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## The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

*For you know **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)*

God wants us to know His grace. He wants us to learn about it, and then experience it at work in our lives. Grace has rightly been described as "unmerited favor." The acronym, "**God's Riches At Christ's Expense**" catches more of its majesty. Grace is God freely providing for us (as we trust in the work of His Son) all that we will ever need, all that we will ever yearn for, all that He has commanded us to walk in and become-realities that we could never produce on our own, could never earn, and could never deserve. Grace offers what every human desperately needs, but what God alone can provide.

This grace is found **only in a person, the Lord Jesus**. It is the "**grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**." Thus, it is accessible only through **an ongoing personal relationship** with Him.

Grace was made available to us by Jesus' willingness to take **our spiritual bankruptcy** upon **Himself**, that we might partake of **His spiritual richness**. Before coming to earth below, Jesus enjoyed heavenly riches above ("*that though **He was rich***"). He knew the infinitely rich fellowship of the Father and the Spirit. He received the rich worship of angelic beings. He enjoyed the limitless rights and privileges of deity.

Then, for our benefit, Jesus voluntarily became poor ("*for your sakes **He became poor***"). He humbled Himself to walk as a man among sinful humanity. He who was adored above became despised below. He who shined forth in glorious divinity in heaven was clothed in humble humanity on earth. He who created all

things was slain by those He created. He who existed in eternity past died in time. He who was holy took our sin upon Himself. Through these workings of His grace, all who believed in Him would become spiritually rich (*"that you through His poverty might become rich"*). Now, we whose *"righteousnesses were as filthy rags"* (Isaiah 64:6) have become *"the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). We *"who once were not a people...are now the people of God"* (1 Peter 2:10). Now, we have been *"blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (Ephesians 1:3).

Dear Lord, I thank You and praise You for Your great grace toward me. May I increasingly know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ through a growing relationship with Him. May I become an instrument of Your grace in the lives of others, all for Your glory and honor, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## Grace Upon Grace in Our Lives

*And the Word became 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**...And of His **fullness** we have all received, and **grace for [upon] grace**. (John 1:14, 16)*

The grace of God is found in a person, Jesus Christ. *"For you know the **grace** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**" (2 Corinthians 8:9).* Through His Son, the Father now proclaims His full message. *"**God**, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days **spoken to us by His Son**" (Hebrews 1:1-2).* One of Jesus' titles is the Word. When He became a man, He was God's incarnate message, His Word to humanity. *"And the **Word** became flesh and dwelt among us."* As the early disciples watched Jesus living His perfect life of godliness, they were looking at the glorious revelation of God's uniquely begotten (that is, virgin-born) Son. *"And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."* His life was an overflowing demonstration of divine **grace** and **truth**: *"**full of grace and truth**."*

Jesus showed us the kind of life that God's **grace** could develop in us—a life of **truth**, a life of **godly reality**. Jesus came as the One to offer that **fullness of grace** to all who would trust in Him. Now for those who depend upon Him day by day, life is explained and developed *"**grace upon grace**."* God's grace first establishes a layer of forgiveness and spiritual new birth. Then, layers of growth, transformation, fruitfulness, victory, maturing, service, etc. are added as His grace is received by faith.

Oh, what **fullness** is available to us in the **grace** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**! *"For in Him dwells **all the fullness** of the **Godhead** bodily; and **you are complete in Him**" (Colossians 2:9-10).* Our wholeness of life comes from His fullness. Wherever we are in our spiritual pilgrimage, progress has come through

receiving by faith from the fullness of His grace. Whatever remains to be accomplished must transpire in the same manner, receiving more fully of His fullness. Yes, daily Christian living is to be "*grace upon grace*"-**upon grace, upon grace, upon grace**-until we stand face to face someday with our Lord of grace!

Lord Jesus, thank You for coming to dwell among humanity. I worship You for the fullness of grace available in You. I appreciate so much the layers of Your grace that You have built into my life. I reach out to You with expectation for the grace needed in the days ahead. This I ask in Your holy name, Amen.

## The Magnitude of God's Grace

*In Him we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the **riches of His grace**...that in the ages to come He might show the **exceeding riches of His grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus...To me, who am less than the least of all saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable [unfathomable] riches of Christ**. (Ephesians 1:7; 2:7; 3:8)*

What is the **magnitude of God's grace**? How extensive are His resources of grace? So often we drastically underestimate God's supply of grace for us.

God is rich in grace. When He forgave our sins, He did so *"according to the **riches of His grace**."* Think of the bountiful measure of grace that was bestowed on us to remove our guilt and shame. God generously poured out His grace and washed away our iniquities. Yet, in doing this He did not deplete the treasures of His grace.

