



BE
Still.

God's Grace

*...it's much more
wonderful than you think!*

Much has been written about God's "grace" and much misunderstanding exists. The following quotations are taken from William Newell's commentary ROMANS, Verse by Verse, in hopes that readers discover the essence of genuine Christianity.

THE NATURE OF GRACE

Grace is God acting freely, according to His own nature as Love; with no promises or obligations to fulfil; and acting of course, righteously—in view of the Cross.

Grace, therefore, is uncaused in the recipient: its cause lies wholly in the GIVER, in GOD.

Grace, also is sovereign. Not having debts to pay, or fulfilled conditions on man's part to wait for, it can act toward whom, and how, it pleases. It can, and does often, place the worst deservers in the highest favors.

Grace cannot act where there is either desert or ability: Grace does not help—it is absolute, it does all.

There being no cause in the creature why Grace should be shown, the creature must be brought off from trying to give cause to God for His Grace.

The discovery by the creature that he is truly the object of Divine grace, works the utmost humility: for the receiver of grace is brought to know his

THOUGHTS AND READINGS FOR MEDITATION



own absolute unworthiness, and his complete inability to attain worthiness: yet he finds himself blessed—on another principle, outside of himself!

Therefore, flesh has no place in the plan of Grace. This is the great reason why Grace is hated by the proud, natural (often religious) mind of man. But for this very reason, the true believer rejoices! For he knows that "in him, that is, in his flesh, is no good thing"; and yet he finds God glad to bless him, just as he is!

THE PLACE OF MAN UNDER GRACE

He has been accepted in Christ, who is his standing!

He is not "on probation."

As to his life past, it does not exist before God: he died at the Cross, and Christ is his life.

Grace, once bestowed, is not withdrawn: for God knew all the human exigencies beforehand: His action was independent of them, not dependent upon them.

The failure of devotion does not cause the withdrawal of bestowed grace (as it would under law). For example: the man in I Corinthians 5:1-5; and also those in chapter 11:30-32, who did not "judge" themselves, and so were "judged by the Lord—that they might not be condemned with the world!"

*"My goal is God Himself, not joy nor peace,
Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God."*

**"HAVE I BEEN SO LONG WITH YOU,
AND YET THOU HAST NOT KNOWN ME?"
JOHN 14:9**

THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF
MAN UNDER GRACE

To believe, and to consent to be loved while unworthy, is the great secret.

To refuse to make “resolutions” and “vows”; for that is to trust in the flesh.

To expect to be blessed, though realising more and more lack of worth.

To testify to God’s goodness, at all times.

To be certain of God’s future favour; yet to be ever more tender in conscience toward Him.

To rely on God’s chastening hand as a mark of His kindness.

A man under grace, if like Paul, has no burdens regarding himself; but many about others.

THINGS WHICH GRACIOUS
SOULS DISCOVER

To “hope to be better” is to fail to see yourself in Christ only.

To be disappointed with yourself is to have believed in yourself.

To be discouraged is unbelief—as to God’s purpose and plan of blessing for you.

To be proud is to be blind! For we have no standing before God, in ourselves.

The lack of Divine blessing, therefore,

comes from unbelief, and not from failure of devotion.

Real devotion to God arises, not from man’s will to show it; but from the discovery that blessing has been received from God while we were yet unworthy and undevoted.

To preach devotion first, and blessing second, is to reverse God’s order, and preach Law, not grace. The Law made man’s blessing depend on devotion; Grace confers undeserved and unconditional blessing: our devotion may follow—but does not always do so in proper measure.

THE KEY TO REVIVAL

BY C. H. SPURGEON • PART TWO



CHRIST PRESCRIBES

And now, secondly, let us note what the Saviour prescribes. The Saviour’s prescription is couched in these three words: ‘Remember,’ ‘Repent,’ ‘Return.’

Remember

‘Thou has left thy first love.’ Remember, then, what thy first love was, and compare your present condition with it. At first nothing diverted you from your Lord. He was your life, your love, your joy. Now you look for recreation somewhere else, and other charms and beauties win your heart. Are you not ashamed of this? Once you were never tired with hearing about Christ and his gospel: many sermons, many prayer meetings, many Bible readings, and yet none too many. Now sermons are long, and services are dull, and you must have your jaded appetite excited with novelties. How is this? Once you were never displeased with Jesus whatever he did with you. If you had been sick, or poor, or dying, you would still have loved and blessed his name for all things. He remembers this fondness, and regrets its departure. He says to you today, ‘I will remember you, the kindness of your youth, your love when you searched after me in the wilderness.’ You would have gone anywhere after your Lord in those days: across the sea, or through the fire, you would have pursued him; nothing would have been too heavy or too hot for you then. Is it so now? Remember! Remember what you have fallen from. Remember the vows, the tears, the communions, the happy days; remember and

compare them with your present state.

