Growing up in a mainline denomination, I never heard much about "power, spiritual gifts, healings, casting out demons," and what I did hear was negative. So how would you develop Faith for empowering Grace if all your information was incorrect, negative, doubtful and contrary to obtaining Grace which was improperly defined? God's plan includes the willful act of man coming in agreement with God's will, receiving His kindness and forgiveness (Mercy) and His favor to be endowed with power (Grace) so we can participate in His works.

Mother made cookies as an act of kindness (mercy-compassion) and as she leaves for shopping, she says, "the cookies are in the jar on the top shelf and I left the step stool next to the cupboard so you can climb up and get some!" (**Grace**). If we don't believe it, we cannot receive or acquire the cookies. In the same way, we can live and die believing God is good and yet not experience that goodness which comes by **Grace**. One little boy doesn't believe Mommy and never gets the cookies. The other finds the stool, climbs up and eats them all. Mercy is who God is, while **Grace** is what He does. Mercy = God makes cookies for us - Grace = God leaving a stool so we can get them ourselves!

When Jesus Christ was fulfilling His ministry, the people, including blind Bartimaeus, were crying out, "*have mercy on me!*" (Mark 10:47). "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*" (Luke 17:13 - ten men that were lepers). This call for

Mercy is focused upon, "Lord I'm passively waiting for you to be active!" "I'm the pitiful one in need of your pity, therefore, will you please do a merciful act for me; show me a Mercy of healing."

We shall discover that **Grace** is the favor of God to us which gives us gifts. These gifts are best described as **Graces**. To have the **Grace** of God is to have the gifts of God. **God's Mercy to us is that God favors us so much that He sets us apart (sanctifies) and gives us Grace (special powers, favor, abilities, endowments, blessings) as gifts.** Hallelujah! The **Graces** (gifts) given to us are so extensive, so many, and so exceptional that Jesus Christ wants us not to get puffed up. Notice in Luke 10:17-20 Jesus sends out 70, *"Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord even the demons are subject to us in Your name'. And He said to them, 'I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'"* Rejoice in your salvation but accept your authority over the power of the enemy. Thank God that you were blessed to be saved and that God's kindness also includes gifts (**graces**). Jesus wanted the disciples to recognize that Mercy provided the **Grace (power)**. We can do great things by **Graces**, but they were given to us and work through us. *Stay humble, stay sweet and give the devil defeat.*

How did Graces (Gifts) Come to Men?

Ephesians 4:7: *“But to each one of us **grace** was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”*

Christ’s gift was given Him by and through the Holy Spirit from the Father. The Word became flesh and, *“let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil. 2:5-8). This shows God becoming Man, setting aside His power in order to work and live as man. Therefore, He is only able to do the supernatural through the Holy Spirit. Only able to operate by the **Grace** (power and gifts) given to Him. Jesus Christ had Faith in the Father’s Mercy, received **Grace** to operate and bring glory to God. This is what we can and should do also. Have Faith to know that, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”* (Gal. 3:36), and *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”* (Gal. 4:4-7). It saddens the Father to see so many of His children acting and living as unadopted, unloved, cast out waifs when we are heirs - rightful sons and daughters.

In Ephesians 4:8, *“Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men’.”* Paul says, “gifts to men”. It has been revealed to Paul that Psalm 68:18, *“You have ascended on high, You have led*

captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell there” points to the Christ as receiving “gifts” – “empowerment” while on earth among men, which enabled the Father’s glory to be manifested. This made Grace possible for men as a blessed benefit; therefore, whom Jesus Christ takes captive He also gives graces – WOW!!! The promise is fulfilled in verse 19, *“Blessed be the Lord Who daily loads us with benefits.”* Therefore, Paul declares to us in Ephesians that whoever Jesus Christ takes, He also blesses.

This passage is also a description of what actually happened. Jesus Christ, after the Cross, took the sin of the world into hell. Satan sought to hold the Lamb of God in hell, but since Jesus Christ had no sin of His own, Satan had no legal right to hold Him. So the Son of Man, now manifested as the Son of God preached to the souls in hell, *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison”* (1 Peter 3:18-19), and also, *“For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit”* (1 Peter 4:6).

Jesus Christ ascended to the Father in Heaven. He presented Himself as the Sacrificial Lamb before the heavenly laver, altar, and basin, then entered the Holy of Holies. He deposited our sins in hell and was cleansed of our sins in Heaven. He preached by the Spirit to those dead in hell and then took with Him the spirits of those who strove for righteousness, but had not qualified to be in Heaven. The preaching of the Gospel would be necessary for both Jew and Gentile to accept Jesus Christ who now is revealed as the door to their salvation. A way was now

open to eternal paradise by the Blood of the Savior of all mankind. This also closed the only door of escape for those who rejected this cleansing sermon, while confirming that *"all men are without excuse"* (Romans 1:20) concerning the reality and truth of God. Those who embraced Jesus Christ in hell were those who shouted, "I know my Redeemer lives and now I see Him face to face and will go with Him." These spirits had done their best to live godly, but had not fully fulfilled the Law and the Ten Commandments or perfected their Faith as Enoch had. They were in hell, but not in torment. Jesus Christ tells us in Luke 16:19-31 of Abraham's Bosom where the righteous were stored. The rich man begs Father Abraham to warn his brothers to avoid the tormenting side of hell, *"for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment. 'Abraham said to him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'* And he said, No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent. But he said to him, *'if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead'.*" This shows that even Jesus Christ's preaching is rejected by the evil ones. So He deposits sin and removes the saved ones. He ascends to the Temple in Heaven and places His Blood upon the Mercy Seat, *"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions under the*

*first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb.9:11,12,14,15). Jesus Christ in Heaven opened the way to eternal inheritance. The promise to us is that as the Holy Spirit gave men and gifts to Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit will do the same for us. Under Old Testament Mercy, gifts of power were given to just a few – the prophet, priest, king, judges, but Grace is now given to **all** who will act upon Grace by Faith, by the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ demonstrated how to operate by and in this Grace, and paved the way for us to use it. What could only be attained by righteousness is now available to any believer through Faith in the gifts given to us by Jesus Christ.*

The gifts of **Graces** are given to the sanctified ones to assist them in doing the continuing will of the Father and the Son. If the Father and the Son are now seated in Heaven, then “we” the Church are the agents responsible to do warfare in the name of the Son against His enemies. *“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:12, 13, 19, 22, 23).*

The Better Promise

“Blessed are those who have not seen and believe!”

John 20:29

Hebrews 8:6: *“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”*

The Hebrews had a promise of God’s kindness, but it was attached to the requirements of the keeping of the Law. So the Old Testament reads as “the adventures of the Father’s Mercy.” The Gospels read as, “the merciful adventures of the Son demonstrating His **Graces**.” The Epistles are the acts of the apostles and believers having adventures in **Grace**. Jesus’ words to the seventy were, “Let’s not get on too much of a power trip!” Jesus’ words to the Church today would be, “Where’s the power trip?! satan should be falling from the sky!”

Let’s look at some Scripture that points to our covenant promise and authority under God’s **Grace**.

Luke 10:19: *“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”*

Luke 24:49: *“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”*

Acts 1:8: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Acts 2:38, 39: *“Then Peter said to them, repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

In the above verses, we usually think of the Holy Spirit as the gift, and He is, but it also means we receive the gifts that the Holy Spirit possesses. *“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover”* (Mark 16:17, 18). Powerful **Grace** has been given to the believer that will believe and act upon the promise.

If we believe the promise and speak it, our words will release great power. *“For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them”* (Mark 11:23, 24). *“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 18:18, 19). As a young man I had heard and even agreed with the arguments that say these gifts ended with the apostles. Then I came to realize that all the gifts of God are appropriated by Faith. My wife says, “Faith isn’t a fix but it is a formula.” We cannot wave the wand of Faith once and think, ‘well, that will do it.’ We have to learn how to operate the formula within the will and in the Name of our Lord for His glory and purpose. Many that don’t believe in the present authority of the believer have formed their thinking based on failed attempts to get what they needed or wanted. Our desperate prayers are seldom fueled by Faith, but are usually driven by fear. When these attempts fail to deliver

in the expected time frame, we become angry and search to explain and defend a theology that will support our feelings rather than the returning to try the formula again, and again, and again till it works. For a detailed debate on this subject, read Pastor Don's book, "Faith." The heart of the issue is - do you have Faith to believe and act upon the promises of the Holy Spirit or do you have a theological argument that eliminates the spiritual possibility? If we speak Faith the formula tells us that we will have the same power as the 1st Century Church, if not we will have great arguments that guarantee Grace-gift bankruptcy.

Great and precious promises.

I was reading a scientific magazine and I noticed in the magnification photos of germs, bacteria and viruses that most of them looked like evil, menacing demons. I thought, "In our blood there are demons, scorpions, serpents, dragons and all sort of evil characters that bring sickness to our bodies!" "We have a new Blood Covenant with Jesus Christ that covers the destruction of these invader cells and demons, and we must exercise our rights of protection." We must see the **Grace** given us to battle exterior demons, but also the interior ones that attack our body, soul and the Kingdom entrusted to us. Amen, Amen. The Blood Covenant of Christ establishes our position concerning seen and unseen enemies.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins' (Matt.26:26-28). Very few saints have a problem accepting this promise given by the Covenant. "Let us

*therefore come boldly to the throne of **grace**, that we may obtain **mercy** and find **grace** to help in time of need*" (Heb. 4:16). Many take this verse to mean - Jesus will be with us in suffering but will not do much else. *"For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins"* (Heb. 5:1). Notice that the promise is sacrifices for sins and gifts.

"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it" (Luke 16:16). The above Scripture refers to John the Baptist. He represents the Old Covenant - the Ten Commandments and the Laws of Moses, a time of the Mercy of God. Under the Old, John does no miracles even though Jesus calls John, "the greatest of those born of women." Jesus makes two powerful assertions: The least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John and secondly that the Kingdom is now advancing. Therefore He is declaring that because of His ministry there is a new dynamic. That new thing is that the power of God is now manifesting on earth. The Kingdom of God is at hand and GRACE is in the house. The Old Covenant which Christ fulfilled has made a way and we can step into the promises of:

Healing, Sanctification, Deliverance, Power over the works of the enemy, and Authority.

Jesus Christ establishes our healing covenant – *"by His stripes we are healed"* (Is. 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24). The breaking of the bread demonstrates this healing covenant. In 1 Cor. 11:29,30, Paul tells us many take the bread and cup not recognizing this Covenant and are therefore weak, sick and die prematurely.

The Blood Covenant for remission for sins has the power to cleanse, and for us to offer that washing to others.

This cleansing from sin delivers us so that we can now do works as representatives - ambassadors of the Kingdom. His might and sin free life has delivered us into the service of the Lord to fight as He would, using the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. *There is one catch -- we have to believe it to receive it.* Jesus, the Word of God, is then our High Priest who has paid the price of sin and the price of the gifts that He gives. He can then delegate them as He chooses and He has something for us all ---- AMEN.

Jesus Christ comes on really strong when He ascends to Heaven. *“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’. Amen”* (Matt. 28:18-20). Here He clearly delegates His power (**Graces**) to His disciples. Some say only to the early disciples or just the twelve. Yet, nowhere in Scripture does He ever say that or even imply it. Peoples’ fear or failures have created a false gospel that is self-serving and without merit. Pat Robertson on his video of 12 miracles shows a woman with multiple sclerosis calling a church to be prayed over for her healing. Upon arrival at the church, the pastor states that they had not seen a miracle at their church, but he was willing to pray the Bible way and seek one for this woman. After praying, he invited her to stand and walk. At first, with difficulty, then stronger and stronger she moved about and full restoration was gained. Today she rides a bike, walks and lives a full life. What if she had gone to a church that would not have taken a chance on the Bible? What if the pastor said, “We haven’t seen a miracle and we believe that age is over!”? *Man’s*

error can refuse God's grace. I have seen and participated in many miracles, as well as failures. Fear of failure should not deter us. In Nazareth Jesus faced failure, but that didn't change the truth. *"Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching"* (Mark 6:5-6). **Mercy** makes **Grace** available and **Grace** is power to change things. The **Grace** of God is available today and it still works no matter what someone else may say. The **Grace** and **Mercy** of God are the promise, the power and the presence of God. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forevermore. *"Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by **grace**, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them"* (Heb.13:9). Man puts limits on God, but if we are bold or at least obedient, we will see His glory. *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you"* (John 15:15-16). *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it"* (John 14:12-14). *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one,"* (underline for emphasis by author) *"as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

*And the glory which You gave Me, I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one" (John 17:20-22). These verses make it impossible for the **Graces** (gifts) to have ended 2000 years ago, for they include the believer in the assumed oneness of hearing and believing the words of the apostles. "Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'** " (John 20:29). **Grace** is given to us to do God's will and establish the Kingdom and the Church.*

*"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). With Faith we please God. God's favor is released to the faithful as a reward. If we reject **Grace**, there is a strong warning in Hebrews 10:28-29, "Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of **grace**." So we should be careful not to refuse to be empowered to use, honor and respect the Holy Spirit's power. After all, God's plan was to empower us to stand against the enemy until He comes. And so He equipped the Church with gifts (**Graces**) to operate as the Kingdom of God on earth.*

Gifts, Offices, Ministries

Let's visit Ephesians 4:11 again, where Jesus Christ gave gifts to men, *"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."* These offices are better understood as expressions of or lists of gifts - powers - **Graces**. When we say someone is a

judge, we are stating his office, but more importantly, we are describing his talents, education, authority, limitations and powers. And so it is with the **Graces** God has given to men. The Church of Jesus Christ needs men in these offices to exercise certain powers. *“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues”*

These **Graces** (powers) are described in 1Cor.12:8-11:

1. Word of Wisdom
2. Word of Knowledge
3. Faith (special for work)
4. Gifts of Healings
5. Working of Miracles
6. Prophecy
7. Discerning of spirits
8. Tongues (as a sign of the inner work of the Holy Spirit or as prophecy)
9. Interpretation of Tongues (as a sign and as prophetic message)

These nine gifts are in the Body of believers working in and through the believers as God wills. As God works by the Holy Spirit in the believers, we come to observe that a person may be used frequently in a special way with certain gifts. This then is called an “office” that the person stands in. Therefore, if a gift comes upon a person just once or twice, we see that the Spirit has used them but not necessarily placed them into that office.

Next we will discuss what is called the five-fold ministry. The **apostle** is a “called out one - a sent one” who plants and oversees churches, and should operate in all of the nine gifts and stand in all five offices. The **prophet** should operate in the verbal gifts - word of

wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, tongues and interpretation. Prophets are to speak what God has said, is saying and will say. They foretell and forth tell what God is saying and doing. They minister to the churches, but are not usually overseers of churches, though their gift is used to guide churches.

Teachers are instructors or revealers of God's message and intents. They must be effective as examples and demonstrators of all the Holy Spirit wishes to teach. The **Grace** of God should be upon them to use all of the gifts to equip the saints. The adage, "Those who can't teach," cannot, must not be applied here, as the teacher must be teaching by the power and Grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore there is a supernatural impartation that enables the Holy Spirit teacher to reveal and demonstrate as needed.

The **pastor** should be apt to teach as Paul says, but his main function is to shepherd the sheep. He loves, protects and covers the flock as an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ. God's **Grace** should be upon him to operate the gifts (**Graces**) of administration, helps, discerning of spirits and wisdom. The pastor must hear from God or have wisdom to find those who will hear from God on behalf of the flock. The pastor's strongest Grace is his ability to love.

The **evangelist** works to enlarge the body. So he works closely with pastors and often looks like a pastor who can't hold still. He must rely upon **Grace** to do his job. Jesus Christ preached the Gospel and then demonstrated that Gospel by signs and wonders following. Sometimes the sign preceded the preaching, but both were in manifestation. The evangelist who does not use gifts as a cornerstone of his ministry is depending upon the gift of prophecy, specifically forth telling - preaching to win souls.

The New Testament evangelist uses healing, miracles, etc., to get peoples' attention in order to reach them with the "Good News." Consider Philip the evangelist in Samaria and Jesus Christ throughout His ministry. The Church today is out of order for the most part. We take the office of the pastor, choose one man or woman and expect them to do it all. Raise money, administrate, sing, organize, evangelize, heal, preach, raise the dead (in the pew and out), do the teen and kid ministries, travel but stay home, and offer his wife as part of the deal. So we have created a church that only Jesus could lead. The right structure is strong elders led by the gifts, with a pastor to love the sheep and someone gifted as an administrator to coordinate activities. Deacons should handle the mini-wars of feedings and cleaning. If the local church lacks people in the various offices, then the prophets or evangelist, etc. would be called upon as needed. The church is not to be a democracy of boards and panels where the money interests dominate.

***The Grace of God is to be sought at every turn
and those who know how to press in by prayer
and hear the voice of the Spirit
and operate by these gifts are to lead.***

Paul encouraged us to desire the best gifts: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is **love**" (1 Cor. 13:13). The **Graces** (empowering gifts) come to us by Faith, and Faith operates by love. All of this is so that the Body can be equipped for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12). Verse 16 sums it all up: "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Don't kid

yourself - if God's in it, He causes growth. First, He grows the church internally, then externally; but there is growth or a season of building up to prepare for growth. In all things, **love is never sacrificed**.

These are the promises to us: Jesus Christ would build His church. He would give **Grace** to empower us to do the ministry as He did it. His divine influence upon our hearts would cause us to demonstrate our power to conquer the devil and equip more saints to do the same until He comes; an Amen goes right there!

The Plan of Salvation in Isaiah 61

The plan of salvation is that Jesus Christ by Mercy paid for our sin and liberty. We can receive His Mercy and refuse to receive His liberating power. Notice that in Isaiah 61, Jesus' premier statement of purpose and plan is mostly about the **Graces** given to us who believe His message. Below we italicize *Mercies* and we underline the **Graces**. Notice that Mercy is extended from verses 1 to 3, then **Grace** is given to empower the saints so that by their efforts, God can receive glory. Verse 8 shows that God gives direction and power to the saints based upon this New Covenant. Verses 10 and 11 close the plan as Mercy and **Grace** culminate in praise to God. Amen. As you read Isaiah 61, notice that Mercy is what the Father does *for* us, and Grace is what He does *through* us.

Isaiah 61:1-11: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach *good tidings to the poor*; He has sent Me to *heal the broken hearted*, to proclaim *liberty to the captives*, and the *opening of the prison to those who are bound*; 2) to proclaim the *acceptable year of the Lord*, and the day of vengeance of our God; to *comfort all who mourn*, 3) to *console those who mourn in Zion*, to give

them *beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.* 4) And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. 5) *Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.* 6) But you shall be named the priests of the Lord, they shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast. 7) Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. 8) For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; *I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant.* 9) *Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the Lord has blessed.* 10) I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for *He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* 11) For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”

Below are divine sayings that help me to keep going:

*Your unction to function is His divine design.

*It's His power - you are conduit wire.

*You don't know, so ask.

*God wants to do the supernatural.

*Leave Him room to work.

*Don't pressure.

*No anointing-stay humble.

Under anointing-be bold, go beyond your flesh!

*Think carte blanche, Visa, American Express,
it's all been paid.

**"Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep?*

Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Then He said to the man, 'stretch out your hand' and he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other." (Matt.12:12-13) Don't let the odds scare you - "nothing ventured, nothing gained".

*Remember the laws of Faith - Jesus Christ shows up by agreement of Faith, and for the glory.

*Be quick to repent so God can bless and use you.

*God is looking to bless me.

*Ask, "Is that my ego or the Holy Spirit?"

*If you're afraid to act out to get a miracle, then it's not a devil trying to stop your miracle, it's probably you.

*Never think, "What will I do if it doesn't work?"

Think and believe it will work

and determine to give God the glory.

***Grace** is a gift given to you to rock the devil's world.

*It came like a bolt of lightning to my mind.

*Don't ever question your salvation.

*You are not worthy, so what!?

*The basis on which God's power operates is favor and on Jesus Christ's status, not yours.

- *You are holy because He set you apart
and chooses to use you.
- *He will show up because He wants to.
- *Somebody better have Faith besides the Holy Spirit.
- *Always pray, "Lord, help my unbelief".
- ***Grace** is measured to you often on the basis of
"let it be unto you as your faith".
- *That applies to the patient as well as the doctor.
- *If you pray for the sick, God will heal them
on your Faith alone.
- *Their lack of Faith may cause the healing to be lost,
but they may learn how to hold on.
- *Slow healing often outlasts instant ones.
- *I saw satan falling from Heaven because the saints
stepped into and operated by the **Grace** given them.

Below are a few comments from a few Early Church fathers. After the Apostles, a belief in power, gifts and grace for service was still believed in. Consider these as further proof that the Church would need Grace as empowerment in the works of salvation.

Early Christian Beliefs

He confers His free gifts upon those who should [receive them]. *Irenaeus* (c. 180, E/W),

Rightly, then, to those who have believed and obey, grace will abound beyond measure. *Clement of Alexandria*. (c. 195, E), 2.196.

This is what it means to “be drawn by the Father” : It means to become worthy to receive the power of grace from God, so as to run without hindrance. *Clement of Alexandria* (c.195, E), 2.435.

Or perhaps the free will that is in us, by reaching the knowledge of the good, leaps and bounds over the barriers- as gymnasts say. Either way, it is not without eminent grace that the soul is winged, soars, and is raised above the higher spheres. *Clement of Alexandria* (c.195, E), 2.464.

The apostle exhorts, “your faith should not be in the wisdom of men,” who profess to persuade, “but in the power of God,” who alone is able to save without proofs but by mere faith. *Clement of Alexandria* (c.195, E), 2.491.

For it follows that there is one unchangeable gift of

salvation given by one God, through one Lord, benefiting in many ways. *Clement of Alexandria* (c.195, E), 2.504.

We make petition, then, that He supply us with the substance of His will and the capacity to do it- so that we may be saved both in the heavens and on earth. For the sum of His will is the salvation of those whom He has adopted. *Tertullian* (c. 198, W), 3.682.

'It was prophesied that, after the ascent of Christ to heaven, He would deliver us from error and give us gifts...Accordingly, we...have received gifts from Christ.' *Justin Martyr* (c. 160, E), 1.214.

'It was necessary that such gifts would cease from you (Jews) and...would again, as had been predicted, become gifts which, from the grace of His Spirit's power, He would impart to those who believe in Him, according as He deems each man worthy of it...Now, it is possible to see among us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God.' *Justin Martyr* (c. 160, E) 1.243.

'What is nobler than to tread under foot the gods of the nations, to exorcise evil spirits, to perform cures, to seek divine revelations, and to live to God? These are the pleasures - these are the spectacles - that befit Christian men.' *Tertullian* (c. 197, W), 3.91.

'The name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, expel demons, and also take away diseases. Furthermore, it produces a marvelous meekness of spirit and a complete change of character.' *Origen* (c. 248, E) 4.427.