In [Ephesians 2:7](#), God speaks of the *"**exceeding riches of His grace**."* The Lord's grace is far beyond any richness that we have ever yet comprehended or experienced. God's storehouse of grace is so abundant that He will continue pouring it upon us for the *"ages to come."* Yes, it will take eternity for the Lord to fully demonstrate His grace toward us. This everlasting demonstration involves showing His kindness toward all who are in Christ Jesus. Think of it—from the boundless resources of God's grace He can make us the objects of His kindness for ever and ever! One could liken the riches of God's grace to an infinitely vast ocean. Think of the immensity of the oceans of the world. Although they are magnificent in scope, every ocean can be searched out or fathomed. Every ocean has a bottom that can be reached. Though vast, they are finite. But not so with God's grace. Paul testified that the Lord gave him grace to go forth and proclaim the *"**unsearchable [unfathomable] riches of Christ**."*

For us, there is **more grace** available in the **heart of God** than there is **water** in **all** of the **oceans** of the **world**! Truly, no matter how much grace we have already discovered in Christ, we have only begun our search.

Heavenly Father, I am awestruck at the magnitude of Your grace. Forgive me for underestimating that grace so often. Enlighten the eyes of my heart that I might know the richness of Your grace. May the immeasurable ocean of Your grace supply my daily need, through Jesus Christ my Lord, Amen.



*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are **not under law but under grace**. (Romans 6:14)*

Sin dominates all of our lives, unless we are learning of God's solution. **Grace is God's sufficient remedy** that **sin will no longer dominate** our lives.

**Before** we came to faith in Jesus Christ, we were **under the dominion of sin**. We were condemned before God because of our sin. Others may not have been aware of our truly sinful condition. Still, we were so controlled by sin that God called us "*slaves of sin*" (Romans 6:6).

The **law** brought us **no hope of escape**. In fact, the law condemned us. "*Now we know that whatever the **law** says, it says to those who are **under the law**, that **every** mouth may be **stopped**, and **all the world** may become **guilty** before God*" (Romans 3:19). We could never have found freedom from sin's condemnation by attempting to perform better under the law of God. "*Knowing that a man is **not justified** by the **works** of the **law** but by faith in Jesus Christ...for by the **works** of the **law** no **flesh** shall be **justified***" (Galatians 2:16).

On the other hand, the **grace** of God is our **effective hope**. There is **forgiveness of sins** by His **grace**: "*The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*" (Ephesians 1:7). There is **justification** through **faith** by the **grace** of God. "*Even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be **justified** by **faith** in **Christ** and not by the works of the law*" (Galatians 2:16). There is **growth in spiritual life** by the **grace** of God. "*But **grow** in the **grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18). None of these heavenly blessings become ours through our ability to live up to the holy standards of God's law. Our **relationship** with the **Lord** is **based** upon **grace**, **not** upon **law**. We **began** a walk with the Lord by His **grace** at work **for us**. We **continue** walking with Him by His **grace** working **in our lives**.



O Lord, my God, I rejoice greatly that I am under Your grace and not under Your law. Your holy law rightly condemned me for my trespasses against You. I thank You for forgiving my sins by Your glorious grace. I praise You for justifying me, declaring me not guilty in Your sight, by Your rich grace. I magnify You for continuing to touch and shape my life by Your inexhaustible grace, in the name of Christ Jesus, my Lord, Amen.

## One Summary Message of the Law: Be Holy

*And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: '**You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.** Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God.'" (Leviticus 19:1-4)*

What is the overall **message** of **God's law**? How could a person **summarize** the **law** of **God**? In this statement to Moses, the Lord mentions a few of the commandments from His holy law. He speaks of proper treatment of parents. He calls for a weekly day of rest. He prohibits the worship of idols. Then, He provides a two-word **summary** of His law: **"be holy."**

In this call to holiness, the Lord holds forth **Himself** as the **reason** for, and **standard** of, living holy lives. **"You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."** God is holy, so He requires holiness to be a distinctive trait of His people.

What is the holiness of God? It has to do with His character. **Holiness** speaks of that which is **innate** with God. It is **inherent** or **intrinsic** to His character. Also, it **contrasts** that which is **foreign** to **His being**. In the Lord God there is perfect righteousness, and in Him no unrighteousness dwells. Complete moral purity abides in God. Conversely, in Him there is not even a trace of moral evil. In fact, everything about Him is spiritually pure and morally unpolluted.

This **holy character** of the **Lord God** is the **standard** that the **law** holds forth for humanity. God's chosen nation, Israel, was given this standard in writing. All others have this standard written on the conscience. *"(Gentiles) show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness"* ([Romans 2:15](#)). **All** who are born into this world are **measured** by **God's**

**law**, which demands that the holy character of God be seen in their lives before God. This includes how they relate to God and to one another. The message of the law is: "**be holy**."