Remember and consider, that when you were in your first love, that love was not so warm. Even then, when you did live to Christ, and for Christ, and with Christ, you were not so holy, not so consecrated, not so zealous. If you were not so advanced then, think about how you are now—now that you have come down even from that poor attainment. Remember the past with sad foreboding of the future. If you had come down from where you were, who is to tell you where you will end up falling to? He who has sunk so far may fall much farther. Is it not so? You may turn out to be a Judas, a son of perdition, and betray your Master, selling him for thirty pieces of silver. When a stone begins to fall it falls with an ever-increasing rate; and when a soul begins to leave its first love, it quits more and more until at last it falls terribly. Remember!

Repent

The next word in the prescription is ‘Repent’. Repent as you did at first. The word so appropriate to sinners is appropriate for you, for you have grievously sinned. Repent of the wrong you have done your Lord by leaving your first love for him. If you could lead the life of a seraph, only breathing Christ’s love, only existing for him, you would have done little enough. But to leave your first love, how grievously you have wronged him. That love was well-deserved, was it not? Why, then, have you left it? Is Jesus less fair than he was? Does he love you less than he did? Has he been less kind and tender to you than he used to be? Say, have

you outgrown him? Can you do without him? Have you a hope of salvation apart from him? I challenge you, repent of this evil towards One who has greater claim on your love than he ever had. He ought to be loved today more than you ever loved him at your best. O my heart, is not all this most certainly true? How badly you are behaving! How ungrateful you are. Repent!

Repent of much good which you have left undone through lack of love. Oh, if you had always loved your Lord at your best, what you might have known about him by now. What good deeds you might have done through the power of his love. How many hearts you might have won for your Lord if your own heart had been fuller of love, if your own soul had been more on fire! You have lived the life of a poor beggar because you have allowed such a poverty of love to take you over.

Repent! Repent! To my mind, as I thought over the text, the call for repentance grew louder and louder, because of the occasion of its utterance. Here is the gracious Lord, coming to his church and speaking to her angel in tones of tender kindness. He condescends to visit his people in all his majesty and glory, intending nothing but to manifest himself in love to his own elect as he does not to the world. And yet he is compelled even then to give a chiding, and to say, ‘I have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.’ Here is a love-visit clouded with a telling-off—a necessary telling-off. What a mischief has sin done. It is a dreadful thing that when Jesus comes to his own dear bride he should have to speak in grief, and not in joy. Must holy communion, which is the wine of heaven, be embittered with the tonic of expostulation? I see the supper springs of close fellowship, where the waters of life leap from their first source in the heart of God. Are not these streams most pure and precious? If a person drinks from this he will live for ever. Shall it be that even at the fountain-head they will be dashed with bitterness? Even when Christ communes personally with us must he say, ‘I have somewhat against thee’? Break, my heart,

that it should be so! Well may we repent with deep repentance when our greatest joys are flavoured with the bitter herbs of regret, that our best Beloved should have something against us.

Return

But then he says in effect, 'Return.' The third word is this—'Repent, and do the first works.' Notice that he does not say, 'Repent, and get back thy first love.' This seems rather strange. But then love is the chief of the first deeds, and moreover, the first deeds can only come from the first love. There must be in every declining Christian a practical repentance. Do not be satisfied with regrets and resolves. Do the first deeds; do not strain after the first emotions, but do the first deeds. No renewal is so valuable as the practical cleansing of our way. If the life is made right, it will prove that the love is so. In doing the first deeds you will prove that you have come back to your first love.

The prescription is complete, because the doing of the first works is meant to include the feeling of the first feelings, the sighing of the first sighs, the enjoying of the first joys: these are all supposed to accompany returning obedience and activity.

We are to return to these first deeds at once. Most people come to Christ with a leap; and I have observed that many who come back to him usually do so at a bound. **The slow revival of one's love is almost an impossibility;** as well expect the dead to be risen by degrees. Love for Christ is often love at first sight! We see him, and are conquered by him. If we grow cold the best thing we can do is to fix our eyes on him until we cry, 'My soul melted while my Beloved spake.' It is a happy circumstance if I can cry, 'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab.' How sweet for the Lord to put us back again at once into the old place, back again in a moment! My prayer is that it may be so this morning with any declining person. May you so repent as not merely to feel the old feelings, but instantly to do the first deeds, and be once more as eager, as zealous, as generous, an prayerful, as you used to be. If we should again see you breaking the alabaster box, we should know that the old love had returned. May the good Master help us to do as well as ever, yes much better than before!