'The Jews no longer have prophets or miracles. Yet, traces of those things are still found among Christians to a considerable extent. Some of these miracles are more remarkable than any that existed among the Jews. I have witnessed these myself.' *Origen (c. 248, E) 4.433.*

Paul's Thorn in The Flesh

Ephesians 6:12: *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*

Numbers 33:51-55: *"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess. And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone's inheritance shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and ***thorns** in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell."*

Joshua 23:13: *"know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and ***thorns** in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which ***author's emphasis***

the Lord your God has given you."

Judges 2:3: *"Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be ***thorns** in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'"*

Psalm 106:34-42: *"they did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, but they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works; they served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, and they played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, and those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand."*

The above verses point to a few usages of the word "thorn", used as an idiom to describe something that is a spiritual irritant that can be manifest in the social, political or personal life of the children of God. God uses the thorn in these cases to demonstrate what would happen when the attack of satan falls full upon His children. In the above examples, God provided clear instructions as to what they were to do to obtain absolute victory. In none of these cases is there a reference to their "thorn in the side" being a physical illness or disability of any kind, nor is it a curse sent by God. Their circumstances were created by either inaction or disobedience, both of which resulted in the adversary gaining the upper hand over God's people.

2 Corinthians 12:7: *"And lest I should be exalted above ***author's emphasis***

*measure by the abundance of the revelations, a ***thorn** in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure."*

This passage of Scripture has been abused and misused by scholars throughout the time of the Gospels. This passage has been used improperly. I have been told that the thorn in Paul's flesh was sickness from which he never recovered; some kind of disease and never got cured. I heard it told that, since he never married, Paul's thorn in the flesh was that he was a homosexual and struggled with lusty desires. I heard that Paul struggled with an eye disease and must have been going blind and never got healed. Paul tells us exactly what this "thorn in the flesh" is. It's neither sickness nor disease, and it's not a perverted flesh problem. Paul's thorn in the flesh is "*a messenger of satan to buffet (torment) him*" (2 Cor. 12:7). Paul uses the term in the same manner as the Old Testament Scriptures. There is no connection to illness but a struggle with an adversary. He was saying he has the Mercy of God, and that he is under the same Mercy that was available in the Old Testament. He is under the covering of God's loving kindness. But every time he went to preach the Gospel in a city, some demon influenced Jews showed up and "buffeted" the Gospel. These Jews were motivated by a supernatural satanic messenger that persisted in influencing people against Paul. They arrested him and threw him in jail and beat him with rods. They lied to the Gentiles and told them that he (Paul) was saying one thing when he was saying another. The devils came and got the good Jewish people to call him all kinds of names and speak lies about him. satan is able to get people's ears and attention, and turn them against Paul. When Paul is trying

**author's emphasis*

to plant the Gospel, win the Jews and establish the Church, the devil is getting people stirred up to come against him. Paul prays and tells God to get these demons and devil-influenced people away from him, because they are hindering his ministry, causing him personal torment. 2 Corinthians 12:8&9: *“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”*” Paul is praying, ‘Lord, do something about the devil’. So God says, *“My grace is sufficient for you”*. Paul prays a second time and says, ‘Lord, they followed me to Macedonia and are causing trouble, please do something about the devil’. So God says, *“My grace is sufficient for you”*. Paul prays a third time and tells Him that satan is tormenting him. *“Please do something about this devil.”* And God says, *“My grace is sufficient for you”*.

Pride, conceit, self-elevation and boasting are all sins that open the door for attack – counterattack. Paul knows this and desires not to be guilty of these sins and in 2 Corinthians 12: verses 1, 4, 5 and 6, tells us as humbly as he can that God exalted him above everybody else with a trip to Heaven and gave him special revelations. Yet, so that Paul doesn’t get too conceited, God permitted satan’s messenger to keep him humble. Then the Bible translators do us a great disservice (as they did with “power” exsousia vs. dunamis.) with a non-specific translation of a word that had multiple meanings. For example, “infirmity” in the Greek 769 *“astheneo”* is a word meaning without strength, feeble. It can be used for weakness in body or mind. If we use infirmities to only mean physical sickness then the passage makes little sense and displays Paul as a masochist. Verse 5 *“yet of myself I will not boast, except in my sickness.”* V. 9 *“Therefore more gladly I will rather boast in my*

sickness" and verse 10 "Therefore I take pleasure in sickness." At the end of verse 10 we get the meaning that Paul is hoping to communicate, "For when I am weak then I am strong." He is not suffering physical illness for the sake of Christ, but the work of the devil against him results at times in persecution, strife and trouble that may end in temporary illnesses. Paul is referring to weakness and a lack of strength that all men face when we try to do spiritual warfare without the aid of the Holy Spirit and the Captain of the Host, Jesus Christ. When we acknowledge our need for divine help and our human frailty and then cry out to God, we become strong by His aid. We are no match for demons without God's help. Paul knows that a humble and contrite heart brings Mercy, and Faith in Grace brings power. His letter is being written to tell the Corinthian Church that he has achieved apostle status by revelation, training, and suffering for the cause of Christ. Only a twist of Scripture can make sickness suffering for the cause of Christ. How we endure sickness can demonstrate character and Christ-like attributes such as love, peace, etc. (Galatians 5:26) "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." Yet we do not get sick to demonstrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostles, disciples, etc. would all have gone on record as sick folk, not as healers and deliverers. Sickness must be fought as it is sister to death and it weakens God's army and strengthens the enemy. How can we defend the sickly if we are sickly? Let us not overlook Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. Note that: "perseverance, signs and wonders and mighty deeds." Let us fight against sickness with perseverance, not giving up or giving in and,

unless we choose to go home to Jesus Christ, we will become a sign and a wonder. For this to be so, we must by Faith play an active part in our healing, whether in body or in mind. Many healings occur just on the basis of Mercy, especially for the unlearned. Since Jesus has conquered sin and death we must come into agreement with His Blood, which declares victory over the works of the devil. Acts 10:38: *"how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."* When we embrace that truth, we are agreeing that Jesus Christ's Grace is sufficient. Jesus Christ's Word is my word. His Truth, my Truth, His Power by Faith in Grace is mine. This is what Paul is trying to tell Corinth. "I'm not much baby, but in Jesus Christ, I am more than you can handle for God's mercy has blessed me with GRACE." Paul had to learn this as he came from Old Testament Mercy through a trial that almost broke him down before he could grasp what the Lord was saying.

Mercy

Paul is thinking he is under the dispensation of Mercy. He's thinking that the category of difficulty he is having is covered by Mercy (Psalm 25:5,6). But God is saying, 'Yes, I am merciful and kind and have given you (Paul) great favor and power to act'. Paul thinks, 'yes, God is merciful but how come God has not dealt with the devil for me?' Under the Old Covenant God's Mercy meant God's servants were helpless in spiritual warfare, and they had to pray that God would sovereignly act. Daniel said nothing to the lions, he just sat and God showed Mercy by defending him (shutting the lions' mouths). Prophet Jeremiah asked God to open his servant's eyes so he could

see the angelic host that God had mercifully sent to protect. Daniel, Jeremiah, the kings and the Israelites were all guilty of sin, but God was merciful to save. Paul was thinking in that same Old Testament way. "God must do something since I am powerless", but Jesus Christ was thinking New Testament – "I have had mercy (favor and kindness) on you and I gave you exousia authority and dunamis dynamite power so go blow up the tormenting spirit and cast him out." Let's break down 2 Cor. 12:8&9 – "*Concerning this*" (satanic messenger) "*I pleaded*" (prayed) "*with the Lord three times that it*" (satanic messenger) "*might depart*" (go away from me). "*My grace*" (empowerment) "*is sufficient for you (is all you need), for My strength*" (dunamis – dynamite power) "*is made perfect in weakness*" (when you cannot get something done in your own power, then plug into My power by Faith and we'll get it done).

Without Mercy we don't get anywhere. We are in jail locked behind bars, and the devil can come and torment us at anytime he wants to. God's Mercy comes to the jail and says, "Listen, I'm paying his bail, loose him from this place. My Mercy and loving kindness is releasing him from this jail. It is putting an end to his struggle in this present difficulty." But Grace is the believer's ability to walk out of the jail, restored and changed, and on the way out bind up the jailer and throw him in a locked cell! Amen!

The church is pounded into submission by wrong thinking. Your bail has been paid and you're free to go but you won't walk out of the prison. The gates are open but you won't walk out because you are still thinking that the Grace that has been given to you is Mercy. You are saying, "Thank You, Lord for Your loving kindness, but I have to stay in this situation that I'm in. I still have to suffer through this thing." God's Grace is sufficient for you.

Walk free from the prison, take a hold of your life, situations, and your difficulties, and walk out a free man. God favors you over the adversary. Ephesians 2:4-7: *“But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly place in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* Please notice something very important about salvation in the above verses. Mercy and love make salvation available but Grace (*“You have been saved by Grace”*) is the active force that acquires salvation. Our empowerment to act out our Faith is our achievement as we are the manifestation of His kindness.

God’s kindness makes God’s Grace available to us. He chooses to bless and empower us to use His Name, power and resources. God is saying that Grace has been given to us because of His Mercy. Mercy put us in position to get Grace and now we can declare that it is Grace that saved us. It saved us because it empowered us. Even though Jesus went to the Cross and rose from the dead, no one would get saved just because of that. You get saved because you accept that truth by Faith, and use the power to acquire its benefits. The sons of God are identified by their ability to follow the Son of God. Romans 8:14 – *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”* God sends a life boat to save you. If you don’t climb onto it, you’ll drown. His act has value by your response to it. Salvation is a gift that must be taken by Faith or Jesus would have spilled His Blood for nothing.

You can say thank You for His loving kindness, but you have to go forward and take His Grace, because His Grace

is the ability to live the Christian life. His Grace is the ability to stand against the devil and take hold of that which the devil took from you. His Grace is the ability to break the chains off your life and turn into the giant killer that God calls you to be – a child of God and a tower of strength and determination. You have to receive it. You have to say thank You for the Mercy and take the Grace to do something with the power that you have. The Blood of Christ has paid for your sin; it covers you and makes you acceptable. Once you take the Blood, Mercy and Grace, nothing will stop you. Our salvation journey begins with the blood of Jesus Christ which was made available by God's mercy. God was merciful to Paul and showed him the revelation of the Christ, the Cross and the Blood, but Paul will need more than these to become a participant in the fullness of Glory. God's promise is Jesus Christ in us the hope of Glory. He wants us to go from glory to glory. This means from manifestation to more manifestation, from victory to victories, from heavenliness to greater heavenliness, from power to more power, from mere man to gods. (John 10:34 & 35, Psalm 82:6) The Apostle Paul stands on the glory list along with Peter, John, and many other deacons – Stephen, Phillip, Prochorus, and disciples, laymen like Ananias. An examination of the early church 100-400 AD shows ongoing glory with signs and wonders. Only Paul's thorn is used to argue that he was sick and did not get delivered, proving or questioning whether healing is for us today and that Grace is sufficient for suffering but not for deliverance. So let's look closer at Paul's thorn in the battle zone.

Grace Delivers Paul

“Jesus came that we might have life more abundantly”
(John 10:10).

So Jesus Christ told His disciples in John 15:15: *“No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends”*. This change in status for the New Testament believer means we are empowered to act in our own behalf, since as we abide in Jesus Christ we know the will of the Father and act to bring Him glory. So we have been endowed with power from on high (Mark 16:15-17): *“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these sign will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues”*. ***The believer first becomes a follower, then a disciple, then a servant, then a friend.*** A friend acts in cooperation with and along side his friends, for he knows (John 15:15): *“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you”*. Paul needed these words, especially John 15:14: *“You are my friends if you do whatever I command you”*. So Paul was being beat up by one of satan’s messengers; one that he was told to command and give no place to. Paul was calling for Mercy but had been given so-o-o much Mercy that it included God’s sufficient Grace. Fortunately, Paul finally got the message and declared, *“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra – what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”* 2 Timothy 3:10, 11 and Romans 8:37: *“Yet in all things we are more than conquerors*

through Him who loved us". 2 Cor. 10:4: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds". These revelations are born out of Paul acting upon the Grace given to him. After this we see him preaching and performing with great power.

Jesus Christ had told Paul he would suffer in Acts 9 when Saul is converted to become Paul, God's chosen vessel. However, in Acts 9:15-16 the word suffer is *Penthō* – to experience a sensation or impression (usually painful) feel passion, suffer, vex. (Strong's 3558). Jesus Christ was not telling Paul he'd have to suffer with a cold, arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, etc. He was saying you will be persecuted "for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16, King James). The source of these sufferings are demonically influenced people who are being used to thwart the Gospel. Paul in his spiritual immaturity wants smooth sailing, a victorious, non-combatant ministry. Yet, as Jesus Christ was faced with opposition, so will each disciple who follows Christ's teachings. Paul prays three times and then gets the message: Faith is the victory and you are empowered to do battle and joyfully accept the peace that passes understanding when you are in the midst of trials. The proof of our Faith is often found in the opposition we face. *"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you...."* (Luke 6:26, King James). Demonic opposition is to be fought with spiritual power – God favors us and gives us charis – miraculous faculties to wage war knowing by Faith "His Grace is sufficient!" We can follow this principle in Paul. Acts 9:22 *"But Saul (Paul) increased the more in strength"*, but by verse 23, *"The Jews counsel to kill him"*. By verse 29 even the Greeks want to kill him. By Acts 13 Paul's getting bolder. He faces down the sorcerer Elymas and strikes him with blindness. These events occurred from Antioch to

Salamis Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia. Acts 13:44 Paul preaches with great boldness, by verse 45 the Jews are “filled with envy” and attack Paul as a blasphemer. Verse 50, the Jews stirred up the devout women and men, and Paul and Barnabas are expelled from town. The messenger sent to buffet is very busy following Paul wherever he is sent.

Acts 14 we see Paul at Iconium, verse 2, *“unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds turn evil against the brethren”*. Now this sure looks like a satanic messenger’s work. But, by now Paul’s response is verse 3, *“speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands”*. Notice that grace results in manifested “signs and wonders”. This is followed by verse 5, “an assault” and plot to stone them. They, therefore fled to Lystra, Derbe in Lycaoniam (remember these places from 2 Tim. 3:10). Here they do the healing of a cripple, for which the Jews persuade the people to grab Paul and stone him (Acts 14:19 & 20). These devils led these Jews to further “torment” Paul. Is it possible that Paul’s trip to Heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 occurs as a result of actual or near physical death from one of these attacks? The believers appear to pray for Paul, and he is restored to wholeness. These believers are now exercising the Grace that’s been given to them. Paul is left for dead, but Grace... but GRACE raises him up for a return engagement to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Verse 22 says it all: *“strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”*.

By Acts 16 Paul is casting out demons and singing in prison, converting jailers, taking on magistrates. Battles

continue but Paul is much more bold and powerful, and by Chapter 18 the Lord confirms and encourages Paul's acts of Grace. Acts 18:9&10: *"Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."* Paul has gone through the progression of crying for Mercy to acting in Grace. At the end of his ministry, while a prisoner in Rome, he writes to beloved Timothy (2 Timothy 3:10-12). He confirms that we will encounter persecution and trials but there is no mention of being defeated by sickness. Turmoil will come, but suffering is not glorified except for the cause of Christ.

Was Grace sufficient? Was Paul delivered? His testimony should be enough proof for us; 2 Timothy 3, verses 10&11 – *"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me."* I conclude the thorn was satan's messengers and persecution. The relief was Grace – super-charged favor that gave gifts, strength, patience, and perseverance. Paul's experience is available to us all for God's mercy is great and provides great Grace.

Great Mercy leads to Great Grace.

Great Grace demonstrates great power.

God's Mercy is unmerited favor. Mercy says, "I will cover over your sin." Grace says, "Since I favor you I will equip you." So when you go around giving people the definition that Grace is just unmerited favor, it's too small, too limited, too Old Testament.

***Mercy put Jesus on the Cross, but it is Grace that
Raised Him from the Tomb to deliver to us power.***

In Mercy He took the needy and unworthy and said, "I

will cover your sins and be kind to you". Jesus died and rose again to give us *Grace* to empower us.

Grace was given to us to equip us.

Grace is God's blessing to us because He favors us.

Unmerited favor is Mercy because Mercy is: we are unworthy and deserve death, but we are allowed to live. Grace is: He will *equip* us, because He chooses to favor (have great Mercy upon) us. Jesus went to the cross and paid for our sins, showing us Mercy, and then Jesus said to the Father, "Throw in Grace also!" Under Mercy, God has to keep helping us; we won't be able to help ourselves. God's Mercy helps the lowly servant while Grace permits the servant to become a co-laborer, a friend. Jesus changed the disciple-servant status when He said, "*Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*" A friend should know his rights and importance to the team. There is a mutual sharing of power and a mutual commitment to self-sacrifice when we move from disciple-servant to friend.

We have been taught that Grace is unmerited favor. Well, what do you think Mercy is, if Mercy is God's kindness to the needy and unworthy? Are we not using the same definition for Mercy and Grace? There must be something that we are not understanding. Both are equally important and desperately needed but different in operation. Mercy is God doing for us and Grace is God doing through us.

How can Paul say, "Lord, do something about the

devil”, and God not do anything? God was saying to Paul and to us today, “When I rose from the dead I released Grace to you, I empowered you with the Holy Spirit, and My Grace is sufficient for you.”

Ways to warfare

Using the Grace that is given to us

Say to the devil “In the Name of Jesus, get thee behind me, you are under my feet’.” “Stop and vacate, I bind you, and limit your activity.” “I command you to release the prisoner, remove your symptom and sickness.” “I break your power over addiction, loose your chains, send you where the angels and Holy Spirit command.” “I declare a jubilee – prisoners go free – debts paid in Jesus Christ’s Name.” “I silence your voice and influence.” “I send confusion into the enemy’s camp.” These declarations magnify blessings and break curses.

Workers of sin, sorcerers, and demon allies were often assailed by faithful believers – consider Peter and John Acts 8:18-23. They confront Simon the sorcerer with his sin and declare his doom and separation from the saints by his wrong thinking.

The saint who understands that God has empowered him can wield the power of the name and person of Jesus Christ by faith. All the above commands must be spoken in faith, not wishing and hoping but in knowing his position by Grace. Fear has no place for it short circuits power. Therefore, demons seek to increase fear and doubt. The saint needs also to have his personal sins forgiven, for satan is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). Guilt from sin will result in satan’s attack to cancel the saint’s authority. Pride, gluttony, lust or weakness in the flesh all weaken protection power. Therefore Jesus Christ lived a fasted life – self-controlled and yielded to the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of fasting is to loosen the bonds of the captive by strengthening the saint (Isaiah 58). If satan has no accusation then his power must yield to a friend of God!!! This is our awesome responsibility and a great blessing to use our faith to enter into His Grace. To use our ability to tap into and release God's awesome, fearless Power.

Paul's thorn resulted in a deeper understanding of living in the power of God. In life and in death he was a great sinner who became an even greater saint. Truly a thorn in the side of the devil. Amen. Amen.

Grace is about God pouring out a blessing upon us so great that we can't contain it. *Grace* is about God providing for you something that you can't access on your own. *Grace* is about the ability to not only be forgiven but to do something about the fact that you've been sanctified and favored. *Grace* is about the ability to use the power that Christ made available on the Cross through His resurrection. *Mercy* forgave you, but *Grace* empowered you, that you can walk sanctified, holy, righteous and powerfully. You are a devil defeater. *Grace* is the power of God given to you that you can take hold of your situation and change it. "*My grace is sufficient for you.*" For in your weakness you are strong in His might.

***Our lack of ability causes us to depend upon
the favor that Jesus provides – Grace.***

In the Greek there are two words for power– exousia is authority – as a badge and a uniform. While Grace is dunamis – dynamite power to do – ability as a weapon, a canon, a gun. Therefore, like Mercy, being born again is an expression of exousia – authority, while the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the endowment of power – dunamis – grace. We see this expressed in John 1:12 – "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right (exousia) to become children of*

God,...” Compare this to Acts 1:8 – *“But you shall receive power (dunamis) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;”*. Unfortunately the King James Version missed this distinction and used the word “power” in both of the passages. (John 1:12 and Acts 1:18) The English use of “power” does not reflect the true meaning of what the Holy Spirit wants us to know. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the giving of a gun (dynamite power) to people who already have the badge and uniform (the rights - exousia) of being born-again.

Evidence that a person has received this dunamis power is the ability to Speak in Tongues. Acceptance of Grace brings the awareness that the dynamite power (the gun) resides within us and that we can draw and shoot. Exercising that power by speaking in Tongues aids us and strengthens our spirit for warfare. Here are the main Scriptures on this subject, concerning tongues: Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 said, (verse 2) *“For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.”* (verse 4) *“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.”* (verse 5) *“I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is grater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.”* (verse 13-15) *“Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”* (verse 18) *I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;”* (verse 39) *“Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.”*

To summarize: 1. Tongues is a sign that power has been received. 2. By Faith we speak directly to God. 3. We have no comprehension unless there is an understanding given supernaturally – an interpretation. 4. Interpretation is a form of prophesy to edify and build up the church. 5. Without interpretation, tongues edifies only the individual spirit. 6. Though unfruitful to the natural man, praying in tongues does great spiritual benefit. 7. Desire to prophesy with or without tongues and don't stop others from speaking.

In science we prove a truth by taking it to the lab, set up an experiment, measure the result, and compare the experiential data. The church has wasted power and Grace by debate rather than application. The Gospel would have died due to disobedience and debate if the apostles had done what we do today. They were instructed to stay in Jerusalem until what was promised happened (Acts 1:4&5). They were waiting in Faith and obedience, not in debate. No one preached a sermon such as, "We can't be empowered since that's only for kings, priests and prophets of the Old Testament." No one asked the women or the young to leave as if they could not be empowered. No, they just believed to receive and kept singing and praising God till He did what He wanted to do. For years we have cried out for Mercy and debated gifts, Tongues and Graces. We have wandered from the upper room out into "Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth" without our guns.

God's power is released in Grace. If you will accept God's Grace, you can do great things with it. But if you won't accept it then, yes, you will have His lovingkindness, but suffer with tormenting spirits and languish under demonically influenced illnesses. As Paul says, many are

ill and die (sleep) prematurely because they “do not discern the body and the blood” (1 Corinthians 11:29,30). He is declaring that communion is a picture of the Covenant we have received by Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53) “...and by His stripes we were healed.” (2 Peter 2:24). The gifts of Jesus Christ include a covenant of healing. This covenant made Grace available to believe by Faith that Jesus Christ paid for our healing, and in His Name we can free others from premature death and sickness. All of this Mercy has provided while Grace empowers, and Faith acts it out to bring Glory to Jesus Christ.

Many “spirit-filled believers” get lifted up in pride as if *dunamis* (dynamite-power) is a status like being “born again” (*exousia*). No, it is not reward for being a “spirit-filled believer,” it is an action, a manifestation. It is a soldier operating under the power of God to accomplish supernatural tasks. Born again is like being a battery that has power to light up and display its status – the sign says, “He’s mine, says the Lord.” The authority tells us who we are and what fruit we should display. *Being Spirit filled is a condition in time for a purpose in eternity.* This eternity purpose may be as simple as fellowship with the Holy Spirit, or it could be for action – healing, warfare, expressions of Grace, and giftings such as prophecy, words of knowledge, words of wisdom, etc.

I have a wife. She’s always with me spiritually, but not always physically present with me. In the same way, I walk around in born-again status but I am not always “in the spirit.” I can contact the Holy Spirit by various actions (prayer, meditation, worship, tongues, conversation), and He can also move upon my spirit to make this contact. Too often the so-called spirit filled believer is not “in the spirit” but thinks he or she is. The Born Again believer who

thinks gifts have ceased or rejects the Baptism of the Holy Spirit can still be used and blessed of God because Mercy remains. They may even experience Grace for a fleeting moment. This is why the lives of the so called Spirit-filled believer and the conservative Born-again believer may not be very different except that one speaks in Tongues and the other does not. The tongue talker may have had an experience with God, but though he's called "spirit filled" he's often not truly "filled." Many are in the military but never fire their guns. All will be affected by the enemy but only those who will fire their weapons should go to the front lines. Paul admonishes us to "be filled with the Holy Spirit." In the Greek it is a picture, not of having a drink once, but of "be being filled" as in continuously drinking; therefore, Paul declares, "*I speak in tongues more than ye all*" (1 Cor. 14:18). So Born-again or Spirit-filled, all are prone to "flesh out" and fall. All get sick symptoms, all slip in sin. Jesus declared, "I and the Father are One." He and the Holy Spirit are One as with the Father. "I am nothing of Myself." When His flesh was tired or overwhelmed, He went away to pray and refill. The Spirit-filled life will not be a better life unless one stays as filled as possible. The significant difference in the life of a Born-again vs. Spirit-filled believer should be primarily in demonstrations of power.

The issue of character is answered in the epistles. The Apostles were elders in very "Spirit-filled" churches. Peter, Paul, and James all reminded these churches that they were still "carnal." Even today we see powerful ministries with signs and wonders, where the carnality of God's servants is appalling – divorce, homosexuality, drug abuse, and premature death were prevalent then and now. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) were surely Spirit-filled and

they plotted to withhold what had been pledged to God. Surely they were not in the Spirit when they made that decision. So sin comes to us all. The mind and soul (will and emotions) are not regenerated as quickly as we would hope. We must accept the Grace (empowerment) to change ourselves to help others, using Truth and Faith to keep us sanctified, clean and powerfully filled. Our only chance is to abide in 1 John 1:9 *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Now, let's consider sickness. God is merciful but He has set laws into motion that must be obeyed, or consequences will be suffered. Sin and disobedience cause illness. Bad words, bad emotions, bad stress, bad food, bad water, bad habits kill – period. Your body is the Temple of God, *“If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are”* (1 Cor. 3:17). How come Jesus Christ is nowhere on record as being sick? If sickness was the acceptable struggle and natural state of the believer, then why didn't Jesus Christ get sick to show us an example of Christian suffering? I'm not being mean; I'm asking a fair question. I have been sick more than once and I pondered, “If Jesus Christ was here, would He do something or would He be afraid that He might catch my cold? Peter's mother-in-law had a fever. Jesus Christ didn't catch it, He drove it out. He touched a leper and many, many sick folk and never contracted anything. We don't eat right, exercise, stress right, so we deserve to get sick. We want to believe Paul's thorn to be sickness so we can feel good about our doubt and unbelief and therefore rest in the comfort of false theology. We don't believe right so sickness stays way longer than it should. We are too worried, too fat, too lazy,

too prideful, and to tell the truth, we want to justify our lack of responsibility and the work of the devil without doing the Faith work that is needed for Grace to operate. So if Paul was unhealed then we can remain sick, but still spiritual. Some say, "Paul never got his healing so God gave him the Grace for suffering." He was not declaring that he was sick, *he was persecuted*. Paul had no problems with doctors, as Dr. Luke was one of his companions. He had no problem with medicine for he recommends a little wine for the stomach for Timothy. So pursue your healing on all fronts but do not abandon God's Mercy for you and His Grace which empowers you to be healed – instantly or in time. Don't surrender your body to the will of demons and death. When the thought or the command is given to "rise and be healed" don't say, "I can't" or ponder an excuse to stay sick – do all you can to believe and to use the Grace that is sufficient for you. Don't surrender to sickness that leads to death until all your work, your witness, and your energy is complete. Don't surrender till all who you were called to lead to the Lord are in the camp. Not till you've said, "I love you" to all you love and can truly say, "I'm satisfied." Then and only then shall you give up the ghost and use your Faith and Grace to dismiss this flesh and embrace the whisper of promise – eternal life.

Grace and Graciousness

2 Samuel 9:3

“Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I may show the kindness of God unto Him?”

The graciousness of God can be lined up with the Mercy of God. We say, “God is merciful” and “gracious unto us,” as we say in some of our hymns and Psalms. We have to understand that the word “Mercy” is another word for kindness, or an extension of niceties to people, but the graciousness of God goes beyond that. In kindness, you may very well spare someone harm, but if you are going to be gracious to them you are going to give them something which not only takes them from harm, but also empowers them. So when we say that, “God has been gracious to me” or “has shown me Grace,” it means that He has shown you Mercy in a sense, but He has also gone one step better and empowered you, placed you in position to **do** something about your circumstances and your situation. Now, inherent in the definition of Grace is a reality that when a person realizes that someone has been gracious to them, they return to that graciousness a wonderful attribute which is gratitude. If someone has been gracious to you, the next expression is what? Gratitude. One expects an attitude of gratitude.

However, sad to say, there are people who do not have the capacity to express gratitude. Because of their pain or deep personal stuff, it’s difficult for some people to acknowledge their weakness or their limitations. They feel that to show gratitude acknowledges some lack in them.

Gratitude is something that we try to instill in little kids. We teach them, “Say, please and thank-you.” But it’s funny how please isn’t as important as thank-you is. It is actually gratitude that reflects your response to

graciousness. I would much rather see an expression of gratitude than I would an expression of politeness. "Jeanine, please give me a pen." Well that's wonderful that I was polite about it, 'cause I said, "please." But after I get it, there's the potential for taking the person for granted. "Please" says you have something I want, while "thanks" says I'm grateful you empowered me by your graciousness. Then thanks also returns empowerment, for thanks is praise. Thank you expresses Grace bestowed and an ability to have solved a situation. Kindness is shown to someone in need or in a lower position, and the Grace giver feels better having done it when gratitude, the proper response to graciousness, is shown to him.

When you acknowledge that someone has done something for you and that you appreciate it, you are basically saying to them, "You did something for me that I didn't do, or couldn't do for myself. Therefore in this relationship, you are the greater one." It's just implied. The word "Grace" itself implies that the greater one did something for the lesser one. The greater one has further empowered the lesser and himself because the lesser then shows gratitude to the one who provided it. If you look in the Greek at the word "grace," (5485 –"Charis" the manner or act abstract or concrete or spiritual; espec. the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude: - grace, favor, thanks, thank, pleasure, acceptable, benefit, gift, gracious, joy, liberality - Strong's dictionary). One surprising part of the definition is "gratitude". To be gracious to someone will cause gratitude to be made manifest. And when you show gratitude to a person who's done something for you, they become elevated. For example, Jesus comes on the scene (Mark 10:46) and the blind man, Bartimaeus, is saying,

“Son of David, have mercy on me. Son of David, have mercy on me.” When we look up that “Mercy” we realize that he is asking the Lord Jesus Christ for a “Grace.” He is saying, “Lord Jesus be gracious to me. Show me a Grace.” And we know that a Grace is a gift and a power. Jesus shows him the Grace of healing; the response from Bartimaeus in terms of graciousness is to show gratitude. The demoniac of the Gadarenes wants to be set free. Jesus sets him free. His immediate response to receiving the Grace of deliverance was, “Let me go travel with you.” And Jesus’ response was, “No, go to your own people in your own town and tell them the wondrous, gracious things that God has done for you.” The greater One blessed a lesser one, and gratitude was made manifest. Gratitude (Grace) shows the content of the heart. So graciousness or Grace given should always express or make manifest gratitude. “Please” is cultural politeness. I can say “please” because I want to get what I want and still be an ungrateful person.

It seems that two of the hardest words to say are “thank you”. The reason is, “thank you” is humbling. It’s just innate that when I say, “thank you” I am humbling myself because someone did something for me. Practicing gratitude should begin in childhood. Teach a kid to be grateful, to learn to say, “Thank you,” and mean it. We are created in the image of God. And in His nature, after He blesses and after He gives Grace, God Himself is expecting a thank you.

Consider the healing of the lepers in Luke 17. Only one came back. And so what does Jesus express to the one? He says, “OK, well, you’ve been blessed, go your way and be healed,” which kind of implies that the nine will lose their healing somewhere along the way. Why? They didn’t have the right response, which was, *Grace should*

manifest gratitude. It's a very powerful concept. You can measure what's in the heart.

When we say "please, please, please," we're begging. But when we say, "thank you, thank you" we are praising. And that's why inherent in what we are going to be able to get from God is this supernatural relationship of the power of praise. Praise is more powerful than begging, because in praise we're giving adoration, we're giving thanks, we're giving gratitude, we're reaching back to God. He then is acknowledged as being the Greater One, He's acknowledged as being the Stronger One, He's acknowledged as being gracious, He's acknowledged as being kind, all in your saying, "Thank you." That's why His response to, "Thank you" causes more Grace to come. You want something from God? If you praise Him, you're basically encouraging Him to give you more. That's why people who are ungrateful and don't believe that God is gracious don't get so much. They stay in "please," which doesn't produce Grace. "Please" may produce compassion, but "thank you" will always produce action and compassion. When "thank you" comes before anything is done, then it is an expression of Faith. "I know you are going to do it so I say thank you in advance by Faith".

Thank you recognizes that the giver is usually greater, more powerful, and that he has an abundance, therefore you are admitting that he can do something for you - something that you probably can't do for yourself. Begging just announces the depravity of your condition. Lazarus' resurrection would be a perfect example. Jesus arrives at the tomb of His dead friend. He plans to see Lazarus revived from the dead but Jesus does not beg. You don't see any, any, any manifestation of Jesus begging

God for anything. He says, "Daddy, thank You for it." We have to go to God in an attitude of gratitude, acknowledging that He is more powerful, acknowledging that we appreciate Him and, when we say, "Thank you" we are making a Faith statement. Even if your Faith isn't there yet, you're making a Faith statement. Thank you says, "I believe I've received." I appreciate it now. Begging is like that old James Brown song, "Please, please, please, please." Begging elicits a totally different response. Did you ever have a little kid pulling on your pants going, "Please, please, please, please?" Makes you want to smack him. But little kids who say "thanks" and show that they're grateful get blessed.

Grace is like two mirrors, because it bounces back and forth and just increases the value of the whole picture. "Please" does not necessarily imply Faith or even expectancy, though it can be a reflection of hope or desire. Thanking God before you have it is truly praying in Faith. A person can pray, "Lord, please" without expressing Faith, while "Thanks" acknowledges the blessing provided – now or in the future. Amen!

You want to get more from the Lord? Then you say to the Lord who has everything, "Thank You, Lord, thank You, I really appreciate it Lord Jesus, thank You. Thank You. Thank You." God's position is that He already knows He has everything. The Bible says that everything you are going to ask from God, Your heavenly Father knows before you ask. So what is the function of even asking for it? The function of asking is the expression of you as the needy one. And what is your response to being needy? Gratitude. Thank you. Faith says that God will withhold no good thing from us. Faith says all things are ours according to the Word. Faith says the Lord wants to

bless His children. The reason for your asking is not to beg in the hope of receiving it, but to show gratitude to your almighty God. Romans 4:17: *"Call those things which be not as though they were."* Paul says it this way, *"In all things, with all prayer,"* give what? Thanks.

God says, "It's already yours, the minute that you ask Me for it. I've already done it for you. I'm going to give it to you because it's My good pleasure." It's God's good pleasure to give things to you. And what does God ask from us? He asks us to be gracious, He asks us for gratitude, before we get it and afterward. So Paul said, *"in all things, in anything you ask for, with all prayer and all supplication, let your thanks be made known."* He's actually saying, "When you ask, thank God for it." Show Grace – gratitude.

God is so kind and so merciful and so great, that if you go to Him, thanking Him for what you are asking, He's more likely to do it sooner. So what is God measuring then? He is measuring your gratitude. He's concerned about your attitude of gratitude. Why did they put Jesus on the Cross? The first reason that they crucified Christ was because Jesus called God "Father" (John 10:33). They were saying, "Why don't you use all of the terms of politeness that we use toward God?" And He says, "I don't have to, He's My Father". Anything Jesus asked from His Father, He said, "Thanks." He also said the only reason I'm saying this is so that they can hear Me saying, "Thank You Abba, that it's already done".

When Mary goes up to Jesus at the wedding of Cana, she doesn't say, "Please, please, please make some wine so the wedding's a success." She states the problem, "They're out of wine." Jesus' response is, "What's that to Me?" And then she says to the servants, "Do whatever He says."

She was saying, "I know He's going to do it. I'm grateful for it. I'm already counting it done."

Any debt, or any help, or assistance, or graciousness, or kindness that you show to a weaker or a lesser person who cannot pay you back, God says, "I will be the debtor. I will pay you back." That's why charity works. The reason you want to help India, Africa, next door neighbors, members of the church -- do any good for someone, is very simply because you want to put God in debt to you. Altruism pays a benefit. You don't do something for somebody and expect not to be paid back. The reality is, if I help Ethel, I expect Ethel to help me back. If Ethel can't help me, I expect God to help me back. There is a selfish motive to all action in life. Although, if your only motive in doing good is selfish reward, God won't honor that.

Lower Seat

We do good because it works, because it makes sense, and it has a high rate of return. And if you don't get that straight you will never be able to work the system. It's a system that God designed. Jesus took the lowest seat in order to get the highest seat. Jesus became a servant to all, in order that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord over all. Jesus died for all so He could be elevated above all. It's only selfish if when you become all, your motive is to destroy those who are lesser. But if your motive is to bless all who are indebted to you, you're being like God. God, who is the greatest, put His Word above Himself; He humbled Himself to His own Word. The only way to the top is to take the lower seat. What did Jesus say? When you come into the banquet hall, don't go to the front, take the back seat, take the lowest seat, so you'll be called up to the front to take the highest seat. What did Jesus do? Jesus

came into the world as a Man. He didn't own much and had no status. He became a servant to all. He died for the poor and the rich, because He was to be the greatest of all. Why do I help people? I'm not stupid; I know that the more people I help, the more benefits come to me.

Good works will get you a better seat in Heaven if they're done with the right motive, but good works won't buy you salvation. Salvation is attained by Faith. I have Faith in the system that the more people I help the better it is for me. So that's my motive. That's a good motive. The good motive is that God's going to bless me because I bless others. If I do good works because I believe that, truly believe it, then good will be counted to me as righteousness. I am believing Hebrews 11:6, "*God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*".

Yeah, I want praises. But I don't want the praise of the world. That's the difference. I want Jesus' praise. I don't care about what the people on the planet say, I don't care if they name a street after me in Albany - put my face on a plaque - Pffht - I'm not playing for that. I could go buy my own plaque. I'm playing for the plaque in Heaven. I'm playing for Jesus Christ. I'm playing with a sincere heart to reach and help as many people as I can, teach people out of confusion and phony politeness. I want people to get to Heaven based on the real deal of the Word of God. And the Word of God says that if God has been gracious to me, I am obligated to be gracious to someone else. And if I'll do that, He will make me a greater one in the Kingdom.

2 Samuel 9:1 *Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"*

OK, kindness for Jonathan's sake. Now what is the point of this? What's going on here?

2 Samuel 9:1 *Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"* Jonathan was the son of Saul and the rightful heir, but He was David's best friend. They loved each other as brothers; even better than brothers because they were really willing to die for each other. Ordinarily if David were looking for a descendant of Jonathan, it would be to kill him, because any descendant of Jonathan's is the rightful heir to the throne. The usual cultural thing was to kill all descendants; not nice, but that's how it was done back then. After Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle and David was ascending to the throne, he usually would go throughout the house of Saul and kill all remaining family members. He might leave some of the women alive, but there's a problem. When they gave birth, those sons would have a right to the throne, so usually he'd waste everybody. Let's see if this is what God's man is about to do. He says he wants to show kindness. 2 Samuel 9:2-3 *"And there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?" He said, "At your service." Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet."* 2 Samuel 9:5-6: *Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself.* Now why did he do that? Why's he so humble? David is greater and he is basically pleading for his life here. He says, "Here is your servant." He calls himself a servant of David because he knows what the deal usually is. Then David says amazing words to Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9:7, *"Do not*

fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake (And then he blows his mind completely) and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually."

Whew!

2 Samuel 9:8 *"Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?"*

Now why does he call himself a dead dog? Because generally, he would have been dead; king David would have ordered him killed. So he prostrated himself. He already knows that he's a dead dog. So he's saying, "To what should I owe, how can this possibly be?" And watch what he says, 2 Samuel 9:9-13 – *"Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in the harvest, that your master's son may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth, your Master's son, shall eat bread at my table always."* Now look at the Goodness of God; it expands, it goes beyond what you think. *"Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do." "As for Mephibosheth" said the king, "he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons." Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha. And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants of Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king's table. And he was lame in both his feet."*

Wheeeew! We must remember not to limit the kindness and the graciousness of God because of our own limitations. We think, "Well God could do good for me but, you know, I'm black... God could do good for me but I come from trailer trash... God could do good for me but

I'm short... Or I'm tall... or I'm disabled... He could do good but I used to be a prostitute... or I used to be a thug or I used to... and we go through this whole litany of all the different things that devalue ourselves, that we would say, "I'm not permitted in the Kingdom."

David is no fool here. What David did was not only politically smart, but also gracious. Think of this: "Mephibosheth you can eat at my table." David is saying to him two things. First, I'm going to treat you equally as one of my sons. AND, I'm going to see you every day to make sure you remember my graciousness to you and that you don't violate our covenant. I'm giving you a new covenant, but I'm not going to turn you loose that you can rise up and pull my kingdom down. He's smart. He's being gracious and kind, but he's also wise. And he's not allowing Mephibosheth (or his sons) to rise up to reclaim the kingdom. He's keeping him close. But there is a deeper meaning. He is saying that in God's house, if you'll stay close to God, He'll count you as a son, and all of your needs will be met. Mephibosheth is elevated to the status of prince in the kingdom, equal to David's sons. Even Ziba, a lower servant even under Mephibosheth, is made a rich and powerful man! Whew!

And when we think of that, we have to see the gratitude that is going to be eternally coming from Mephibosheth. Nobody can look down on him now, except under penalty of death. They may have made fun of him: you're king Saul's cripple, you're a failure, and so on. But now he eats every night with the king. He can talk to the king and say, "they're making fun of me because I'm crippled... they're making fun of me 'cause of my daddy." And they could be under penalty of death. So what we have to see is that God brings us into the Kingdom, and out of His Grace does

more for us than we can imagine. At the same time, God expects our gratitude, because that expression of gratitude for God's grace binds us to become a son or daughter in the Kingdom. We're going to act differently when we know that we are a son or a daughter. We're going to live different when we know that the King is available to us all the time. You don't have to plead, "Please, please, please." You're sitting at the King's table. Where there is anything you want, it's already yours. You already have it. It's already given to you. That's a powerful story. The humbleness of Mephibosheth saved his life, and the Grace that David showed him empowered him to be blessed beyond his expectations.

So having an attitude of humble gratitude is inherent in God's graciousness, as is the "thank you". It becomes something that we have to learn to live with everyday. We have to step out from a "please" mentality and we have to step into the true relationship of "Thank you." We don't see Jesus begging God for anything. Therefore we want to really become aware that we're in an attitude of gratitude. It should just naturally flow out of us. You know, you get up in the morning and you realize you're still here and you look outside, I don't care if it's a foggy, misty whatever. Everyday is a beautiful day, the trees are beautiful. And you just flow in that attitude of gratitude, which means that you're in a constant cycle of son-ship. You're in a constant cycle of special privilege that offers thanks because great Grace has been shown you.

Luke Chapter 15:11-12: *"Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of the said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." So he divided to them his livelihood."*

Now notice there, he divided THEM. Who's the

“them”? The two sons. So the first son comes, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.” And what happened to the other brother? He got his portion too. Do you see it? It’s right there. I don’t know why people miss that. But the younger brother asked, “Please give me my piece of everything.” And so the father says, “Well, ok.” Basically he said, “This is the reading of the will. I’ll give you what’s in the will now.” He divided up his property.

Luke 15:13-15: *“Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into the fields to feed swine.”*

Now this is an insult above insults. This guy’s a Jew, and he’s forced to feed pigs, which puts him at the low of the low. Not only that, it gets worse. Verse 16: *“And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.”*

“No one gave him anything.” Powerful lesson about the world. When he has wealth, prodigal living, he’s got women, and friends, people all around him. When we step out into sin, when we step off into the world, everyone acts like our friend, but then when hard times come they’re not there. You know, everybody will share their drugs and their pornography with you when you’re buying for them. But the minute you run out, they’re gone. They’re just like “poof” - gone. Some of us know what I’m talking about. Where are your good friends when things go bad? And then the funny thing is, that if you haven’t picked your friends well, when you return to the Lord, they don’t come with you. So you have to go through the process of getting new friends. Verse 17: *“But when he came to himself, he*

said..." This verse is interesting because it implies demonic activity. "When he came to himself." After the devil used him up, the devil dumped him. Now he is so down and out he wants to eat pig slops. And "he comes to himself" means that after the demonic activity cleared his thinking, he thought a right thought.