Notice, however, that this will require a great deal of effort and warfare; for the promise which is made is 'to him that overcometh'. **Overcoming implies conflict.** Depend on it, if you conquer a wandering heart, you will have to fight for it. 'To him that overcometh,' he says, 'will I give to eat of the tree of life.' You must fight your way back to the garden of the Lord. You will have to fight against lethargy, against an evil heart of unbelief, against the numbing influence of the world. In the name and power of him who bids you

repent, you must wrestle and struggle until you achieve the mastery over self, and yield your whole nature to the Lord.

So I have shown you how Christ prescribes. Now I wish to dwell with earnestness on the last part. I have no desire to say a word by which I should show myself off as an orator, but I long to speak a word by which I may prove myself a true brother pleading with you in deep sympathy, because in all the ill which I rebuke I mourn my own personal share. Bless us, O Spirit of the Lord!

CHRIST PERSUADES

Now see, brethren, Christ persuades. This is the third point: the Lord Jesus persuades his erring one to repent.

First, he persuades with a warning: 'I will come unto thee'; 'quickly' is not in the original: the Revised Version has left it out. Our Lord is generally very slow at the work of judgment: 'I will come unto thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.' This he must do: he cannot allow his light to be apart from his love, and if the first love is left, the church shall be left in darkness. The truth must always shine, but not always in the same place. **The place must be made fit by love, or the light will be removed.**

Our Lord means, **first, I will take away the comfort of the Word.** He raises up a certain minister, and makes them burning and shining lights in the middle of his church, and when the people are gathered together they are cheered and enlightened by their shining. A ministry blessed by the Lord is a singular comfort to God's church. The Lord can easily take away that light which has brought comfort to so many: he can remove the good man to another sphere, or he can call him home to his rest. Death can put out the candle which now gladdens the house. The church which has lost a ministry by which the Lord's glory has shone forth has lost a good deal; and if this loss has been sent in chastisement for decline of love it is all the harder to bear. I can point you to places where once there was a man of God, and all went well; but the people grew cold, and the Lord took away their leader, and the place is now a desolation: those who now attend those courts and listen to a modern ministry cry out because of the famine of the Word of the Lord. O friends, let us value the light while we have it, and prove that we do so by benefiting from it; but how can we profit if we leave our first love? The Lord may take away our comfort as a church if our first zeal dies down.

But the candlestick also symbolises usefulness: it is by which a church shines. The use of a church is to preserve the truth, wherewith to illuminate the neighbourhood, to illuminate the world. God can soon cut short our usefulness, and he will do so if we

cut short our love. If the Lord is withdrawn, we can go on with our work as we used to do, but nothing will come of it: we can go on with Sunday schools, mission-stations, branch churches, and yet accomplish nothing. Brethren, we can go on with the Orphanage, the College, the Evangelistic Society, the Book Fund, and everything else, and yet nothing will be effected if the arm of the Lord is not made bare.

He can, if he wills, take away from the church her very existence as a church. Ephesus is gone: nothing but ruins can be found. The Lord can soon take away our candlesticks out of their places if the church uses her light for her own glory, and is not filled with his love. God forbid that we should fall under this condemnation. Of thy mercy, O Lord, forbid it! Let it not so happen to any of us. Yet this may occur to us as individuals. You, dear brother or sister, if you lose your first love, may soon your joy, your peace, your usefulness. You, who are now so bright, may grow dull. You, who are now so useful, may become useless. You were once an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes; but if the Lord is withdrawn you will instruct nobody, you will be in the dark yourself. Alas, you may come to lose the very name of Christians, as some have done who once seemed to be burning and shining lights. They were foolish virgins, and before long they were heard to cry, 'Our lamps are gone out!' The Lord can and will take away the candlestick out of its place if we put him out of his place by a failure in our love for him.

How can I persuade you, then, better than with the warning words of my Master? My beloved, I persuade you from my very soul not to encounter these dangers, not to run these terrible risks; for as you would not wish to see either the church or your own self without God's light, to pine in darkness, it is necessary that you abide in Christ, and go on to love him more and more.

The Saviour holds out a promise as his other way of persuading. It seems a very wonderful promise to me: 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' Observe, those who lose their first love fall, but those who abide in love are made to stand. In contrast with the fall which took place in God's paradise, we have man eating from the tree of life, and so living forever. If we, through grace, overcome the common tendency to decline in love, then we will be confirmed and settled in the Lord's favour. By eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil we fell; by eating from the fruit of a better tree we live and stand fast for ever. **Life proved true by love shall be nourished on the best of food; it shall be sustained by the fruit from the garden of the Lord himself, gathered by the Saviour's own hand.**

Note again, those who lose their first love wander far, they depart from God. 'But,' says the Lord, 'if you keep your first love you shall not wander, but you shall come into closer fellowship. **I will bring you nearer to the centre.** I will bring you to eat from the tree of life which is in the middle of God's paradise.' The inner ring is for those who grow in love; the centre of all joy is only for those who grow in love; the centre of all joy is only to be reached by much love. **We know God as we love God.** We enter into his paradise as we abide in his love. What joy is here! What a reward love has!