I was counseling on the phone with a teenager who had decided that her parents are against her. She basically at 17 decided, "My parents are stupid, they don't love me or respect me, and I want to be on my own." So she stayed out all night, doing her thing. But by the middle of the next day, she's getting phone messages from everyone who knows her because her parents are wondering what happened to her, since she didn't come home. She didn't call. She didn't anything. They don't know if she's dead or in jail or whatever. She finally came to herself and realized what she had done. But then instead of just going home and eating humble pie, she decided to exit stage left from the house, to go out on her own. I talked to her, trying to get her to see her parents were not unjust or unfriendly to her. Being a grown up means you call home, and that idea was foreign to her. She didn't understand responsibility. Responsible adults call home and tell people when they are going to be home. Not being treated like a kid means acting like a responsible adult. I'm sure that the young prodigal son was thinking that same way. "I want my stuff now, so I can do what grownups do." But grownups don't run off to a foreign country, and party their money away. Grownups don't stay up all night, playing games on the computer. They have to get up the next day and go to work and be functional. And so, what we see is that the line between maturity and immaturity is actually tied to thanks and gratitude. If this teenage girl

had had thanks and gratitude, she would have appreciated what she had, correct? 'Cause she had it made. Parents working, both have money, all of it was there but she misread the situation. Believe me it was a demonic voice that told her to stay out all night and it was a demonic voice that told her, "Your parents are against you," and it was a demonic voice that told her to leave her parents. When you have a hard time saying thank you, you need to know you might be getting help from the flesh and the demonic realm. The devil will always come against your attitude of gratitude because to be like the devil is to be ungrateful. To be like the devil is to take people and things and situations for granted, so you get moved from a position of "I'm grateful for what I have," to a position of it's either "mine for the taking" or "mine to be thrown away." Selfishness does not care about expressing appreciation for things. The devil isn't appreciating anything. In the Garden of Eden, he didn't say, "Well thank you that I'm going to rule and reign over Adam and Eve and all of their progeny for the next six thousand years." He didn't say thank you, he just slithered in the dirt. This young girl left home and suffered greatly, only to realize her mistake and came home crushed, humbled and grateful. Freedom without responsibility is anarchy, and anarchy leads to destruction. Our young girl came to her senses and so does the prodigal son.

"How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Luke 15:18-24: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. He arose and came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and had

compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." And they began to be merry."

What is the dad expressing? He's putting his son back in the same position as before, and he's expressing gratitude. Dad is a happy dude. He's happy that the fog lifted off the son. He's happy that that demonic possession is over, and he's grateful to have his son back. The Father fully restores the son's position in the house! And so we have this picture of the heart of the Father. The heart of the father is one of thanks and gratitude. He is grateful for this situation coming out in this positive way. And the son has an attitude of gratitude. How is his gratitude expressed? He's coming back with humbleness, he's coming back with an apology, he's coming with, "I am the lower, you're the higher." He doesn't beg to be returned to his position. I guarantee if he had gone back begging, "Please, please, please, I want to be the head again," the story would not have come out the way that it did. And the reason is that the father saw the expression of gratitude and humility. Grace causes more Grace.

Verse 24-27: *"For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry; Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called to one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, "Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf."*

Now notice in verse 27, the father is happy that his son was returned safe and sound. He's not happy that the son spent all the money, threw it all away. Yet, if that's the cost to save the son well then it's o.k. His joy is the fact that his son could have been dead and is alive and changed.

Now let's talk about the other son. Verse 28: *"But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him."* What is the father pleading? He's telling him to have the right attitude and the right heart, come on and join the party. But there is a heart issue. And when there is a heart issue, no matter how aggressive we would go after it, we can't get people to understand. The heart can be so closed that it will not open to reason or the truth.

Verse 29: *"So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years, I have been serving you;'"*. Sometimes our sentiment is what gets us in trouble. This son's sentiment was "I've been serving you," when his sentiment should have been, "I'm getting mine, I'm working in mine. The company is Jones and Sons, I'm one of the sons, I'm working in my own business here." So he'd have pride, ownership and humble gratitude. He didn't have the vision or the heart of his father. And so he says in verse 30: *"But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots..."* That wasn't all the boy was doing, but it showed what the older son figured he was doing. We know that he was low living; harlots would have been involved, but it wouldn't have been just harlots. He continued: *"you killed the fatted calf for him."* And he said to him, *"Son you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."*

Jesus gives this parable as a picture of God, and what we should see is that it doesn't matter what the younger brother was doing, the older brother had a problem of having the right attitude of gratitude. He should have been more grateful for his brother's return, than the fact that money was gone. Money can always be made or lost. What's more valuable – a human or money? But this brother is short sighted, which means that he didn't understand the love of the father. I doubt very seriously that the father treated either of them very differently. So what was the problem? It was a heart problem, a gratitude problem.

Jesus doesn't treat us all the same way. He allows some of us to get rich, some of us he leaves poor. The outcome is up to us, as God gives opportunity to us all. He knows what's best for us. It's just that when we are self minded, we think we know more than God, and we have a hard time accepting the truth that He does what is best for us. The reality is Jesus treated David better than He treated a lot of other people in the Kingdom. He had to, for the good of David and the good of the Faith. But we have a hard time with that, because we want to be God or we want God to play by our rules. God is an equal opportunity employer. We all have the opportunity but we all do not have the same attitude or aptitude. "Many are called but few are chosen." God doesn't choose everybody, because some people, the minute they got the football would fumble it. Some of us need less and some more. I lost \$300,000 in bad debts before I learned to manage money. There may be somebody who doesn't need to lose that much to learn what I learned. So why would God give them the \$300,000 to lose when they would learn the same lesson by losing only \$3000? Some

people will have to go through two bad marriages to figure it out, and get a good third marriage. And some people can't find a marriage, so God isn't fair? No, God is fair, according to the need of the individual. He knows their heart. He knows their circumstances. He knows their opportunities. I love the story of Dave Thomas, Mr. Wendy's. He was adopted. He had nothing. He was one of those so-called "throw away kids". But God put him in the right family at the right time, and boom, he comes up with Wendy's, and he blesses all these people every day, providing thousands of jobs. So God knows who to bless on what level.

The prodigal's brother was an ungrateful son. He wasn't concerned about the fact that he had his, and he could partake of it all the time. But he was upset that the younger brother had his. And he was still upset with Daddy, because he gave the whole thing to both of them. He wasn't supposed to get his inheritance until his dad died. But because of the stupidity of the younger one, he had all his possessions, and then he's upset that he didn't have a fatted calf. If he were grateful to dad, the minute he got his inheritance because of the prodigal son, he could have killed the fatted calf, and everything would have been fine. But he didn't have an attitude of gratitude. He was not grateful for what he had. *He was favored but did not understand that favor empowered him to kill the fatted calf any time he wanted to.*

Therefore, he had little power, as most of the church today, *singing Amazing Grace but not doing anything Amazing but complaining.*

Jesus gives another parable – there is a guy who hasn't been doing his job. The boss goes to him and says listen, you've been handling all my affairs and I don't like the

way you've been handling them; I'm going to get you out of here. So the guy figures he's going to get fired, and he says, "I'm too old to dig, and I'm too old to work hard, and I'm not cut out for common labor. I have to figure out a way to ingratiate, be gracious to people that owe my boss so that they'll be kind to me later." He calls Jack and says, "Jack you owe \$50,000. Give me your bill," and he makes this bill \$20,000 and gives it back to him. "Now you only owe the boss \$20,000." Then he says to Harry, "Give me your bill. It says you owe him \$100,000. Here, make it \$50,000, you owe him only \$50,000." And he says, "Here Bert, here's \$10,000, you only owe him \$1,000." So he goes through all of the accounts, and as a result he has ingratiated, he has been gracious to, all the people who owe the boss. And he did that to provide for himself people who would be gracious to him. *"So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly."* Grace creates more Grace. The unjust steward showed Grace to the debtors which in turn over time will come back to him as Grace.

In these stories we need to see that being grateful is an important part of Grace. When we have an attitude of gratitude, more power is released to us to do more work. The power of the giver is multiplied to us because he feels appreciated. The prodigal has made his father feel better about the son and himself. A gracious guest is more welcome in the house and will receive better treatment, and therefore more power and freedom from the host. This is God's world and Heaven is His home, so our attitude has a lot to do about what we will achieve and receive from our host - who also happens to be our Daddy.

Sin, Blood, Judgment, Mercy & Grace

The words Mercy and Grace are what we will focus on in this text. We will look at the time periods before and after the Cross. Also the period when Jesus Christ dies, and what happens spiritually because of Jesus' death.

The Body of Jesus Christ has adopted wrong thinking, that Mercy and Grace are the same thing, and this must be addressed. We think of Mercy as an Old Testament term and Grace as a New Testament term, where both are eternal, with different aspects. We exclusively use the definition of Grace as "unmerited favor" when it is so much more. We tend to think that Mercy stopped at the Cross, but it did not. Mercy began way before the Cross, as it says in Psalm 25:6: *"Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and lovingkindnesses, for they are from of old."* God's lovingkindness and mercies are eternal, and describe His wondrous nature. Let us begin this adventure at the beginning - Genesis.

Adam and Eve were in the Garden and they sinned. If they had not sinned, we wouldn't be in the trouble and the situations we are in now. We wouldn't have a constant battle with evil, lusts, and other sins that cause our disobedience to God. We wouldn't have to fight those fights because the devil would have been vanquished right then and there in Eden. But we lost when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Yet God, who knows all things, permitted the fall to happen so His greater plan of salvation could be acted out. The eventual outcome is that millions will be made better. "Man" shall be perfected and changed into the true sons and daughters of God – His "Holy Temple". This is a selection process and a perfecting program made possible by Mercy, powered by Grace and admission to be

His temple is by obedience and by Faith. The free will of man makes obedience the Training Course and sin the Tests; therefore disobedience is what we call SIN. The word sin itself means: *the breaking of a religious or moral law, separation from God due to violation of God's law. Committing of error or being an offense. Impiety, perversion. Improper use of free will. Prideful action in opposition to God or His law* (Webster's Dictionary). Ultimately, sin is committing an act or being self-destructive or self-corrupting. Keeping God's law is ultimately good for us and self-preserving for man, individually and collectively. Sin disqualifies one from receiving God's best. Only through God can the damage of sin (death) be postponed or reversed. This is where the Blood of Jesus Christ, Mercy and Grace come in, for they permit us time and opportunity to grow and be empowered to complete our tests, trials, and training. Let us now begin to explore how sin is connected to the Blood, Mercy and Grace.

God said to Adam and Eve that when you eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and evil, in that day you will die (Genesis 2:17). The Scriptures tell us that "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). "Where is the death in this?" How is death to follow sin and why? Think about natural situations and death. Dig up a flower it will die. Remove a fish from water and it will die. Violations of the natural order cause death, slow or immediate. Also, violations of spiritual order cause spiritual death. Spiritual death causes eventual physical death. This is because the spirit gives life to the flesh. When the spirit vacates the body, the flesh breathes its last breath, which is the spirit leaving, resulting in death. God is the Giver and Sustainer of life. Sin causes separation from God. This is because God's Holiness repulses and rejects sin. Therefore, death is the separation

from God which was caused by sin, as the Scripture states, “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). Physical death because of sin is unhealthy and is often associated with vices such as; drugs, gluttony, abuse of alcohol, sexual promiscuity, etc. God does not accompany or assist in these activities, so we that do these things are separated from Him. After physical death, the spirit of an unrepentant sinner is separated from God. If they didn’t want God in life they will continue to reject God in death. Sin also causes death to emotional life. Sin may bring temporary joy but will result in eventual sorrow, and if sin continues, then death will manifest and lead to spiritual death.

What happens if a married person goes and commits an adulterous act? The purity and sanctity in the marriage would die, resulting in emotional damage leading to death. This marriage will then end in death – divorce. Only an application of Mercy, love, forgiveness, and Grace can reverse a sinful situation like this. Mercy, love, forgiveness, and Grace are of the nature and character of God. They are His attributes that can be applied to a circumstance where sin has caused or is causing death, and reverse it. The component to understanding sin, the Blood, Mercy and Grace is to go back where Adam and Eve first sinned and then God declared, “in the day that they sinned they shall die”.

Now look at 2 Peter 3:8, where God said one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. If we look, we will see that Adam didn’t make 1,000 years. In fact, every one born in the time period shortly after Adam, even though they lived a long time, all died before 1,000 years; therefore they died in the day that Adam ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil. Later in the

Scriptures, we see that God shortens man's life span to 120 years; then in the time period of King David (Psalm 90), God shortens it to 70 years, or by strength 80 or more. We are dying faster and faster. So now the best you can expect from a good life is 70 years or if by strength 80, sometimes more. But if you go past the age 70, it says that your time will be spent in sorrow and agony (Psalm 90). That's because you will be living longer than anyone else you know and therefore you get to go to more funerals than anybody, as you will outlive your family and friends.

The Scriptures point out that in life there is sin and that sin causes death, and that we are all going to die because of the sin of Adam. Therefore, eternal life in the physical realm is not promised to us. We will die. Because of the continued sin of man, the time period was shortened. The 70-80 years is shortened due to poor health and stressful living, which are the results of sin.

Life in the Blood

What is the life force? The Scripture tells us clearly that blood carries and is the life force. Genesis 9:4 –*“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”* It is interesting that in these last days the devil has made a full onslaught by giving us many blood carried diseases, viruses, sexually transmitted diseases, (HIV, AIDS, etc.), which are carried in the blood. It is also interesting that the main transport system for death in the physical human body is through blood. If you are going to snort or smoke cocaine, drink alcohol, pop pills, etc., you have to access blood vessels either in veins, in the stomach, head or nose to get death into the bloodstream so you can begin to shorten your life. The process of “getting high” is actually an effort at controlled poisoning with substances that the

body is allergic to! These poisons are carried by the blood system, bringing periods of death to the organs and brain.

Blood itself is the source of life or death, for blood transverses through the body, bringing life or death to all the different parts of the body. The only one who has created blood is God. Therefore, God says that He gives blood as the life force. He has declared that there is something holy about blood. Since blood carries the life force, it is to be treated differently from all other bodily fluids.

For example, God taught the Jews that when you kill an animal, the blood is to be drained completely out of the animal before you eat the meat. God gave the Jews the Commandments and ordinances about how blood is to be treated, because blood is the life force (Leviticus 17:10-14). These laws were for three purposes: 1. Respect for blood points us to the Creator. 2. Blood carries death or life, so for health purposes it is to be treated with respect. 3. Blood alone fulfills the substitutionary requirement: if a man sins, only blood can pay the debt for that sin.

In the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned, something amazing happened. We have the spilling of the first blood. Man didn't have the authority to do that, only God did when He covered their sin (nakedness – shame) with animal skins. When Cain kills his brother Abel, the Word of God says that Abel's blood is crying out from the ground. Cain did not have the right to spill Abel's blood. Adam and Eve did not have the right to kill any animal in the Garden, for there was no death in the Garden at the time God is there with Adam and Eve.

God has established that the blood is holy and important and that it is the source of life, and the currency of sin-debt payment. He is the only One then, that can take

life without sin, because He is the only One that can give life (He's the only One that has the right to give it; therefore, He's the only One that has the right to take it). God declares that if anyone sins, their blood will be required of them (*"the wages of sin is death"*). The only thing that could pay for sin is the death of the person who commits the sin; therefore, you can only pay with your blood. You can't pay for your sins with money, good deeds, or someone else's blood, unless they volunteer their life as a substitutionary payment. Romans 6:23 – *"For the wages of sin is death..."* Hebrews 9:22 – *"...and without shedding of blood there is no remission."* Hebrews 9:28 – *"So Christ was once suffered to bear the sins of many;..."*

The Word of God shows us that the penalty for your violation against life is that your life has to be forfeited. You have to give your blood to pay for the sin that you have committed. Blood is the only sacrifice; life for life, blood for blood. Because Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, their lives were required of them. But if God required the blood of Adam and Eve, the whole plan of redemption would be over. So God had to do something in the Garden. He either had to take the life of Adam and Eve and take their blood and start over again, or He had to find another way of Atonement.

Atonement: Some substitutionary act that is going to pay for sin in part or whole. Fortunately, God chose to permit atonement to become His method of redemption. God sacrificed animals' blood, and provided skins to cover the sin and shame of Adam and Eve. This would be a temporary solution until a "proper sinless man" could be brought forth to make atonement for all, forever. The sacrifice of animals could be used as a cover for sin but could not fully cleanse it away permanently. Passover is a

picture of atonement. Temple sacrifices of lambs, bulls and goats were substitutionary but not sufficient. Eventually the perfect atonement of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God would be adequate to meet the requirement of atonement. God's Mercy was shown as He receives the annual animal sacrifices as a temporary solution, until Christ comes. God's plan is to get man back to the state and condition of purity. Before Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, they were pure and righteous by naïve ignorance – they did not know sin and therefore could not be held "accountable" for their actions. They had no malice, disobedience, or pride. So in "innocence" God could dwell and abide with them. He could "hang out" with them in the cool of the evening. After they willfully sinned this fellowship was lost. The world is in the process of returning to that fellowship. Christ's cleansing Blood makes that reunion possible. Amen! Mercy was the condition that caused God to be kind to mankind. Psalm 25:6: *"Remember O Lord, Your tender mercies and lovingkindness, for they are from of old."*

Mercy: A form of love, directed toward the needy and the unworthy. Mercy is forbearance from inflicting punishment upon an adversary or a law breaker. To have compassion for someone is to show them Mercy. To say you have compassion and yet do nothing, where you could do something, is not true compassion. In the Bible when God has compassion He shows His Mercy.

Compassion causes one to help the weak, sick and poor. It is Mercy then that put Jesus on the Cross. God saw the condition of man, had compassion and showed Mercy. Therefore, Jesus Christ's Blood was an act of Mercy by providing substitutionary atonement.

God's Mercy and tenderness are from old; as Ancient of

Days as God is. So in the Garden we see that their lives are required of them, but God has Mercy on Adam and Eve. God had to put a limit on their life span for they would have been eternally sinful had they eaten of the Tree of Life, after eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil. God accepted the blood of animals as a temporary substitution, as the blood of bulls and goats is not equal to that of man; but if that was acceptable for a time, then how much more that of the Lord Himself. Hebrews 9:12-14 – *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 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?”*

The Ark

If the Law is where God meets us, we would be convicted of our sins, because everyone is guilty of breaking at least one Law. If we are guilty, we are to receive punishment. The result of that punishment would be death. The Lord says for Moses to put the Law in an Ark (box). God tells Moses in Exodus 25 and 37 how to design and make it.

As you read the description, remember that the lid covering the box (Ark) is called the Mercy Seat. Exodus 37:6-9: *“He also made the mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits was its length and a cubit and a half was its width. He made two cherubim of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at the two ends of the mercy seat; one cherub at one end of this side, and the other cherub at the other end on that side. He made*

the cherubim at the two ends of one piece with the mercy seat. The cherubim spread out their wings above, and covered the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat." The Law on tablets was inside the ark, and the lid with cherubim was on top – reminding God that though the Law was violated, the judgment had to be tempered with Mercy.

Deuteronomy 4:30: *"When you are in distress and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice (for the Lord your God is a merciful God), and He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."* So down through the years, God-fearing saints came to know the great Mercy of God. 2 Samuel 24:14: *"And David said to God, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.""*

It's better to fall into the hand of God and let God punish you, because His Mercy is never ending. Wouldn't you rather get forgiveness from God than to get it from some people? You would have to pay and pay for forgiveness from some people. There are some people still paying for things that happened in their families or their marriages twenty years ago. God is merciful and kind. Our job is to find a way to be as merciful and kind as God is, because His mercies are never ending. He gives Mercy to those that are unworthy and to those that are needy. This shows His power, love and glory. It's easy to use power to destroy but greatness can pardon and forgive.

Mercy is needed in order to heal the breach and reconnect us to our God. We should want to be like Him and offer Mercy to those that need mercy or have harmed us and have asked for forgiveness. As we show and

demonstrate Mercy to others, God will extend more Mercy to us.

God has made a design to demonstrate His Mercy. He made the Law, He put it in a box called the Ark of the Covenant, and He placed a cover (lid) upon it called His Mercy. God then says, "If I come to meet you with My Law, My judgment will be just, but it will result in punishment and death. Therefore, build a cover to go over the top of the Law". The top of the Ark covering the Law is called the *Mercy Seat*. Christ obtained eternal Mercy for us by acting out the Mercy process of substitutionary sacrifice on earth and in Heaven.

Romans 6:23: *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Hebrews 9:22-26: *"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another – He then would have had to suffer often, since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."*

In other words, Moses builds the Ark of the Covenant and the high priest has to go sacrifice animals, then take the blood of the animals and pour it on the Mercy Seat. When he does that, God accepts it, not as an equal sacrifice, but as a substitution for the blood of the people who sinned. God, who is merciful, will spare the needy and unworthy people and will accept a substitute (the blood of

bulls and goats) for their sins. This was a temporary solution until One came – Christ – who was without sin, and therefore His Blood fully met the requirement of the Law.

Judgment

I went to a service recently, and the person in charge was saying that because a person was baptized they knew he was in Heaven. I thought about that. The Bible says don't judge concerning people's eventual destination. I can't decide if someone is going to Heaven or not; that's not the judgment we make, that judgment is up to Christ. The Father says the judgment goes to the judgment seat of Christ. Since Christ sits on the judgment seat, the Father gives that judgment to Him. *"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son"* (John 5:22).

If the Father sat in judgment of you when you died, you would be in serious trouble, because He will judge on the basis of the Law, what He is and what He has experienced in comparison to you. The Father is perfect holiness so He would judge that you aren't holy. So you wouldn't get into Heaven. That's why it says there is none righteous, not one. Compared to God, no one gets in. It says that Jesus was like us in every way, He was tempted in every form and therefore He's qualified to judge. Jesus Christ knows what the human condition feels like in every respect. Therefore His judgment is tempered by comparative compassion. The Father therefore, has placed the responsibility of judging upon the shoulders of Christ. If Christ is sitting in the judgment seat, and He's going to judge, He knows our feelings and our hearts. He knows what you've been through. Therefore you're in, by trusting in Him for your salvation. You may have been

baptized in water or even speak in Tongues, but these do not guarantee eternal salvation. You are *“saved by Grace through Faith”* (Ephesians 2:8); sins repented and Faith in Christ’s sacrifice = debts paid.

Therefore, we still have to fight with the devil. We still have a struggle. *Mercy* is a form of love directed toward the needy and the unworthy. *Mercy* is forbearance (you don’t let it come, you hold it back) from inflicting punishment upon an adversary or a lawbreaker. *Mercy* is compassion that causes one to help the weak or the sick.

We think that Grace put Jesus on the Cross to spill His Blood for us, but it wasn’t Grace, it was *Mercy*. It was Mercy that caused the Father to say to the Son they are guilty, unworthy, I will hold back the death sentence if I have a blood source to substitute for taking their blood. Our concept has been skewed. God is merciful, kind, loving, but at the same time He is *just*. And He can’t allow things to get out of balance. Just because you said the sinners’ prayer and got baptized doesn’t mean you are clean, holy, and godly. God has declared that your Faith in the sacrifice of Christ and the saving power of His Blood has paid your sin debt, and you’re now *“righteous”* by Faith. God justifies you and guarantees that Heaven is your home. Your godliness is the condition of your soul on a day to day basis. You are still capable of sin and therefore must... *“Work out your salvation in fear and trembling”* (Phil. 2:12). Your status with God is eternally saved by Faith, yet you do sin from time to time and must repent from doing or thinking the *“unclean”, “ungodly”* thought or act. God’s great Mercy makes our status eternal, and permanent as our Faith in the sin-cleansing Cross. 1 John 3:7-9: *“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is*

righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God". There is no contradiction here. John means the true believer is always quick to repent, is not habitual in sin or disregarding his belief in God and Jesus Christ's Blood. The believer does not defy the will of God permanently, for he loves God. The righteous (eternally saved by God's Mercy) will do righteously if he sins or errs in behavior. God knows that man can have fixed Faith in Jesus Christ but fail in having fixed behavior. Of course, we are being perfected, and this progress and power to dominate the flesh and live more righteously/godly is because Mercy provides Grace. If not, it's because you haven't thrown yourself on the Mercy Seat and have not accepted Grace. The difference is; *Mercy* is given to those who are undeserving, and to those that are needy. It is after you receive Mercy that you then can receive *Grace*. If someone breaks God's Law, He is required to respond and issue forth a punishment. Someone has to pay for the sin that has been committed, and His Name is Yeshua, the Anointed One. Grace is made available by Mercy, so we fight the demons and the flesh to earn a good testimony, made possible by God's better promises (gifts).

What gifts do you have? Do you operate them regularly? Do you desire more? If so, ask God, believe and act in the Grace He's given you!

Here Comes Grace

It is at this point that greater Grace is introduced and made available to those that by Faith acknowledge and

accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice as payment for sin. This Grace is given as a gift made possible through Jesus Christ for empowerment to live a "Zoë life" (a God kind of life). Jesus Christ "gave gifts to men" (Ephesians 4). These gifts are the Graces given to demonstrate God's glory and set others free of death and empower them. 1 Corinthians 5:17: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* I believe that Jesus, after Calvary, went from the tomb and descended into hell – and according to the Scripture was met by Mary in the Garden before dawn. John 20:17: *"Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me; for I have not yet ascended to My Father.""* Jesus Christ is a now resurrected body and is on His way to place His Blood on the altar in Heaven to pay for man's sin against Heaven – in the same manner He paid for sin on earth! Jesus Christ's Blood was spilled on the earth as the Sacrificial Lamb. While all Israel killed their Passover lambs and spilled their blood, so was the precious Blood of a sinless Man offered up for all who will believe. Mary's touch would have possibly contaminated Christ's purity, some have speculated. But, I doubt that, as He had already bore the sins of the world. So saying, "Don't touch Me" would be more accurately interpreted, "Don't attempt to hold on to Me", implying that Jesus was notifying Mary that He had to leave and He was not returning to His old role as Jesus of Nazareth on the earth, but was returning to His former Deity status as the WORD; God. Whichever interpretation you accept, Christ has accomplished the task of being the fully accepted sacrifice for sin that brought us Mercy and forgiveness, and for those who will believe gave us access to greater Grace.

The Old Testament dispensation of Mercy has never

ended. God is still merciful to us. He is still giving His kindness and forgiveness to unworthy people. We have confused *Mercy* with *Grace*, not understanding that Jesus went to the Cross because of Mercy. The Father said to the Son, "Listen, the blood of bulls and goats is good, but We need to go one step further". Jesus then says, "Wait a minute; the blood of animals is a poor substitute for human blood, therefore I will put on a human suit, with human blood in My veins and I will go down as an atoning sacrifice to pay for their sins." Jesus then came to the earth and lived a sin-free life. (If Jesus had sinned and gone to the Cross, He would have only paid for His own sins; it wouldn't have done us any good.) He had to live a sin-free life in order that the Mercy would be extended to us. What a marvelous act of Faith. The mystery of the Cross is that Jesus had Faith to believe that someone, someday, somewhere, would look to the Cross for substitutionary salvation. The Cross only saves if a person by their Faith believes that the Cross was in fact payment for their sin. This is the Gospel – this is the Good News. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit"* (Romans 8:1). Mercy provided a system that empowers us (Grace) to hear, act, believe and receive our salvation here on earth and into eternity.

As Jesus hung on the Cross, darkness came on the earth and there was an earthquake. Jesus' Blood poured down the Cross; it got to the foot of the Cross and made a puddle. When the earthquake happened, it opened a crevice or crack in the earth at the base of the Cross, and

His Blood began to pour down through the cavern. It has been found that at Golgotha (the place where the Cross was) there is evidence of a stream of Blood that has stained the rock. This Blood flowed down through the crevice.

It is told to us in history that there were many caves and caverns where the priests would hide the various things that were used in holy worship. The Ark of the Covenant was used in worship until the destruction of the first temple. The Ark disappeared at that time and its whereabouts are unknown. It has been said that Rabbis were doing excavations and believed they saw the Ark in this area under the place of the Cross. Also, the now deceased explorer Wyatt, on his death bed, repeated his sworn oath, that he saw the Ark below the place of the Cross. With these reports the Palestinians closed the caves with massive amounts of cement to prevent further exploration. Imagine that as Jesus' Blood poured down through the crevice that the Ark of the Covenant with the Cherubim and the Mercy Seat were underneath in that cavern. Then the Blood of Jesus could have actually touched the Mercy Seat and accomplished on the earth what was to be accomplished in the spiritual as well. Scripture says first the natural then the spiritual. So maybe the actual Ark, which disappeared after the destruction of the first Temple, was hidden below in that cave. Of course this is an interesting but un-provable, delightful idea.

Nonetheless Jesus Christ had to appear in Heaven and present Himself before the real altar, laver, basin and Mercy Seat. That the Blood of One perfect Lamb, One perfect Savior, One perfect Person, had to be put on that Mercy Seat to buy for us the Mercy that was only available through Him; His Blood pouring on to the Mercy Seat paid the price. Our High Priest Jesus took His own Blood and

applied it to the Mercy Seat in Heaven so that we could enter into Mercy and receive Grace. The Word tells us that when Jesus returns, it will be with an earthquake that will shake Jerusalem. I believe this Truth will be revealed as “that which was hidden will be exposed”, Amen. What was done in the spiritual was also done in the physical? Jesus Christ’s Blood actually spilled on the Mercy Seat in Heaven, and possibly on earth, paying once and for all, the debt of sin, thus clearing the way for Mercy to provide Grace. Mercy provided forgiveness of sin and Grace added better promises.

Hebrews shows further this Mercy-Grace revelation. Hebrews 8:6 (amplified): *“But as it now is, He (Christ) has acquired a (priestly) ministry which is as much superior and more excellent (than the old) as the covenant (the agreement) of which He is the Mediator (the Arbiter; Agent) is superior and more excellent, (because) it is enacted and rests upon more important (sublimar, higher and nobler) promises.”* Hebrews 8:9 (amplified): *“It will not be like the covenant that I made with their forefathers on the day when I grasped them by the hand to help and relieve them and to lead them out from the land of Egypt, for they did not abide in My agreement with them, and so I withdrew My favor and disregarded them, says the Lord.”* The new covenant through Jesus Christ is superior in part because His sin-free Blood provided a better promise (Acts 1:5 & 1:8): *“for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”* *“But you shall receive power****GRACE**** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* This power is *dunamis* (Greek) meaning dynamite, ability, efficiency and authority. Only a merciful God would be so gracious to give us GRACE.

If we were to just have Mercy, that's a good thing. Mercy will obviously get you to God. David had an ongoing relationship with God based on the Mercy. Samuel had a relationship with God based on the Mercy. Isaiah had a relationship with God just based on God's Mercy. If we needed Mercy yesterday then we need Mercy today. If we needed forgiveness and God's lovingkindness yesterday, then we need it today. If the apostles and the early church needed Grace – power, then we surely need it today.

Taking the Lower Seat (The Road to Power)

The tour bus climbed up a hill and near the top, the tour guide declared, "This is the possibly the cliff that they were going to throw Jesus Christ off. This is the village of Nazareth!" As I scanned the little town, I could see why the people of Jerusalem looked down on it. "It's not that much to see." Compared to Tel Aviv, Bethlehem, or the great city of Jerusalem, Nazareth still isn't much. So 2000 years ago, when the Jews were questioning if Jesus Christ could be the Messiah, they concluded that it was too humble a place for a King to come from.

Yet, this town was where the Lord was raised - in humble Nazareth. Jesus was born in another humble place - Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 tells us His birthplace and many assumed that their traditional-cultural patterns would hold the Messiah in Bethlehem until He was revealed. The tradition was that the city of your birth would be where you lived, died, and established your legacy. The Jews knew some Scripture, but not the full counsel and plan of God. The Christ would have to leave His place of birth to escape an assassination plot by evil king Herod. The small family would hide in Egypt for a while then settle in tiny-humble Nazareth. So the Scripture declared, "*out of Egypt I called My Son*" (Matthew 2:15/Hosea 11:1, King James).

In Nazareth of Galilee, the family grew unnoticed while moving toward the fulfilling of Isaiah 9:1-2: "*Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has*

shined."

Notice that even God did not highly esteem this area. So the Christ is born in a lowly manger, taken and hidden in exile, raised in obscurity in a nowhere town; truly humble beginnings.

Jesus practices what He preaches. Even in His birth and childhood the King of kings took the lower seat. His earthly parents are simple folk with good roots but with little or no education, just a maiden and a carpenter.

Nothing in the Word seems to imply that Jesus was ever ashamed of these humble beginnings or that He was proud of them. Throughout His ministry Jesus Christ does not mention His humble upbringing or the modest town He was from. Jesus makes no effort to bring Nazareth glory or make it more than it was. He surely did not talk about His humble beginnings to impress people with how far He had come. Some peoples' testimonies have a flavor of pride and bragging. It's as if they are happy and rejoicing that their flesh and the devil took them so low that they should get more honor as an overcomer than someone who resisted and did not fall as low as they did.

Our Lord's status was never held up as a badge of honor. We honor Him because He accepted this lowly status from a high position. Philippians 2:5-11:

*"Let this mind be in you which was also in
Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God
did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
but made Himself of no reputation,
taking the form of a bondservant,
and coming in the likeness of men.
And being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled Himself and became obedient
to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him
the name which is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
of those in heaven, and of those on earth,
and of those under the earth,
and that every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."*

Though He is God, He humbled Himself and became a man. Low birth, lowly town, lowly existence taken on by a great Spirit being. WOW! Greatness is becoming less for a higher purpose. Sacrifice for a greater good. Lowering self to raise a victory banner. Doing your part to win the whole thing. ***True greatness is recognizing your design and accepting your moment of selflessness.***

Selfishness is only evil when it's shortsighted or immoral. If we see the big picture, understand the ultimate goal, then selfishly push toward that higher goal, good things will happen since our motive is pure. We must be selfish about being unselfish. Jesus did not let anyone out-give Him. He gave it all for the big picture of saving mankind. In a good selfish sense, He would not be deterred, talked out of, threatened, persecuted, stoned or manipulated out of giving His life for us. His vision was long and wide - ultimately mankind, the Father, Holy Spirit and Christ Himself would receive the greater joy by Him staying the course and sticking to the plan. Being selfish and staying humble make great sense and has great rewards. The key is to keep the motive honest. Selfishness has received a bad rap, as has intolerance. If the motive is to maintain a high moral and ethical standard for the benefit of all, then selfishness and intolerance are good. God is intolerant of permitting evil in Heaven. Rev. 22:14-15; 18-19: *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that*

they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie...For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." No matter how we try to get God to change, He remains intolerant of evil and He selfishly gets His way. This works because God's motive is pure and ultimately His judgment is what's best for all. To be tolerant of evil is sin by omitting to do the right thing. **YOU ARE GUILTY BY WHAT YOU ALLOW.** If you see evil in progress and do nothing, you are guilty for not attempting to prevent it from continuing. Pride, conceit and elevating oneself to a place we don't deserve are all of the spirit of falsehood. Only God can sustain someone at a level beyond their ability. Embracing a view of yourself that's a lie will always end in disaster. "Your talent can take you places where your character cannot sustain you," someone once said. How true; now add to that, "Your pride can take you places where your boldness cannot sustain you." People will boldly promote themselves beyond their giftings where they will be exposed as frauds. These folks can be identified by the "bold absolute" type statements. They express their opinions using terms like "always, never, and definitely," yet, they don't prove their assertions. If pressured they assert, "Well, that's the way it is", "You just aren't ready to accept this truth", "You can't accept my view cause you don't have the revelation of it yet!" They leave you feeling put down as they are too deep for you or

you're just too slow to get it. Yet, your questions were not answered and they couldn't prove their points with clarity or simplicity. Christ, the Deep Thinker of all time, made it simple via stories and explanations to His disciples. Our gifts should be a blessing to others, not an insult. The teacher should leave us with direction. The evangelist should leave us convicted and motivated. The pastor should leave us comforted. The apostle all of the above, with signs and wonders following. Our gifts – administration, helps, etc. must all be done with the understanding that we are but vessels and tools in the hand of an able God. The true motive of the proud will eventually be exposed as the fruit will smell of “self for self and by self”. Yet, if they stay humble, God can bless them with gifts that are useful to the individual and the team. God's gifts bless the recipient and others which then opens the higher seats. God gives Grace (favor and empowerment) to the humble. I Peter 5:5-7: *“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”*. The word “Grace” means God gives empowerment to those He favors, and God favors the humble. The humble here are not “acting humble”, they truly are lowly and self aware. They presume that they are capable of accomplishing much alone but so much more with divine help. They need help from God to succeed and are willing to give Him the glory and praise.

I Peter 5:10: *“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you”* tells us that if we

suffer with the right motive, the God of Grace (empowerment) will establish and perfect us. This points out that in humbleness we need help, we ask and we do receive, but not so the proud. It is strange how a person can come to think that they are always right and are superior to those around them. Many fail to see that this is usually due to a poor self-concept which is covered in "over-compensation". Out of hurt and disappointment there emerges a person ready to believe his fantasies or the voice of a demonic liar. A great hunger is developed that has at its core the false idea that there is an amount of adoration that will satisfy the inner beast. External attention cannot heal the inner wound. Rejecting the lower seat and striving for the higher seat becomes the life style. They are always looking for the way up and suspecting that others are working to hold them down. They must try out two or three hotel rooms and don't want the seat offered them in any restaurant. They never stop to ask for directions, read assembly directions or seek counsel. The proud are believing the demonically influenced flesh, accepting the lie so they don't ask and don't receive timely wisdom. Foolishly they believe they get points by saying, "I did it without help". They seek to attain the higher seats and places of honor by self promotion and politics. The proud start to believe their own press and publicity.

Opportunities, Trials & Tribulation

The doors of opportunity are opened and closed by unseen actions in the natural and in the super natural. Most of these events are beyond our control. God and God alone can open doors that no one can shut. When the humble rely upon God for help, He is pleased to provide opportunities that will bring great rewards. His plan is

that these opportunities which He provides should not be taken from us so He often must prepare us to succeed. Sustained success is often based upon such traits and skills as perseverance, patience, willingness to learn and humble teachableness. The lower seat is often a beginning place where these skills are taught. The truly worthy student comes to know this and embraces small beginnings. Great men who have achieved much, love to talk about their beginnings, for therein lie the roots and fond memories of attaining the rewards of starting from the lower seat.

*The lower seat is a position of learning,
trials and tribulation.*

It is here that we come to know that when we do not know, divine providence smiles upon us with the answer to our seemingly unsolvable dilemmas, providing, strength and inspiration. We then accept our position for we know we were blessed for some unknown and wonderful reason. We are truly humble when we think "I am not all that, I was just doing my job, but this feels good." "I was o.k. where I was." "I worked hard, maybe I deserve to be up there, but I'm content right here." Yet, after a while, God recognizes our progress in humility and promotes us to the higher seat. Sometimes God's promotion comes only because we arrive at a place where God knows He can now trust us. The question has been answered - "If you receive honor, and you gain recognition will it go to your head and increase pride or will you stay humble?" This is answered in the head as well as the heart, and God knows each man's potential and the truth. The mature and self aware know they may want to move up but want it given to them, rather than by usurping the higher seat. They are no longer "seat" oriented but have become goal and task oriented. God divinely influences the hearts of others and

causes them to recognize and elevate whom God has chosen. Even if men ignore God's call to elevate, promote and recognize a chosen person, that person has such a sense of fulfillment on the inside from God that man's accolades can be overlooked. When you take the lower seat, knowing you should be more greatly esteemed by man, God's still the Great Rewarder in other ways when men fail to reward. The satisfaction of a job well done does not fade because others don't see what was accomplished. There is a strange air of superiority that comes from knowing that people are unaware of your greatness and humility. When we do things just for praise, that praise is never enough. Dancers and singers that are seeking "man praise" don't get the joy of pure worship and the rewarding touch of the Lord. True worshippers will sing and dance anywhere in the church, even if it's not on or in front of the altar. They don't care who's watching or dance only if they are "looking good".

The humble know that great power becomes available to us when we are weak or needy. The apostle Paul said, "When I am weak I am strong..." It's good to be polished and organized, but the humble know that *when God takes over, He takes over!* So no matter how well you've set things up, God will change things, and the humble aren't so set in their way as to believe they must have their way. Positive selfishness says, "What's best for me is that God takes control of what's going on. That's the way I want it - God in the driver's seat!"

Humility allows us to realize we are happiest when we can let go of control. The control freak is doomed to sadness, depression, anger and frustration. There are too many things that cannot be controlled.

1. The unexpected
2. The unexplained (communications)
3. Other people's stuff
4. Timing
5. Emotions
6. Resources
7. The supernatural
8. Error
9. Wrong assumptions

Your circumstances depend upon all 9 factors and more. *If your happiness depends upon things going the way you want them, get ready to be unhappy.*

The humble are looking for instructions, assistance, and direction (guidance). Jesus taught that He only does what the Father is doing and says what He is told to say. This is the heart of the saint and his relationship with the Holy Spirit. In John, Chapters 14-17, Jesus Christ is giving us information on the Holy Spirit. He is a Teacher, Guide, Comforter and Lawyer. We must remain in the vine as team players that are yielded to the supernatural leading of the Holy Spirit. The humble know they don't have all the answers so they will listen to follow. Therefore, taking the higher seat is also under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Great Expectations

The humble want God to lead and control, and they limit their expectations. The prideful set mental pictures of what they expect. They see themselves receiving honor and accolades. In the Book of Esther, evil Haman was asked by the king how a servant of the king should be honored. Haman expected that this servant was himself, so he described to the king, "Put the king's royal robe about him and place him on the king's horse and parade

him before the people.” This prideful expectation of honor was later bestowed upon Haman’s enemy, the Jew Mordecai. Humble expectations are of victory for the greater good and hearing, “you did your job!”, or “well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Jesus tells us that a servant after a hard day’s work should expect to come into the house and gird himself, and prepare first for the master before serving and eating himself. If we expect little, then any praise is a great bonus. After all we are not after the praise of men but of God. We therefore expect to do our best and know our reward will be a perfect match for what we have done. Our hope and expectations must be in the Lord and His Word. Disappointment is the product of shallow expectations. Having the nature of Christ our expectations are wrapped in Faith and godly hope. We are aware that man may never recognize us but we anxiously look forward to see how the Lord is going to work things out. Work harder than requested or required, then on that day of reckoning we’ll not become shipwrecked by our expectations. If upon entering and taking the lower seat our Master calls us forward, then how joyful and fulfilled we will be.

Biblical humility is that devotion to knowing that God’s plan and view of us is accurate and true. We are what God says we are, and we’ll have what He wants to give us. Solomon was born into the kingdom and was given the throne. His humble request for wisdom so that he could better serve caused God to view him as worthy of greater honor, and bestowed upon Solomon the perks of wealth and power. Solomon’s son Rehoboam was not humble, but prideful. His pride was not based upon God’s estimation of him, but upon what was given to him. So often I see beautiful or handsome people who are proud

and arrogant about their looks, which were given to them and not achieved. God shall reward us for what we did with that which was given to us. Rehoboam was given a great kingdom, but lacking humility he caused division and tore the kingdom apart. Think more of God and others and less of yourself - take the lower seat and God will raise you up. AMEN.

Taking The Lower Seat
Traditional & Cultural Disobedience

*“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’
and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46)*

Jesus is talking to the people concerning taking the lower seat. He sets forth an illustration of a man going into a banquet. The man goes in and sits at the head table; it appears that he is going to be asked to move to a lower table. Then a man who comes in and sits at a lower table, and after a time, he is asked to sit at the head table, a place of honor. This example is given to us to illustrate a type of humility, a way of keeping the ego in check and controlling pride. As a side benefit, it keeps us from being embarrassed or ridiculed. It is not wise to be presumptuous as to your importance or your status. So Jesus gives us words of wisdom as to guard ourselves against these embarrassing moments, but it is actually more than this. In the Kingdom of God (on earth), and the Kingdom of Heaven, the Father has relegated Christ to be the ultimate and final Judge over man, and over the church. John 5:27: *“And has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”* Christ is the ultimate dignitary who comes in contact with man, along with the Holy Ghost; They alone sit in the high place over the affairs of the Body of Christ. The Godhead sits in the

highest place and determines which seat a saint receives. This work is concerned with the question of: Has man, by culture and tradition, placed himself at odds with God? Man has created practices that he uses to get a higher seat, rather than taking the lower seat. These practices set Jesus' teachings aside and leave one with only the praise and accolades that other men can give. God withholds any further blessings, leaving man with a hollow victory.

Mark 7:10: *"For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death'."* Jesus warns the Pharisees and scribes against setting aside the commandments of God, in favor of the traditions of men. Jesus uses as an example the practice of Corban, where the command of God to honor your father and mother is set aside in a devious practice to avoid the responsibilities of caring for elderly relatives. A person who did not want to honor his father or mother would give a gift to the priest, instead of providing for his elderly or disabled parents. The rationale was that a gift to the priest, who places the gift in the temple, is a gift to God; therefore, a legal and acceptable way to get around the command of God. This would be like a little boy who is told by his mother, "Don't eat any cookies from the cookie jar." The tricky little boy devises a way to get around that command. When his friend comes over to visit, he gives his friend a few cookies, and his friend then gives him a cookie. Then he can tell his mother, "I didn't eat a cookie from the cookie jar, I gave a cookie to company, and the company, in their kindness, gave me a cookie from the cookies that they got, therefore, I did not violate the cookie law". Jesus, in this teaching on tradition (Corban) is showing the Pharisees that they are making judgments that they are not given authority to make. They are perverting

the true purpose and meaning of the commands of God with their devious manipulations. The child is to honor the parents by humbling himself to care for them. When the child was helpless and could not care for himself, the parents did - so a reciprocal act is commanded. God's purpose is to establish the correct parent-child protocol. God's system preserves society, the family, reduces misery and puts in place a "lower seat to higher seat" honor tradition. We are commanded to do this and God promises a long and prosperous life. If we take the lower seat, humble ourselves and give honor to our parents, our promotion is going to come.

Sin and error are obvious when we fail to do something that is in the Word of God. But it is also sin and error when we take something that is in the Word of God beyond its application and purpose.

Mark 7:3-5: *"For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like with washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?' "* It is interesting that the Pharisees and scribes are focused on the question, "Why do your disciples not hold to the traditions of the elders?", but omitted doing what God said do. Jesus continually challenges what man establishes as spiritual and holy when it departs from or adds to the command of God. Adding to God's commands is as bad as not doing them. *"For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men - the washing of pitchers and cups, and many*

other such things you do. He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition" " (Mark 7:8,9). These Pharisees are not willing to humble themselves to God's command and want others to humble themselves to their suggestions, propped up to be commandments.