Then notice the mystical blessing which lies here, waiting for your meditation. Do you know how we fell? The woman took the fruit from the forbidden tree, and gave it to Adam, and Adam ate and fell. The reverse is the case in the promise in front of us: the Second Adam takes the divine fruit from the tree of promise, and hands it to his wife; she eats and lives for ever. He who is the Father of the age of grace hands down to us immortal joys, which he has plucked from an undying tree. The reward of love is to eat the fruit of life. 'We are getting into mysteries,' someone says. Yes, I am intentionally lifting a corner of the veil, and no more. I only mean to give you a glimpse at the promised boon. Into his innermost joys our Lord will bring us if we keep up our first love, and go from strength to strength therein. Marvellous things are locked up in the caskets whereof love holds the key. Sin set the angel with a flaming sword between us and the tree of life in the middle of the garden; but love has quenched that sword, and now the angels beckon us to come into the innermost secrets of paradise.

We shall know as we are known when we love as we are loved. We shall live the life of God when we are wholly taken up with the love of God. The love of Jesus answered by our love for Jesus makes the sweetest music the heart can know. No joy on earth is equal to the bliss of being completely taken up with loving Christ. If I had my choice of all the lives that I could live, I certainly would not choose to be an emperor, nor a millionaire, nor a philosopher; for power, and wealth, and knowledge bring with them sorrow and travail; but I would choose to have nothing to do but to love my Lord Jesus—nothing, I mean, but to do all things for his sake, and out of love for him. Then I know that I should be in paradise, yes, in the middle of the paradise of God, and I should have meat to eat which is all unknown to the people of the world.

Heaven on earth is abounding love towards Jesus. This is the first and last of true delight—to love him who is the first and the last. To love Jesus is another name for paradise. Lord, let me know this by continual experience. 'You are soaring aloft,' cries one. Yes, I own it. Oh, that I could allure you to a heavenward flight upon the wings of love! There is a bitterness in declining love: it is a very consumption of the soul, and makes us weak, and faint, and low. But true love is the foretaste of glory. See the heights, the glittering heights, the glorious heights, the everlasting hills to which the Lord of life will conduct all those who are faithful to him through the power of his Holy Spirit. See, O love, thine ultimate abode. I pray that what I have said may be blessed by the Holy Spirit so we are all brought closer to the Bridegroom of our souls. Amen.

THE BRIDE

In you
perfect grace
and perfect charm
perfectly blend.
The face of God,
your face is
kin.

With heaven's light
your raven locks
are
strewn.
Your being
of his being
hewn.

His race
now
your race
is.

You are that space
that makes one the line
of
the life of man
and life
divine.

GENE EDWARDS

• The Word's WORD •

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

The written Word is meant to reveal the Living Word, not to hide Him. Many know prophecy better than the Prophet. Our Father gave us His written Word that we might know His Son, not only as Saviour but as our very Life. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17).

The knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is the basis of the believer's life. That is, it

underlies our very relationship with God; it underlies all our growth in grace; it underlies every fragment of our service. There is nothing which comes within the compass of the life of the Christian which does not depend upon the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Heart acquaintance with Christ is the secret of spiritual growth. One may know all the truths of the Bible, and yet be practically ignorant of the person of the Lord Jesus. It is possible to go back into the world with acquaintance with the scriptures, but it is virtually impossible to return thither with the scriptural

acquaintance of Christ in the heart.

The believer should have but one object: knowing Christ has laid hold of him for glory, his heart is running after Him. He is to have no other object, though he may have many things to do. The Lord Jesus is 'in all' believers as the power of life, and He is 'all' as the object of that life. He is 'all and in all' (Colossians 3:11).

And, 'all to Him I owe.'

"Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:21, 22).

The enemy has filled the minds of many believers with the delusion that they are poor, and in their poverty they must work and grind and toil in order to buy the blessings which are already theirs in Christ. It is time to see that all you need you have in Christ. There is no need of yours which is not fully met in Him. And you are in Him. You only need to take the position which is already yours. Abide!

"...ALWAYS HAVING ALL SUFFICIENCY IN ALL THINGS..." (2 CORINTHIANS 9:8)