Clothes Make The Man?

Let us take a very simple topic, such as apparel. In the Old Testament, Moses and Aaron are given instructions as to what the priests should wear. *"Of the blue, purple, and scarlet thread they made garments of ministry, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron, as the Lord had commanded Moses..." (Exodus 39:1-3).* Somehow things have gone awry. Every Sunday people dress up in colorful robes to do religious stuff and want to look like Moses and Aaron. They want to reproduce the personal grandeur of fancy robes so they can "look" holy and special. They didn't reproduce the wilderness' cloth tabernacle, or the brazen laver, or the altar. There are no animals about, and no one is planning to get blood on their robes. OK. OK. Jesus Christ is the last Sacrificed Lamb necessary so we don't need any of that. Well, then I ask, "Do we still need the fancy robes?" The honest answer is: Jesus Christ was the last High Priest and He ended Temple worship with all its trappings, and only when He returns will we know how to properly minister to Him. In the meantime, let's consider what the Bible had to say about apparel.

During temple times the priests, singers, dancers and musicians wore simple white linen. Jesus' simple garment was not special due to color or ornamentation but was seamless, therefore unique. In this simple daily garment

He healed the sick and raised the dead. Many have then taken this (the fact that Jesus dressed casually) to mean we should establish a tradition of commanded casual dress. I visited a casual dress church and an elder (in jeans and flannel shirt) came over to me and loosened my tie saying, "You don't need that tie in here". I felt so condemned that I began explaining that I had just come from work, etc, etc. At their church the tradition was casual dress = holy dress.

At the other end of the continuum there are "dress up only" churches. These churches are "suit and tie, and ladies in dresses" churches. They offer as justification that they are striving for excellence. Since the priests dressed up in temple worship, they respond, "We should also". Ex. 28:3,5,6: *"So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest...They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, artistically worked. It shall have two shoulder straps joined at its two edges, and so it shall be joined together."* Ex. 28:42,43: *"And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, that they do not incur iniquity and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and his descendants after him."* Ex. 39:1: *"Of the blue, purple, and scarlet thread they made garments of ministry, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron, as the Lord had commanded Moses."* These passages show that Aaron, as the high priest, was elaborately dressed. If we are in that office we could be justified in dressing like Aaron. Yet, under the New Covenant, Jesus is declared as our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14: *"Seeing then that we have a*

great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession"). We very well are priests and kings as Peter declares, but we are not the High Priest. At the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 5:12), God shows up in a powerful manner and the Levites and musicians are simply dressed. God established a pattern and they properly honored that pattern and saw a great move of the Holy Spirit. Taking the lower seat means to keep your station without desiring or usurping what belongs to the higher position. The one with the fanciest vestments was the one who would make sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the nation and for personal sins: This is only our High Priest Jesus Christ. It appears that over time under-shepherds wanted some of the glory of the Head Shepherd. Then the choirs, ushers, bishops, etc., etc. all got into the act. Some religious orders took to wearing black with jewelry, chains and ornaments. In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Chapter 17:4, we see the scarlet woman *"arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls"*...she is over-dressed, considering how she's about to meet her end. *"Therefore her plagues will come in one day - death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her"* (Rev. 18:8). After the crucifixion, Jesus is portrayed in His glory, which is beyond words. On a few occasions He hides His glory to accomplish His goals, but we see Him as He is in the Book of Revelation (see Rev. 19:12,13 and Rev. 1:13-16). Many crowns, golden belt, glorious robe, etc., while only the elders have a crown and the angels and saints and martyrs are all in white linen (see Rev. 6:11, 7:9, 7:13,14, and Rev. 19:14). Maybe we should practice for Heaven in clean white linen, or wear our clean common clothes, as we are

all equal.

Someone reading this might be inclined to start the "Church of the White Linen". This surely would be missing the point - the simple white linen represents holiness, purity and humility of the heart. These traits come from within and reflect what's on the inside. The exterior can not govern, lead or dictate. Many would and did wear the white linen, but in their hearts they were like lucifer, desiring that which has not been given to them. *"For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High' "* (Isaiah 14:13,14). *"Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, the most terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, and defile your splendor"* (Ezekiel 28:6,7). Humility must be of the heart, and starting another religious tradition would be foolish. What is needed is truth that causes self-evaluation and reordering of our flesh priorities. Do we have a dress code? If so, why? Are we dressing up to honor and glorify God, or is it to discriminate against the poor? Some are dressing to appear more holy and set themselves apart, not by conduct but by appearance. My grandma was into a Holiness Church. She wore the clean white uniform, but was quick tempered and very often mean without cause. The holy dress was a mask and a sign of hypocrisy to me.

One of our deacons tells of how he was at his lowest point of life. He couldn't find a job, feed his family or fix his marriage. He thought, "Maybe if I go to church God will help me." As he opened the door, the priest fully

adorned for holiness told him, “Young man, you can’t come in here in jeans and a tee shirt!” As the door closed in his face, shutting him out from God, he uttered quietly, “But these are the only clothes I have.” It was twelve more years before he’d step into a church again. Dressing up for service is not a bad thing if the heart is right. Jesus came to tear down the wall of separation between God, clergy and people. Traditions that serve the flesh put back walls that God wants down. King David wore the attire that brought the most glory to the Father – nothing at all. A humble heart was David’s covering – but I don’t think it’s time to start “The Church of the Naked.” Better to dress down now than when Jesus returns and makes us disrobe.

Notice that God had directed them to clothing that speaks of purity and humility. There is nothing about the clothing that would draw attention to the garment itself. We surely cannot identify this simple attire as making a fashion statement. There are no names or emblems, or decorative borders or trim. Matt. 23:5: *“But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries (frontlets and strips of cloth for Scriptures - Ex. 13:9,16, Numbers 15:38, Deut. 22:12) broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.”*

Some churches are very orderly but often become overly restrictive. You must come on time or be locked out. You must sit where you’ve been ushered to and, “No, you cannot go down front and meet the pastor.” We must ask – are these restrictions to train the people, or to please our need for control? Clothing and all rules must be examined under the light of humbleness.

“The Reward of the Humble”

“Now Jesus, when He saw the great throngs around Him, gave orders to cross to the other side (of the lake). And a scribe came up and said to Him, ‘Master, I will accompany You wherever You go’. And Jesus replied to him, ‘foxes have holes and the birds of the air have lodging places, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’” From this passage we see that the Son of Man does not expect to get all of His rewards on the earth. In Matthew chapter 5, the Beatitudes specifically tell us that the humble who rate as insignificant, theirs’ is the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus must be telling us that we can become truly blessed as well as demonstrate wisdom and other good fruits by accepting a humble status as well as making “taking of the lower seat” our habit. He further promises benefits in verse 19; *“he who practices these commandments that Jesus taught, shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven”*.

Matthew 6:1 ups the ante quite a bit because He says to be careful not to do our good deeds before men, otherwise we will have no reward in Heaven. He goes on to discuss the giving of charity to the poor, and methods of prayer.

Matthew 16:11-12 - Jesus points out that the teaching of the Pharisees, which He calls leaven, is a contagious pollutant. He warns the disciples to beware of their teachings. In other words, it rises up like a leavening agent (yeast) creating more sin, abuse, prejudice and misunderstanding, rather than the commands of the teachings of the Lord.

Jesus hits this topic again even harder in Matthew 23:1-7,12. He really comes on strong...*“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe that observe and do, but do not do according to their*

works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi'. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" .

In Luke 14:7-11, the parable of the lower seat includes a warning as to possible outcome. *"So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit at the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.""* This teaching is taken from Proverbs 25:6,7: *"Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great; for it is better that he say to you, "Come up here," than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen."* He points out the wisdom of taking the lower seat, for it will potentially result in greater acclaim, honor and reward, whereas violating Jesus' teaching in this regard reduces one to forced humility and disgrace. On the other hand, the reward is eternal in the heavens as well as practical on the earth.

Hollow Practices

There are many practices we have adopted in church worship and in church activities that promote the wrong spirit. This spirit works against what Jesus is trying to teach us - the humility of taking the lower seat. In church services we say we are giving honor to God but spend a good deal of time making sure every dignitary is named and every supposed important person is recognized. Extensive amounts of energy go into the elaborate decorations of preparing the seating places of speakers and church leaders. Great expense is taken to make programs to display the names, histories, biographies, and achievements of men. Even as the Pharisees had iron-clad practices, we today have similar well ingrained and entrenched customs. I remember after ministering at a church, being taken downstairs to the banquet area. It was a stage on which tables were set for 10-12 people, and then facing the stage were about 100 seats. I was escorted to the head of the table on stage where there was placed sufficient amount of food to feed a great host of dignitaries. Nothing was missing, from appetizer to fabulous desserts, but facing the stage were the members of the congregation. They were strategically placed to actually watch us eat a full course meal while they received only cake and Kool-aid. Prior to speaking, I encountered a homeless man on the street as I was entering the church, struck up a conversation with him and invited him to come in for the service. After the service he entered the dining hall and proceeded to approach the cake handlers. As I sat in my position of high honor, I noticed that a move was under way to escort this man from the church hall, so I went down and informed the church members that this man was my invited guest and proceeded to take him to the head

table. The choir director discreetly told me that this may cost me a future invitation to this church but I assured her that I was willing not only to take the risk, but felt this action was a better sermon than the one I had preached. The pastor informed me that I wouldn't be back, and then a sweet smile came to his face and a tear looked for an exit. "Young man, I have labored here for years and have not been able to get these people to open their hearts to the members or to the people of this community that are down trodden. I've told the district heads to move me; I'll be leaving soon - pray for me and these people as well." We embraced and I could feel his pain, for he truly loved all of God's children but couldn't level the playing field here at this tradition-bound church.

Let's list a few church customs and activities that need examining: decked out preacher's robes and super fancy movie star suits, choir robes designed to dazzle with monogrammed capes, marching and swaying ushers, and parading offerings. In some African nations there is an outstanding example where the saints, choirs and ushers pass a wooden box with a hole in it and people, whether they have money or not, stick their hand into the box as if they are releasing an offering. People march with clenched fists toward the box as if they have something even when they don't. Anonymity is preserved but most of the church acted out a lie.

I engaged an African pastor in a discussion on this practice. African poverty isn't just because of the exploitation of Colonial powers, but also the exploitation of Traditional powers. Jesus Christ's teachings on economic wealth seem as counter-productive to our culture as they seem to capitalists. The lion's share goes to the top dog and the little dogs have so little that they squeeze what

they have. As a result, the principles of sowing, give and it shall be given, are in need of help. I notice how much attention is given to honoring visiting pastors and missionaries. They won't even let you carry your own Bible. They wait on you constantly, call you "uncle" and "daddy", but much of it is to get and not to give. I'm not saying that I want anything from people who have little to give - I'm saying they would get more by giving. Poor people remain poor because they hoard what they have and count their little as nothing. God counts little as much if it's sown as a seed in good soil. In order to benefit from God we must humble our understanding of financial matters to the wisdom and supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Pride and bad habits prevent supernatural provision. What visiting foreign pastor receiving an offering from a Third World church would not be so humbled as to give back more than he budgeted or planned?

In Haiti we walked from the church a mile or two into the back woods, crossed a stream to a small hut where the Pastor lived with his wife and five kids. I had preached to 300+ people the night before, where a few hundred little children from his school had come. The purpose of this trek was that he wanted to say thank you – he was going to kill his lamb and provide a feast for us. The lamb was very small and thin, but with rice and gravy all 20 of us ate well. He beamed with joy as his offering had pleased us. I asked what he'd want in return, he insisted, "nothing, all is well". I persisted for three days. Finally as he, Brother Pierre and I walked he tearfully confessed: "I'm a 70 year old man, and soon I will die, leave my wife, children and church-school, and have not provided for them. My dream is to buy land near the church-school, build a house and a small

store so they can be self-sufficient after I'm gone...this is my prayer." How could we say no, when that was great gravy? Humble asking is better than bold begging. We must teach the Body of Christ to practice and believe in God's principles of giving for this type of giving is a form of taking the lower seat - your humble gift can also gain you the upper seat.

On the other hand, "marching - swaying" ushers, white gloves and all, is pure flesh on parade. In orderly fashion they direct you to march to the offering table and none are allowed to escape!

Some churches go the total opposite. The offering plate is mentioned as it has been placed at the rear of the church. These churches are almost ashamed that giving is part of worship. Unfortunately, the people don't learn to give. They get cheated of the blessings that come from God due to the practice of giving tithes and offerings. An examination of the Word shows that giving was central to learning how to be a giver like our God. Offerings determined the response of God to our generosity or lack thereof. We should give in a humble fashion, but not in shame or flamboyantly. Forgiveness, mercy and love of the brethren could be demonstrated through acts of giving. The tithe offerings are a matter-of-fact ordinance in the Bible. Offerings were deliberate, though better done in private and with little pomp and circumstance. Jesus commends the widow who only had a mite (coin of small value) to give, and He praises anonymous giving.

How about Mother's Day, Father's Day, Children's Day, Valentine's Day? I'm sure these are not Scriptural and were probably dreamed up by a greeting card company. Why are dignitaries given special tall seats on the altar? This practice comes from pagan times where judges were

given impressive seats to reflect their power and office. Christ had no such seat and tells us via Peter to feed, not bleed the sheep! Parking spaces and reserved seats for the speakers are necessary at times, but often great efforts are taken to treat those identified as servants as lords unapproachable; superstars above the common folk. Often ushers work as body guards to prevent the leaders from having contact with the very people they are serving. My wife and I went to visit a church pastored by a friend of our family's. His ministry had done well, growing from his living room to now 2,000 or so. To our surprise, his church was not user friendly. We couldn't sit where we wanted - ushers weren't helpers, but were police. After service we couldn't get near to him without interrogation and feeling as if we weren't welcome. Having an armor bearer is one thing, but being covered in armor is the other.

Jesus recommends that we invite those lower than us to dinner rather than inviting the important dignitaries, the rich or famous. The lesson is one of humility, servanthood and Faith. We bless people who cannot in turn bless us. This is done by Faith - we believe that this type of kindness results in being blessed by God. We also lower ourselves to associate with the needy and serve the poor. Jesus points out that you will miss the envy and admiration of other people if they see you inviting those below you rather than those equal or above you, but God sees and is pleased. We don't often see this practice. We see the custom of soup kitchens, but then people are often viewed as underlings, not as friends. The meal is used as a charitable act, but also is a vehicle for evangelism. Of course, we have no intentions of putting down evangelism. Jesus Christ fed 5,000 who had come for the Word and miracles, seeing their hunger. This is the opposite of what

we do. Food is being used as a drawing ticket.

Rummage sales, bake sales, yard sales, roast beef dinners, and barbecues have become ways of raising funds to meet the needs of the church. None of this is seen in the temple era and the early church era. God's plan to support the Church has always been to have the people give as opposed to selling. In an effort to compensate for poor giving, pastors and church leaders will devise unholy methods to encourage giving. Competition, bragging and giving prizes and awards for giving are unbiblical traditions. These techniques range from peddling guilt to: Name on a window, special recognition dinners, private special prayer, laying on of hands, selling anything: idols, toys, garments, prayer cloths, holy water, oil, seats with plaques, stained glass windows, dinners, fashion shows, raffle tickets, etc. These may work but are without Scriptural support. They tend to tie giving to getting from man rather than blessings from God. The priests would describe the need and make an appeal to the people, and the people, out of their possessions, would bring in their offerings and meet the need. We have no examples of begging, but we do have an example, wherein Moses had to request the people to stop giving because their generosity was so overwhelming. Since tithing, the giving of 10%, has come under such attack, people who traditionally tithed 10% are now giving, in many cases, 3% or less, which has caused the church to pursue other means to meet its needs.

Probably the most dangerous and unfortunate liberty given to dignitaries and important people is that they are not to be questioned. This has caused great error in the church and has gotten very far away from the Jewish tradition in the temple. We see in Jewish culture, that

debate and discussion even permits a 12 year old boy (Jesus) to sit with the elders and teachers and be involved in a give-and-take discussion. This relationship is quite often not practiced in Gentile settings. Bible studies are not interactive studies, but are lectures and sermons which go uninterrupted. Out of what we determine as being respectful, the speaker is free to speak, but not the listeners. Error can be spoken and even heresy can go unquestioned inside the church. If a speaker is questioned, it is often at times considered rude, improper or back-biting.

Many a preacher and teacher have hidden behind the Scripture that admonishes us not to touch God's anointed. To criticize, challenge, request or even demand an explanation does not properly fall under the category of touching the anointed. In 1 Chronicles 16:21 and 22, David is saying that he would not be directly involved in taking the life or attempting to remove an anointed and appointed king, in this case, King Saul. *"He permitted no man to do them wrong; yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, "Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm." "* Strong statements and powerful preaching are to be challenged if they raise questions that are not supported by Scripture. Great organ swells and exciting drum accompaniment may elicit an emotional response when the preacher is exhorting and encouraging, but if the exhortation is not Scriptural it should be challenged. Could it be that if the practice of taking the lower seat was fully adhered to, the humility of the teachers and preachers would be more evident? Many leaders are not open to answering questions or defending their positions. The foolish adage of "not discussing sex, religion or politics" has left us at the mercy of self-appointed intellects that

hide in flimsy ivory towers. Much foolishness could be exposed if these protected ones had to break down their walls and come out where the people can examine and test their teachings. "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" tells us that clergy can also fall into abuse if given too lofty a place. Sexual abuse and protection afforded pedophiles proves this point. Arrogance and pride breeds predators that reject the lower seat, and by manipulation and aggression take the higher seat. Paul warned us that this would be one of the signs of the last days - "*men would be lovers of themselves, boasters, proud,*" etc. (Tim. 3). The music and videos of today blatantly declare, "I, me, mine-I'm the greatest, I desire the best and I'm taking it, and I'll walk all over you to get it".

In the church, pride wears a mask called "networking" - "I have 200 members, you have 30, God bless you!" "I have 200 members, you have 250, let's do lunch and exchange pulpits!" "I'm an apostle, I'm a bishop, I'm a deacon, I'm Spirit-filled, I'm an independent, I'm a Methodist, I'm born again", etc. - labels, divisions, and distinctions are too often used not to bring unity or for identification, but to impress and establish hierarchy. Jesus prayed that we'd "*be one*" (John 17). Unity can not be blended without humility. Zacchaeus was a rejected tax collector, yet Jesus Christ the King of kings invited Himself to his house, in spite of the persecution that would be forthcoming. Jesus Christ allows a known harlot to wash His feet and then declares that her actions will be noted in history.

Jesus' greatness is best outlined in Phil. 2:3-11 - because the "Word" (Son of God - Son of Man - Creator of the world) lowers Himself to serve His creation and its creatures. This is the premier example of taking the lower

seat – from the Throne of Heaven to an animal manger in a cave in a small village called Bethlehem. Born into the world of common folk, Jesus must follow the orders of humans.

Jesus' first miracle was not for a king or priest, but for his lowly maiden mother, who said, "They have no wine, Son". "Woman," He said, "It is not yet My time!" Yet for her, He made gallons and gallons of wine. Since then, those who call holiness "not drinking" have been putting down "drinkers," but deny that they are prejudiced against what they fear or seek to control. The Master of the universe makes wine at a wedding of underlings for a lowly mom, the wife of a carpenter. His power and Faith are used to serve the unworthy and poorly prepared wedding host or the gluttonous crowd.

Each spiritual display of power must be done at the order of the Father and by the unction of the Holy Spirit, and often with the permission and at the request of the lowly humans. Even His own words are not His own. Jesus is totally yielded to following the lead of the Holy Spirit, and serving mankind. This extreme example of taking the lower seat culminates at the sacrifice of the Cross, the most humiliating death and the most painful torture known at that time. For a life of humility and sacrifice, Jesus is awarded permanent status as "Lord of lords." If we will lower ourselves, God will glorify us in the same manner the Father blesses the Son of Man.

We must notice that Jesus Christ is perfect in obedience and adhering to the "Truth", rather than being bound to tradition or selfish motives. He could have seized the world, governments, power or money, but fulfilled the call to humility.

Thousands of sermons are preached encouraging the

saints to humble themselves, and to think of others as equal to, or more important than themselves; but if the actions of the leadership do not reflect what we are teaching, then the teaching falls to the ground. If our traditions elevate our flesh and feed the ego, then the cause of humility is lost. The curtain of glory does not come up and the stage of greatness remains shrouded in the darkness of selfish pride. This selfishness is shallow with no chance of bearing long time eternal rewards.

Worship Concerns

Matt. 23:6: *“They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues.”*

Why do pastors sit facing the congregation in elaborate, high back, cushioned chairs? This is once again an effort to establish the priesthood and separate the people from the ecclesia. Often the ministers will walk to these grand seats as worship is ending. This tells the people that worship to God was a preliminary to what they are going to say. Should the message to the people be more important than the people’s message to their God? Listening to and for God’s response should be revered. In worship, God can and does speak to His people and to His servant. A pastor who has been too busy and important to worship may still deliver his prepared message to the people, but has he spoken to and heard from his Father? If the Holy Spirit changes the direction of the service, how will the pastor know it? One can miss a great move of God if they miss worship. The bottom line is – the pastor is also a person and he needs to worship, and the people need to see him side by side with them worshipping their God. How can you think higher of your brother, holding him in higher regard and esteem if you have a better chair than he

has?

Matt. 23:7, 8-12: "...greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi'. But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." There's another trend that is disturbing: titles, labels and offices. If there were as many true prophets, apostles and bishops as use the titles, then surely there would be more churches than bars in America, and spiritual gifts would be in open operation everywhere. This grabbing for importance without being truly significant will cause sickness and premature death in many that placed their personal importance above service. Too many have let people talk and cheer them into a dangerous place. I met a brother who wore a cleric collar and introduced himself as Apostle, Bishop XYZ and later found out he had once had a storefront church with little or no members. The old timers were wise in this area; Brother Oral Roberts, Brother Kenneth E. Hagin (to name a few). These giants fulfilled all requirements for all offices and were content to be called "Brother"! Even the term "reverend" should be retired, as only God should be revered. The under-shepherd should be seen as what he is – a humble servant of the God Most High. The people who give honor where honor is due will be doubly blessed, and God will deal with the disrespectful. A title never made a ministry, but many ministries will receive titles that will test, bless or curse them. Just do what you do and do it as unto the Lord, and let Him give you a title - *"Well done, thou good*

and faithful servant.” Let that hope be enough.

Humble Prayer

Matt. 23:14: *“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”* The long prayer with hundreds of Father God’s thrown in can be very wearisome and self serving. As a child I noticed that laymen that felt either they or God missed to call them would use a chance to pray as a platform to preach. It could be a simple prayer to open the service, to collect the offering, present the speaker or any opportunity afforded them. Five to ten minutes later you had forgotten the reason for the prayer, but you felt like church was over. Someone would ask, “What did he say?”, and the answer would come back, “I don’t know but it was good!” Good to whom and to what end? Good to the flesh.

Get The Money Honey

Often the higher seat is offered up for a price. Large donations get more attention than the widow’s mite. While in Jerusalem, I was able to buy a small bag of these coins. I asked the interpreter of the approximate value, and his response was a snicker. After a good laugh he said they are not really worth the metal they are printed upon. Yet, this small sum was all the widow had. In her giving she was commended by the Lord for giving sacrificially as well as giving privately and quietly.

Some TV ministries will often give statues and other religious gifts to “get the money, honey.” They do this due to the great expenses they face in trying to stay on the air and due to the poor support that people give to the spreading of the Gospel. That old American adage, “give

something to get something," comes in and causes ministries to step out of their calling and move into commercialism. Autographed photos and books are also used to create a "groupie" phenomenon. At one meeting they were offering for a donation of \$1,000 or more you could come up and have hands laid upon you. To push the embarrassment button just have people divided into "committees" to raise money and then march them up front to announce what they have collected. Competition propels, and fear of embarrassment motivates giving that is not God-centered. Giving can be accelerated by giving prizes, like "a cruise" or special recognition.

A pastor friend had a \$5,000 need for a plumbing problem, and asked me how I would approach it. I told him I would have me or someone knowledgeable concerning teaching on the tithe and God's blessing come to his church and teach the people to give God's way. Then I told him to be an encourager, trust, pray, and lead by example and God will change the people and the church. Instead they called in a Christian entertainer and booked a bus trip to Atlantic City. Oh well! He eventually got the money, but so did the slot machines. The promise of God should be sufficient to cause cheerful giving.

We must take the lower seat and obey God's plan for supporting the Levites and His Temple. Jesus used the example of, "Why should the worker expect special reward or attention for doing his job?" (Matt. 20:1-16). Only owners and bosses get raises for increased production. Workers think they should get raises just for showing up. This mentality creates a "something for nothing", "it's about me" thinking. Money is not always promised to us and blessings are not always in cash. The Bible says, "Our needs are met in Christ Jesus." Do our egos have to be

stroked to get us to do our jobs as servants of God and keepers of His Temple? Do we have to be in competition with each other to be motivated to build His church? Do we have to be tricked and manipulated by the promise of special treatment to get us to give back to God from His provision? Many would say yes, but I say, no! We can humbly give and receive from our gracious Savior and Provider.

Learning to save is part of the economy of the Kingdom. This habit of saving is focused not on tomorrow, but tomorrow's tomorrows. We are told to store up treasure in Heaven. This treasure can be called down for use on the earth or reserved for spiritual reward after this life trip seems over. Death is a doorway to eternity, a change in address, a dance into another dimension. If we believe this life is all there is, then taking the lower seat makes no sense. If this is all there is then we should push to fight for importance and promote self at all costs. Yet, there are physical laws that are fixed, such as gravity. And, there are spiritual covenants and laws that are also fixed - "Faith comes by hearing", "wages of sin are death", "you shall have what you say", etc. etc. Should we and can we examine "taking the lower seat" from that same vantage point? Giving Mercy we will get Mercy, and being humble we will be exalted. Have we seen this? Has it been proven in your life, in mine? I am convinced it is a law, immutable, unchangeable, attainable and desirable. People who have not understood the concept of saving will not grasp the beauty of trusting God for a deferred reward. Saving is an act of Faith. ("The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" - Hebrews 11:1). Because God said so, we humbly serve, confident that payday will come. It may look stupid to serve, but we

have the guarantee of the Spirit that in due time we will be exalted. Moses' 40 years on the back side of the mountain were not at all a waste of time. He slipped up and struck the Rock, but has been exalted for 3,500 plus years.

Let's not be Trapped by The Trappings.

Grace in the New Testament

Additional Study

These pages are for those who need more convincing or for those who love the word of God so much that they want to get every ounce out of this topic. So we now bring you every usage of the word Grace as found in the King James and Amplified Versions of the New Testament.

My purpose is to show that the very limited definition of Grace as “unmerited favor” does not fit the context and the usage of the verses where the word is found. Strong’s dictionary gives us, “The divine influence upon the heart as made manifest in life”, which would be: favor of God manifesting as empowerment. Or we could say, “God empowers who He favors” as a definition of Grace.

So here we go, hold on tight! It’s a quite exciting ride but it can be a long one! Luke Chapter 2 verse 40, “*And the Child, (speaking of Jesus) grew, and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him*”. And the “unmerited favor” of God was upon him. Obviously, it is speaking about Jesus the Christ. The Son of God merits favor on two bases: one, He is the Son of God and two, He is without sin. Therefore, more appropriate understanding of the use of Grace in this passage is that He is strong in spirit, He is filled with wisdom, and therefore the favor of God is also manifesting as empowerment as the Child grows.

John 1, verse 14: “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father; full of grace and truth*”. If we were to use “unmerited” here, this sentence would now be, “full of unmerited favor and truth”. The glory that was beheld, that belonged to the only begotten was, of course, empowerment to do great works and signs and wonders,

which was favor manifesting as empowerment. John 1, verse 16: *“and of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace”*. We have received unmerited favor for unmerited favor? Of course this redundancy doesn't make sense, but manifesting as empowerment for manifesting as empowerment begins to make more sense. It is saying that as the favor of God was extended to Christ, He received more variety as well as varying degrees of favor that was manifested in His ministry.

John 1:17: *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”*. What's new about the New Covenant is not unmerited favor, which is of course Mercy, but what's new about the New Covenant is that Jesus will give gifts to men when He ascends on high (Ephesians 4:8: *“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men”*), and also, while He does His ministry He extends empowerment to the twelve and then to the seventy, in order that they also can make manifest the favor of God.

In the book of Acts, fourth chapter, thirty-third verse: *“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all”*. We see clearly here that they are not saying that unmerited favor was all that was given to the apostles. Of course it's implying that empowerment was given to them to accomplish great acts.

Acts 11:22, *“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord”*. Grace in this context is implying that something was seen, therefore, it would be better believed that it is referring to seeing manifestations of power such as miracles, signs and wonders. In Acts 13:43: *“Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the*

Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabus, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.” This would appear that they are encouraging them to continue manifesting empowerment.

Acts 14:3: *“Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands”.* This passage of course speaks for itself. Acts 14:26, *“From there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed”.* We see once again the theme of empowerment for accomplishing tasks. Acts 15:11, *“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, in the same manner as they”.* At last we have a verse which is somewhat neutral. Yet in the next few verses after Peter tells of the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit. Barnabas and Paul declare that the Gentiles were saved through the signs and miracles that occurred.

Acts 15:40, *“but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God”.* Acts 18:27, *“And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace”.* Throughout the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts, we see the spreading of the Gospel was through the use of signs and wonders, not through just fine talking. Paul expressed it that way as he said, *“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”* (1 Corinthians 2:4). Therefore we could state that the empowering favor of God to bring signs and wonders is what caused the people to receive and hear the Gospel in most cases. Therefore, this Grace would have to be Grace that is

sufficient to do great works.

Acts 20:24, *“But none of these things move me; nor count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God”*. Acts 20:32, *“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”*. Notice that the word Grace here is to be used to build up. It is also the vehicle by which one takes his inheritance. We see once again favor, which enables people to do things.

Romans 1:5, *“By whom we have received Grace and apostleship, for obedience to the Faith among all nations, for his name: Romans 1:7, “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”*. To just state ‘unmerited favor be to you’ isn’t quite the same as wishing them that they would be empowered and receive all that God has for them, to accomplish work in the earth. Would we really wish that someone would have that which they would receive at the point they believed as in unmerited favor, which is freely granted to the believer, but further empowerment requires different levels of Faith and acceptance of gifts. Romans 3:24, *“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”*. Romans 4:4, *“Now to him to works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt”*. The context of Grace in Romans 4:4 is more accurately translated, *“reckoned a favor but of debt”*. In the NIV and in Weymouth’s New Testament translation we see that this usage has no direct bearing on our conversation concerning Grace, Mercy and unmerited favor. It is basically saying that the favor of God cannot be earned by work because it is the free gift of God.

Romans 4:16, *“Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace”* is a discussion referring to the same point. Romans 5:2, *“through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”*. If we exercise and manifest the empowerment that is given to us we can then rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, for the glory of God is manifested by the saint who acts upon the favor that he has received from God.

Romans 5:15, *“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one the man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many”*. This is a powerful support for our position of gifts of God being manifested as power. It points out that because of sin God makes favor available to us, and the gift by Grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ has abounded to many.

When Jesus departs from the earth in Matthew twenty-eight, He makes it very clear that all power has been given to Him which He delegates to the believers. In addition, in Mark Chapter sixteen, He delineates these Graces and powers, or can we be so bold to say He delineates these Graces that have been given to believers, to accomplish His will and continue His work on the earth. In Romans 5:17, Paul continues this argument by saying, *“much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ”*. We see that it is the presence of the abundance of Grace which enables us to be empowered to reign in life. Not just getting by but excelling and accomplishing, for to “reign” is to be doing very well.

In Romans 5:20, *“But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more”*. In Romans 5:21, Paul begins a discussion

about sin reigning. He says, *“even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord”*. We don’t see the connection for the empowerment of Grace until we get into Romans 6: 1, 14, & 15. *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”* In verse 14, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace”*. It is the Grace of God that empowers us to refuse to let sin rule over us, and also empowers us to reverse the oppressive acts of satan. Therefore, through Grace we can break the chains and the bondages of sin. Let me remind you that Jesus told the apostle Paul that His Grace was sufficient. A careful reading of the passages (2 Corinthians 12:9 *And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* 1 Timothy 1:14, *“And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus”* shows that His Grace was sufficient to overcome the demonic forces that were buffeting Paul.

Romans 11:5, *“Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace”*, and 11:6, *“And if by grace, then is it no longer of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise grace is no longer grace”*. The emphasis here in 11:6 is upon the fact that it is God who provides the Grace freely and openly to us. Even though it is used to accomplish great things beyond our ability, we can’t take credit for it, for the unmerited favor and empowerment come from a Sovereign God who is benevolent.

Romans 12:3, *“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith”*. Paul is reminding us here that

even though he has been greatly empowered and blessed with many gifts working in his ministry, he too, must stay humble. Recognizing that the Faith to accomplish great acts stems from the ability that God gives, having been so kind as to give us a measure of Faith with which to start out with. We must take this measure of Faith and operate in greater gifts (Graces). Remember that *“faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”* (Romans 10:17). He further echoes this in Romans 15:15: *“Because of the grace given to me by God”*. Faith is given to each man, and some do more with it than others, and they then show greater Grace, but the glory should still go to God.

Romans 16:20, *“And the God of peace will crush satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen”*. It would appear here that he is saying that it is the Grace of Jesus with you that will enable you to get satan under foot. Romans 16:24, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen”*. 1 Corinthians 1:3, *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”*. 1 Corinthians 1:4, *“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,”* 1 Corinthians 3:10, *“According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it...”* Here Paul describes the gift that he has been given through the empowerment of Grace; he has become a wise master builder.

1 Corinthians 10:29-31, King James Version *“Conscience, I say not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”* Paul is saying “God provided food – Grace gave me the ability and liberty to eat and I am grateful, so why

are you upset with me?" In this passage it appears that as Paul has operated in his gifts, some have gotten confused about his motives and actions. 1 Corinthians 15:10, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*" Paul is saying the divine influence upon his heart has been made manifest many different and powerful ways, but notice he says I labored more abundantly than they all. The Grace with which God blessed him has also enabled him to do more than many others.

1 Corinthians 16:23, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*". 2 Corinthians 1:2, "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" 2 Corinthians 1:12, "*For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you*". Once again the gifts of God are greater than the wisdom of men. 2 Corinthians 4:15, "*For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God*". The glory of God is the manifest display of the work which Grace alone is capable of doing. 2 Corinthians 6:1, "*We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain*". It seems that Paul wants to not just enjoy the unmerited favor of God, but we are supposed to get busy doing something with it.

2 Corinthians 8:1, "*Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia*". A reading of these next few verses shows that Paul is calling the ability to give a Grace from God. He is not talking about being able to give what you are able to give, but he is

saying the churches of Macedonia gave beyond what they were able to give, implying that supernatural ability made it possible for them to exercise this Grace; for they were empowered to give. 2 Corinthians 8:6; he now encourages them, *“so He would also finish in you the same grace also”*. In other words, he believes that this supernatural ability to give, this gift from God, is transferable.

In 2 Corinthians 8:7, *“Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also”*. Paul is calling Faith, tongues, knowledge and diligence from God as Grace. In 2 Corinthians 8:9, *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich”*. This verse points out that Jesus Christ had this gift of giving even from a place of poverty. This theme is continued in 2 Corinthians 8:19.... *“chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace”*, 2 Corinthians 9:8, *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work”*. Notice in this verse that once we receive Grace we can abound to do greater works in all areas, even financial.

2 Corinthians 9:14, *“And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you”*. This verse clearly spells out that this Grace of empowerment is upon the believer, inside the believer and works through the believer in order to accomplish God’s will. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 we see this theme again, for Paul says that Jesus said unto him, *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”*. We see clearly that Grace is a power that rests

upon the believer from Christ, not just a description of status but a description of ability.

2 Corinthians 13:14, *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen"*. Once again we see that theme of Christ giving gifts to men, along with the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to do Christ's will in the earth. Galatians 1:3, *"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ"*. Galatians 1:6, *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel"*. Galatians 1:15, *"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace"*.

Galatians 2:9, *"And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship...."* What was this Grace that they saw in Paul's ministry? I'm sure it was the testimonies of demons driven out, bodies healed and other miraculous signs. Galatians 2:21, *"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ's death is in vain"*. Could Paul mean that he takes his favored status and actually accomplishes works demonstrating that Jesus provided the power? Demonstrations of power (Graces) validate Christ's ministry better than righteous compliances with the law of do's and don'ts. The New King James translates this, *"I do not set aside the grace of God;"*. Wow, then Paul is saying *"I do not set aside [signs, wonders and demonstrations of the favor] of God, for Christ died that we may prove His worthy death"*.

Galatians 5:4, *"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."* Galatians 6:18, *"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen"*. Ephesians 1:2, *"Grace be to*

you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ". Ephesians 1:6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved". Once again we see the effect of Grace causing glory to be made manifest. Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace;" Notice that riches is in the plural, for we have not just one Grace but we have many Graces, reflecting gifts and abilities.

Ephesians 2:5, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)". When we consider salvation achieved by the act of Christ and unmerited favor given to us by the mercy of God, we successfully arrive at Heaven, but it is the salvation of the riches of Grace that provide for our day to day salvation against the devil and his works until we arrive at Heaven. Ephesians 2:7, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus". Ephesians 2:8," "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God". This verse we see clearly that God has given to us Graces which, if we will exercise them by Faith, we do achieve saved status in our day to day lives as well as eternity.

Ephesians 3:2, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:" This verse is more easily understood from the NIV: "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you". In this passage he is speaking about the revelatory gift given to Paul that makes it possible for him to pass on power and great revelations to his disciples and the church. Ephesians 3:7, "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power". Wow, we clearly see the

relationship of power working in the life of the apostle Paul.

Ephesians 3:8, *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"*. In this case, Paul counts himself blessed to have exercised the gift and Grace of preaching. Ephesians 4:7, *"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."* We clearly see that Grace is a gift measured out, given and directed toward the believers for work. Ephesians 4:29, *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"*. Isn't he here talking about building up the saints in order that they can operate in signs and wonders and the gifts of God. The Word of God ministered in a positive, uplifting way causes the hearers to be encouraged, confident and ready to do good works (Graces).

Ephesians 6:24, *"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen"*. Philippians 1:2, *"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ"*. Philippians 1:7, *"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace"*. Paul has no unmerited favor to give, but Paul has much to give in the way of anointing; revelatory information and wisdom. He is stating that these abilities and gifts, these Graces, these riches from the gifts of God are his defense and confirmation and proof text of the Gospel. These disciples were witnesses and partakers of His Graces!

Philippians 4:23, *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen"*. Colossians 1:2, *"To the saints and faithful"*

brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". Colossians 1:6, "Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth". This can be knowing the unmerited favor as a truth, but notice that he says that it brings forth fruit, as it does in you. Might he better then be referring to gifts and works and signs and wonders? Today, the church is struggling, for it knows the Grace of God in Truth concerning unmerited favor, but has not known the Grace of God in its power.

Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord". Grace here is used as gratitude in the sense that we have the empowered ability to manifest from our hearts the divine reflection of our love and gratitude of God. Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man". Colossians 4:18, "The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen".

1 Thessalonians 1:1.... "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ". 1 Thessalonians 5:28, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen". 2 Thessalonians 1:2, "Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". 2 Thessalonians 1:12, "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ". If we read this according to the unmerited favor of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ, we don't get the full impact of it. Paul is telling us that according to the power and gifts of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, may you be glorified to the point that you bring glory to the Name of

Jesus Christ. There was a song in the 70's, "I Wish You Love"; Paul is here saying, "I wish you power".

2 Thessalonians 2:16, *"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace"*. 2 Thessalonians 3:18, *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen"*. 1 Timothy 1:2, *"Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord"*. 1 Timothy 1:14, *"And the grace our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus"*. Once again we see that Grace is described in abundance; not singular just for salvation but abundant in multiplicity of gifts, abilities, and love. For he says, *"exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;"* pointing that as compassion increases and Faith increases then our ability to operate in Grace also increases.

1 Timothy 6:21, *"Grace be with thee. Amen"*. 2 Timothy 1:2, *"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord"*. 2 Timothy 1:9, *"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"*. It says not according to our works; this would mean the things that we can do with our human capability but according to the purpose and Grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus, God's purpose requires God's power, therefore man is acting under the unction and the ability of Christ. 2 Timothy 2:1, *"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"*. Of course we cannot be strong in unmerited favor unless that favor of course includes ability. 2 Timothy 22, *"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen"*.

Titus 1:4, *"To Titus, mine own son after the common faith:"*

Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Titus 2:11, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.”

These next two verses do not contain the word Grace, but are important to our discussion as they pertain to God’s eternal power. Romans 1:19, 20: *“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”*. The power and glory of God is the Grace of God that appeared to all men. Men see this Grace and can be brought to salvation. God, in His justice, shows all men His signs and wonders. Then they must choose to come to the Savior or reject His Truth and proof. This is what we must also do; operate our Graces before men to bring them to salvation. For, this Grace to appear, to be seen is to have been made manifest. Pointing out that it is the manifestation that causes men to accept the special favor given to them by God. Titus 3:7, *“That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* Since Grace has action it can cause justification. Thus, it is Grace that empowers us to accept our inheritance as heirs. Titus 3:15, *“All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen”*.

Philemon 1:3, *“Grace to you, and peace”*. Philemon 1:25, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen”*. Hebrews 2:9, *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man”*. It is the Grace of God that was bestowed upon Christ that gave him supernatural strength and ability to

humble Himself to withstand the pain, the shame and the difficulty of the death of the Crucifixion. Hebrews 4:16, *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"*. Once again we see that Grace has the ability to empower us, because it contains spiritual gifts from God. Also it should be noted that Grace is different from Mercy, in that one under mercy comes humbly to the throne of Grace, but since Grace is ability we can therefore come boldly to the throne because Grace empowers us.

Hebrews 10:29 is referring to the man who comes to know God but rejects the value of the spirit of Grace, *"who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* Of course in this capacity Paul is referring to blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and rejecting the Mercy and kindness and the empowerment given by God. Hebrews 12:15, *"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God"*. This of course is a warning not to take God's blessings for granted. Hebrews 12:28, *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear"*. The emphasis here is on Grace as empowerment and ability to serve.

Hebrews 13:9, *"For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein"*. I believe he is pointing us toward having the security that Grace provides, knowing that in diverse situations we have special favor from God, and this should give us peace in our hearts. Hebrews 13:25, *"Grace be with you all. Amen"*. James 1:11... *"and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways"*. This is the use of Grace in terms

of beauty and graciousness.

James 4:6, *“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”*. We see the quantitative aspect of Grace, and that God’s Grace is not given to the proud who can be further puffed up, but is given to the humble that they might accomplish great works, thereby demonstrating great gratitude to God, who has made them the exception to the rule.

1 Peter 1:2, *“Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied”*. 1 Peter 1:10, *“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you”*. The gifts that have been given to the New Testament Church exceed that which was given to the prophets and that the common man through Faith can access great power and exercise great ability. 1 Peter 1:13, *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”*. This is a very powerful verse, for it points out that upon achieving the revelation of Jesus Christ (understanding His Blood and the power that is released by Him conquering sin and death), gives to us that have the renewed mind access to this great Grace. This great revelation of Jesus Christ will be greatly needed during the end days, for great Grace must overcome great evil. Keep a clear head and trust that Grace (power and direction) will be revealed to you by Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:7, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered”*. 1 Peter 4:10, *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”*. There is no escaping it in this verse; we are talking about the gifts that

a man can receive from God and be empowered to minister them to and for others. Notice verse 11: *“Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it”*.

1 Peter 5:5, *“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”*. 1 Peter 5:10, *“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you”*. God, who has all gifts, powers and abilities, wants us to receive some of these gifts, powers and abilities, but the door of acceptance can only be opened through seeking and suffering. Then God Himself makes us perfect, established, strengthened, etc. What a wonderful God!

1 Peter 5:12, *“and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand”*. 2 Peter 1:2, *“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”*. 2 Peter 3:18, *“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”*. If we can grow in it, then we must be able to attain greater heights and diversities of gifts. 2 John 1:3, *“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace”*. Jude 1:4, *“ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ”*. These ungodly men are guilty of taking the abilities of God and God’s favor and turning it into an evil thing: doing works of God for wrong motives; operating in the gifts for personal glory.

Revelation 1:4, *“John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne;”* Revelation 22:21, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen”*.

This is my prayer also, for all of you that have waded

through all of the New Testament Scriptures on Grace and come to the end of this work. The New Testament writers pray, “*Grace be with you*”, “*Grace to you*”, “*Grace be upon you*”, “*Grace be in you*”. They know we are favored and they are praying that we have and receive power and ability as a result of our being favored – they wish it for us, but we must go after it!

The arguments over gifts of the Spirit and the powers of God given to men have raged for hundreds of years. The apostles and the writing of the Gospels seem to be pointing us in the direction of accepting a Grace that includes manifestations of power for the sake of doing the work of God. We are not down here alone, wandering about, favored only to the point of receiving eternal salvation in Heaven, but we should be wandering about amazed at the opportunities and abilities given to us by that great word Grace.

When the Lord Jesus Christ told Paul, “*My grace is sufficient for you*”, Paul entered into receiving the revelation that with God’s favor comes empowerment, that the divine influence upon the heart is something that is supposed to be reflected in life because we are God’s children; and ought not the children look like and act like their parent?

If God favors us, then surely he would not leave us on the earth naked and without armor or weapons to withstand the onslaught of an adversary who is literally hell bent to destroy us. If we are to be martyred for the name of Christ then assuredly the Spirit of God would not leave us without supernatural ability to be favored to the point of having super human courage. Glory to God, who has promised to never leave us or forsake us, and has given us Grace.

Let us now speak to evil without restraint and with a

defiance that is based upon the revelation of who we are in Christ Jesus and what He has accomplished through the Cross, and the grave; glorious, unlimited, and purposeful power has been granted to us. A graciousness, a beauty and a divine mandate to be grateful and awe-stricken with what we are capable of because of Christ. Let us take none of the glory for ourselves, but let us seize all of the Grace that is available. Let the sick be healed in the Name of Jesus; let cripples walk, let blind eyes be opened, let bad backs be healed, let tormented souls be released, let depressed spirits be conquered and let the joy of the Lord truly be our strength.

Let the gates of hell be reminded that they cannot prevail, because our God has given us great Grace! The gates of hell cannot prevail because the Church is pounding them down, busting them up, and casting them out of our way, so that the King of Glory can come in!!!

Summary & Conclusion for Busy People

These following pages are a summary and conclusion to this book on Grace. Busy people may not have the time to read it all or may not see the need for this greater expanded look at unmerited favor. So in these closing words you can catch the flavor and get inspired to read it all, as repetition produces learning. Or you can try to fight the fight with unmerited favor alone. As for me and my house we want some power. Most of this end is taken from live teachings at church or discipleship training sessions – enjoy.

It seemed like I was here and God was over there, but I didn't know where over there was. All the "hold on to JC's hand" songs never seem to answer my dilemma – "Where is His hand?" The most confusing part of the whole matter was: should I be "standing in Faith", or "taking back what's mine", was I to be "waiting on the Lord", or "boldly seizing my inheritance"? Am I waiting to be healed, or am I the healed?

And then I heard the preacher take Mark 4, ("If you are willing you can make me clean") and insure my insecurity by asking the question, "God is merciful, but is He willing to heal and rescue you?" Then he added, "after all, the great apostle Paul cried out to God and He wasn't willing to deliver him!" as he pounded the pulpit! These types of teachings widened the gap between my powerlessness and God's availability. When do I do? When does God do? Does God do or is there something I don't understand? As it turns out, there is a lot we don't understand. The pulpit echoes many things that the Scriptures have not intended. We have heard Grace preached as "unmerited favor" loud and long with an emphasis on the "unmerited" and little on the "favor." Let's get back into balance and revive the

“favor” and know what’s ours.

GRACE

Grace is a two part word:

1. Favor.
2. Empowerment.

Because God favors us, He provides power to us. You can live in part 1 favor without part 2 empowerment and do pretty well. Yet if you do you will have to develop a system to explain and justify suffering, disappointment and the human condition. The main question will focus upon, “If God favors me, how come He doesn’t act in my behalf?” Tonight, my heart is heavy, as one of our church workers informed me that a “former” crack addict fell to her old demons. Today, as I prayed with one of our Sunday school primary teachers, they smelled like a captive to the nicotine demon of death. I passed by an usher that was still battling with Budweiser. For the most part, these bound people are wonderful saints that know they are favored but don’t know they are empowered. David knew God favored him, and he was not waiting for God to come down from Heaven and go kill the great Goliath. As the shepherd boy walked out to meet the enemy, he knew somehow he was not going alone, for God was with him. But he knew he had to go for God to be with him. How come the rest of the Israelite army didn’t know that!?! It may be that they knew but did not believe. Maybe David knew and believed the old histories of Moses, Caleb, Joshua and the other soldiers that went to spy out the land. In Numbers 13, the spies give an evil report that they are unable to take the land God had given them, but not so Caleb and Joshua.

These two men declare, “Let’s go up and take the land for we are well able to, and they (the giants) are bread meat

for us". Why are these two different from the other ten?

They all saw the Lord deliver them from Egypt and Pharaoh's army. Surely, they all knew they were favored. Yet, we see Caleb, Joshua and David know and believe they are also empowered to take the land and overpower giants.

In the New Testament, we see Jesus the carpenter confident and assured, not only of His position, but also of His power. His rag-tag group catches this notion and goes out chasing demons, and acting just like Jesus. So much so that Jesus has to remind them that it's great to be empowered, but don't forget that you are empowered because you are favored. Luke 10:20: *"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."* In much of the Body of Christ the spirits are not subject to us and there is nothing to rejoice about. Our names are written in Heaven but there are no exploits of Faith written next to our names. Our theologies have crushed our abilities by denying their existence. *The modern church has been so busy being unmerited that they forgot to act on the favor.* So intellectual that we forgot trial and error. The disciples figured, "Jesus says we can do what He did... so let's go over to that village and do some stuff." We should not let someone who has not done a miracle talk us out of miracles. Our natural minds and fleshy logic will talk us out of the supernatural. I remember the first healing I participated in. A sister had an intense neck pain due to an auto accident. I felt a voice on the inside whisper, "Lay your hand on her neck and I'll heal her."

The mental arguments began: "God doesn't do that anymore... the last apostle died.... how do you know His will?... maybe she's got sins... that's probably the devil

talking." I said, "Shut up, I'm going for it!" The worst that could happen is nothing happens and she's left in pain. I laid my hand on her neck and felt a transfer of soothing heat. She declared, "The pain is gone – oh, I feel that heat." Many times since then some healed some not, some demons gone some not, but the argument is settled – Better some than none! Jesus said, "Freely give". The saint must shut off the doubt and be obedient to act in Faith, realizing that God is the Source, we are the vehicle – chosen, favored and empowered.

Every time Jesus Christ expresses anger or disappointment with the disciples, it is usually due to their inability or reluctance to exercise Faith, belief and action that reflects that they are empowered. Jesus seems to be saying, "Don't you know who you are and what you're capable of doing?" Our situation looks pretty dismal when Jesus is speaking concerning the last days, and He asks, "When I come will I find Faith on the earth?" We have "favored status" so that we can do - Faith is an action word. "Show me your Faith and I'll show you my works. *"Faith without works is dead."* To know that God can heal, and still not go and heal is still disobedience. Is that not the sin of omission? To refuse to do the right thing is equal to doing the wrong thing.

Grace is empowerment to do works by Faith. So Jesus Christ must be seeing that down the tunnel of time people would call themselves "in the Faith", but would not be workers *of the Faith by Grace*.

Woe unto those shepherds who make people feel comfortable not activating the Faith to demonstrate the Grace of our God. If we excuse each other rather than encourage each other, we will all stay bound to the works of the evil one. Doing evil by refusing and failing to do

good; staying sick when we are empowered to get well; staying bound when we are empowered to break free. The will of God will never contain a permission slip to stay addicted and bound to our own destruction. To walk around in favored status without any benefits is theological insanity.

God's Grace is not just unmerited favor; God's Grace is also spiritual blessings. If God favors you, He empowers you, He gives you the strength to do based on:

1. His mercy, which is His kindness to you, and because God is kind to you,
2. He wants to give you grace, which means He wants to empower you so you can have joy.

Let us reflect on the testimony of Brother Mike. The struggle he went through is a perfect example of Grace. Michael is bound to a wheelchair due to Multiple Sclerosis. He was locked out of his home, the weather was changing and no one was scheduled to come see him for hours. He could have sat on the porch helpless, but Michael got an idea to use what he had and believe that God could give him strength to succeed in pulling himself through the window to the door, retrieve his chair and roll back inside, safe and dry. All of us would have said it is not possible; he's not going to make it. Michael could have said to himself he's not going to make it. But taking it one step at a time, with the Grace of God, that which looked like an impossibility became an extreme victory.

For the rest of our lives, in our next difficult situation, we will remember Michael, who has been physically limited due to the diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis, was able to make it. Not only did he make it, but he made it well. He went through the window head first, then recovered all of the implements that describe him as a disabled man,

limited but victorious.

Now what you have to see is the Grace of God that gave him the ability to do that. The Grace of God was that God was kind to him. Now he could have done this: he could have sat on the porch and become despondent and distressed. Or he could have sat on the porch and said, "I don't believe in the Grace of God, I don't believe in the possibility for Him to empower me to do this; I'm going to sit here and wait for a miracle". So he would have sat there saying, "Lord be merciful to me, and turn the door knobs. Send a holy angel to turn the door knobs". Or, "Lord, send Cindy from West Hurley up to the house by divine motivation to come open the door". Or, "I'm gonna pray 'til Pastor Don becomes aware that I'm in distress and gets in his car and comes from where he is to save me". All of those would be extensions of Faith and the possibility of Faith and are all real. Those are all real possibilities. The reality is that God got more glory by giving him the Grace to help himself than he would have gotten if someone else had happened by, whether it was a neighbor, or even if I had gotten the message from Kingston and drove all the way up there. God, who loves His children, wants to empower us to have victories. It wouldn't have been Michael's victory if Cindy got a spiritual message to go up there; it would have been Cindy's victory, that she was sensitive enough to hear the will of the Lord. It would have been my victory if I would have heard the voice of the Lord and gone over there. It wouldn't have been Michaels' because he would have been in the same position as the Apostle Paul, who said, "*three times I pleaded with the Lord*". He pleaded with the Lord and zip happened, but the Lord's answer to him was the same – "*My grace is sufficient for you*". Michael could have stayed

on the porch pleading with the Lord, but the answer would have kept coming back, "*My grace is sufficient for you*". In other words, "Michael, if you have a little Faith and you exercise some will power, I'll get you through the window. "

In many of our situations we sit in life not realizing that God will empower us to overcome that thing that besets us, if we will exercise His Grace to us. God wants us empowered to conquer the beasts in our lives. Not just to sit there and wait for relief, but go conquer the beast. That really is the lesson. God's mercy, kindness, favor, pity, help and forgiveness is available to you under the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant the promise of God was that if you were obedient to Him, He would do it for you. We see this very clearly in the book of Deuteronomy, chapters 29-34. "If you will obey Me, and keep My law, then I will do this, this and this...." That's important and very powerful. But it means then, that our trusting God is limited by our ability to wait on God for His Mercy to bring the hand of God to do something for us. Example: the Law of Moses. Moses gets to the Promiseland and tells the people that there are giants in the land. The children of Israel say, "We need the Mercy of God. We need God to do something about the giants". Caleb and Joshua, though, aren't looking for the Mercy of God; they're looking for the Grace of God also; they want ability to fulfill God's promise to them.

When our Faith rises to the point that we truly believe God, then Old Testament or New, the believer can cross over into active Grace. Caleb and Joshua are willing to participate in God's purpose. They want to be empowered to take the land that God has promised. Big difference; God, please do it, vs. God bless me so I can do it! Too

often, we come with a mentality which is “Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner, and God please fix this.” New Testament Faith is based upon the truth of the victory of the Cross. Jesus Christ conquered sin and death so we could conquer our flesh and the works of satan.

Jesus the Christ came to establish the foundation of the New Covenant, which is different from the Old in that it isn't based on the Mercy of God, but it is based on the extension of Mercy (favor) that brought us to Grace (gifts and empowerment).

Remember that the Mercy of God is the kindness of God to favor us, and the Grace of God is that He favors you enough to empower you. It's the difference of “I will beat up the bully for you” vs., “I will pay for your karate lessons, so you can beat up the bully yourself.” Now in one instance the bully is beaten, but he could return at a later time, when you're not prepared for him. But Grace is, “I will empower you, so that any time the bully comes around, you can whip him by yourself”. Grace is not better than Mercy, it's just different; but it's based upon a better promise. It is a better promise that “I will teach you to fish”, than “here is a fish”. If I give you a fish, you can eat one meal; if I teach you to fish, you can provide meals for yourself for the rest of your life. If we can figure out how we got Grace, then we can figure out what it is and how to use it. Ephesians 4:7: *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.”*

So the Father gave all these gifts, abilities and powers to Jesus Christ. Based on those gifts, the Father gives us Grace to operate in the gift that was given to and through Christ. Every spiritual gift, every power and all authority was given to the Son; so if all the gifts were given to the Son, the Son then distributes to us these same gifts, in

different degree and measure. Verse 8: *“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men”*. That is a fulfillment of Psalm 68:18: *“You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the Lord God might dwell there.”* If we look at that passage carefully, it also shows the gifts of men were given to the Son by the Father. The Father ordained that the Son would capture men. Remember Jesus said, *“and all that were given Me I will lose none”*. Men were given to the Son as a gift. Psalm 68 points out a two-fold blessing; the Messiah would come, and He would capture men that have been held captive by sin and the devil. He would lead *“captivity captive”*. He would capture men as a blessing unto Himself. The New Testament revelation is that Jesus, as a result of capturing these men, will give gifts to these men.

For example, if right now we flew a jet to Somalia, and when we got out of the jet, God would say, I give you these 14 kids over here as a gift. We’d gather them up, put them in the jet, and fly them to America. What did we just do? We took them captive, as a gift to ourselves, a blessing for us to help and work with. In the meantime, we are now going to introduce them to a life without poverty, a life without disease, hunger, a life without fear of torture, mutilation and genocide. Those kids are then going to receive gifts by virtue of the fact that we took them captive.

Paul gives us the revelation of Psalms 68 when he explains *“and gave gifts to men”*. By virtue of the fact that Jesus possesses you, you’re going to get some gifts. How many of you can honestly say that since you became a believer, your life has become remarkably worse? You may laugh because you know you have more peace. You may not have solved every problem, but at least now you

know the answer, and the Answer Man – Jesus. You definitely receive a gift from the Lord because He possesses you.

In verse 9: “(Now this, “He ascended” - *what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?*”) This is when He took captivity captive. He’s going into hell, and the devil is going to try and keep Jesus in hell. Jesus is carrying the sins of the world. When the devil goes to possess Him, satan finds there is no *personal* sin upon Jesus Christ, and the sin He bears is that of others. So Jesus goes to hell and deposits our sin, and the devil comes to possess Him but cannot, because Jesus is the sinless Sacrificed Lamb, without spot, wrinkle or blemish. To summarize, Jesus is carrying the sins of the world; therefore He must go to hell. But when He gets there, He cannot be held captive in hell, because none of the sin is His. According to Peter, Jesus Christ preaches the Gospel to the souls who are held captive in hell. This would include everyone who died that did not perfectly keep the Law of Moses, and everyone who died before the Law of Moses who did not walk in the righteousness of Faith. They were too good for hell but weren’t holy enough to go to Heaven, so they were held captive in Abraham’s bosom, which is described to us in Luke 16.

So Jesus goes and preaches the Gospel to them, and all of those that had obtained some righteousness, though it wasn’t enough righteousness to gain Heaven, He takes them captive. That’s what it means when it says, “*He led captivity captive*”. He captivated those who were in captivity. When Jesus Christ preaches the revealed Truth of Himself, the captive souls of good men and women receive the Truth by Faith, and sin and death are defeated. They now can enter Heaven through the Blood of Jesus

Christ. The Bible tells us He then took them and ascended. Notice in verse 10: *“He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things.”* Jesus Christ came to the earth to fulfill the Scriptures and reconcile creation back to its balance and perfection. Satan stole the dominion of the earth and gained influence over man. God made man to fellowship with Him in eternity, but sin entered into the world and man was deceived and lost the relationship and the revelation of God with us (“Emmanuel”). From Adam to Abraham there was no way to atone for sin or to get to God except by righteousness by Faith. From Abraham to Moses very few would attain paradise. At Moses, the Law with its Commandments pointed the way to God but few could keep it. All the above were held in a holding place till the supreme sacrifice was paid and the way to Paradise was cleared – and Jesus Christ led captive ones to Paradise. Before this they couldn’t receive the Lord, because they didn’t have the revelation of the Lord. He had not appeared yet as the Messiah, but many did have a righteousness because they desired in their hearts to do right and they believed God as did Abraham. People always ask me, “How can any of the Jews be saved?” Very simply, He led captivity captive. The Jew did not have a revelation of the Messiah, but did have a revelation of right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness.

So the Jew of Moses’ day did not comply with the keeping of the 10 Commandments and the keeping of the Laws of Moses, but fortunately for them Jesus said, “Hey, nobody could do it”. There was only one recorded person that achieved righteousness, and it was before the Laws of Moses – Enoch. Enoch just walked up into Heaven. He did not live under the Laws of Moses; if he had, he

probably wouldn't have walked up into Heaven, 'cause no one did keep that Law, except Jesus Christ, who kept the Law perfectly. So Christ went to hell and preached. Can you picture that – while the Lord is preaching many are saying "I knew there was a Savior, I just didn't know His name. I didn't have the revelation of how I'd be redeemed, but like Job I kept saying, "I know my Redeemer lives." Be very careful who you send to hell, and of how you judge people. That's why judgment hasn't been given to you or I. You don't know who's saved and who's damned. There are many questions that are answered between life and death that no man is privy to. In the end of Matthew 28, the graves were opened at the time that Jesus was resurrected. Many saints that died while Jesus was on the earth had accepted Him as Lord. These were raised up from their graves. Their lives were suspended (asleep) and when Jesus rose they did also. The power of the resurrection gave the first gift to these men - life.

Summary of Ministries Gifts

"and He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers". Now it doesn't tell us all the gifts that He gave to men, but it delineates these gifts for a very specific reason. *"...for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ".*

These gifts are to equip the saints in the church for the work of the ministry. Ministry is not just in the church but also outside the church. That's where the real battlefield is. You come to church to get equipped for ministry, but your ministry is not only in the church. Jesus has placed gifts in the church to edify the saints but also to grow and reach the world.

Ephesians 4:12: *"for the equipping of the saints for the work*

of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..."

Jesus gave special gifts to individuals to walk in spiritual offices.

The Apostle walks in all of the gifts of the Spirit. He is a "sent one" commissioned by God and directed by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Apostles are planters and overseers of churches and ministries operating in all phases of equipping and edifying.

The Prophet speaks for God to edify, comfort and exhort. The Old Testament Prophet spoke to the people. He brought guidance and warning from God. The New Testament Prophet speaks for God, confirming what the Holy Spirit has spoken in the Word and to the spirit of the believers. The prophetic voice is a sign post to help the Saints and the Body steer through the world's confusion and to the will of God.

The Evangelist is to flow in the gifts with signs, wonders and healings, and the purpose is to get people's attention. They hear the Gospel and become disciples.

The Pastor is not only to be apt or able to teach, but his main function is to represent the Holy Spirit to the body. He is to operate in supernatural love. He has to always forgive you, no matter how much of a knucklehead you are. If he is going to walk in the supernatural love of the Comforter, he must provide an atmosphere of "you're forgiven, God loves you, so do I, let's get back on our horse and ride again". With that, though, it requires the same thing that the Holy Spirit does, to comfort and to teach. Why are there some parents that parent effortlessly, and others have to work on it really hard? The pastor should work in the supernatural love of the Father, and be able to teach – instruct as a loving parent.

The Teacher that just passes out information is not

using the spiritual gift to its fullest. The spiritual gift of teaching is to give people information that they can use, and help them get the revelation of it from the Word of God. The anointed teacher unravels mysteries and applies revelation to the student's life. He also is a living example of the Truth of the revelation. The teacher must supernaturally be able to demonstrate as well as operate in the gifts that he teaches. Too often in the church we permit intellectual people to transfer information, but they can't operate in any of the gifts that they teach. How are you going to equip the church to do the supernatural if you have a teacher that can't teach the supernatural by demonstration? We're stuck because we have people that can delineate verses of Scripture, but cannot act out, demonstrate and teach those verses in application. The Teacher should live a life that demonstrates the power of the Word.

All of these five gifts and offices: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, operate to equip the saints in order to build up the Body. For how long? Verse 13: *"till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man,"* (that perfect man means a mature man) *"to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery on men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share..."* So we may have the five fold ministry operating in the church, but when we get right down to it, we've got to have everybody operating by Faith in spiritual gifts. The Scripture

continues, “causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”. The gifts of the Spirit exist in the church in order to bless the church. The church is blessed by its selfish fulfilling of its own needs. A bride must focus on preparing herself for her groom. She must work to be the best she can be, not allowing anything or anyone to slow her preparedness for the day of her unveiling. Jesus will return for His bride, “the Church”, which is His Body, “and the two shall become one flesh”. Christ the Head, joined to His Body.

Concerning the authority of delegation of the Grace from God-- Luke Chapter 10, beginning in verse 17: *Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority...”* Who is He giving the authority to? To the followers of Christ, to the disciples. *“...to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you”*. Jesus is talking about demons, devils and the people they control.

We need to recognize that our spiritual battle is often with unseen forces. The Grace of God has made us more than conquerors over the work of the enemy – seen and unseen.

In closing, we need to realize that God has appointed us and given us this authority, to the church, to operate by Grace. It’s just that *we have to know it*. It’s like this: I pulled into a gas station, I put ten dollars worth of gas in my tank, I reached in my pocket, and I didn’t have any cash, couldn’t find my wallet, and thought, “I don’t have any money”. I assumed I didn’t have any money, so I went to the attendant and said, “You’ve seen me come in here before, do you want me to leave something and I’ll

bring the money back?" He looked at me and said, "no, I've seen you many times in here, could you just bring me the money before my shift changes?" I got back in my car, and drove home. I got out of the car at home, took my car keys and put them in my rear pocket, and when I put them in my rear pocket, I found my wallet with my money in it. When I was frantic and searching, I could not find my wallet and I assumed I had no cash. The church is like me in this instance, in that I had the billfold, which had the cash, and credit cards, to pay for all my necessities. I needed gas and I had everything I needed to pay for it. But I didn't know it, and since I didn't know it, I didn't act upon it, and because I didn't act upon it, I was inconvenienced.

The Body of Christ has been given, not just the Mercy of God, but we have been empowered by God to be able to do something about the inconveniences in our life. Sickness is inconvenience. How about poverty? How about depressing and anger? What you need to realize is that God has provided for you all of the bug spray that you need, all of the snake destroying weapons that you need. All the Grace you need. We have to:

1. Know that we have it (Grace),
2. We need to know how to use it (Grace).
3. We must know Jesus Christ gave us Grace and empowered us with gifts.
4. Have Faith and operate Grace.

Once you locate your level of Faith, then you can go ahead and act on it. Once you act on it, God *must* empower you. If God said He gave gifts to men, if He says I have empowered you, if He delegated this authority, if this verse is true: "*Behold, I give you the authority*"...Notice it doesn't say *I will trample on snakes for you*, it says that

He gives *you* the authority. God has provided it; we can do this.

There's a couple of things that I try to remind myself when I pray with the sick. The first is that the devil has no legal authority; he has usurped authority and put himself in an unlawful position. Since he stole whatever authority he took, I'm only taking back what he has stolen. That makes me willing to pray for everybody about everything. Another thing is that when I pray, not only is it done, but it is done before it manifests. It's done when I pray, and if it takes six years to manifest, it was still done when I prayed the first time.

*This is true, because the Lord's Grace
is sufficient for us for every purpose.*