O Holy Father, I worship You for Your perfect holiness. None is holy, O Lord, besides You. You are pure and righteous in all of Your being and all of Your doing. Father, I am aware of, and convicted of, my lack of inborn holiness. I confess that I could never produce a life that would measure up to Your holy standards. I thank You for the gracious forgiveness that is available in Your Son, Jesus Christ. I take comfort in, and find hope in, the righteousness that Your Son can bring to those who trust in Him day by day!

## Another Summary Message of the Law: Be Loving

*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, "You shall love **the Lord your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall **love your neighbor** as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40)*

In His response to the question, Jesus supplies **another summary** of the **message** of God's **law: be loving**. "**Love the Lord your God...love your neighbor**." Jesus then revealed that "On these **two** commandments hang **all** the Law and the Prophets." Every command in the law of God is related to one of these two commandments.

**"Love the Lord your God."** The primary demand of the law is an all-out love relationship with the Lord God Almighty. God is to be loved "*with **all** your heart, with **all** your soul, and with **all** your mind*." From the depths of our being, love is to be flowing out toward the Lord. In every expression of our personality, love is to be poured out toward God. In every thought of our minds, love for God is to be the motivation and the content. Any aspect of life that does not indicate a comprehensive, unrestricted love toward God is in violation of His law.

**"Love your neighbor."** The secondary demand of God's law is an unselfish love toward every other person. We are to love others "**as ourselves**." Some have wrongly used this phrase to urge obedience to an imaginary third commandment: "We need to learn to love ourselves"?! No, Jesus said there are only two commandments here. This second one is a call to give others the consideration and care that we all have given to ourselves throughout our lives. Jesus later intensified this second command by saying, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another; as I have loved you**...*" (John 13:34).

The message of God's law is: **be loving**. Love God fully. Love others sacrificially.

Dear Lord God, I bow before You as the God of infinite love. I have come to love You, because You first loved me. Yet, my love for You is so feeble in light of what You deserve and what You command. O Lord, my love for others is so often diminished by my own selfishness. I humbly ask that You would work in me a more profound love for You and a more selfless love for others, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## One More Summary Message of the Law: Be Perfect

*"Therefore you shall **be perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*  
(Matthew 5:48)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus provides a startling **summary** of the **law** of **God**: "**be perfect**." Our Lord had just been teaching about God's law. His instruction provided a much deeper understanding of the law than the teachers of Jesus' day had grasped. He showed how the **law** goes **far beyond external behavior** alone.

The format Jesus used was "**You have heard that it was said... But I say to you.**" In Matthew 5:27-28, He addressed the commandment on **adultery** in this fashion. "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'* But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." When **lustful imaginations** are **entertained** in our **thoughts**, **adultery** has **already occurred**, as far as God is concerned.

In verses 21-22 Jesus used this same pattern of instruction to reveal God's perspective on **murder**: "*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.*" When **vengeful anger** floods our **thoughts**, this is harboring a murderous spirit within the heart. Actual murder and vindictive anger both deserve the same judgment. Clearly, God's commandments can be transgressed by the unseen attitudes of the heart, as well as by the visible actions of the body.

Again, Jesus summarized such teaching on the law by saying: "**be perfect**." In the law, God requires a perfection that measures up to the perfect character of Himself. The law is saying that we



are to hold within our hearts and manifest through our actions a character that matches God's. "*Therefore you shall **be perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*"

Dear Heavenly Father, these words are so humbling and convicting. You are so perfect in every way. I am so imperfect in every area. Lord, even actions that I think are acceptable in Your sight can be polluted by unacceptable attitudes that fall far short of the standard of Your perfections. Thus, I cast myself upon Your mercy and grace, looking to You for the only remedies that will ever suffice, even Your forgiveness and Your transforming power, through Christ my Lord and Savior, Amen.

## Not Hearing the Law

*Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, **do you not hear the law?***  
(Galatians 4:21)

When people do **not really hear** what the **law** of **God** is saying, they may still desire to be under the law. Those who are **lost** and **dying** in the **world** often underestimate the message of the law. They may imagine that it is only calling them to attend religious services or to join a religious organization. In missing the message of the law, they choose to remain under it, trusting in their own best behavior to pass any final judgment concerning heaven or hell. This is a matter of "**not hearing the law.**"

**Many** who are **redeemed** to **new life** in Christ, also want to remain under the law for spiritual growth and service. This is another case of "**not hearing the law.**" Any believer who expects to please the Lord on the basis of "best efforts" does not really hear what the law speaks as God's will.

The law of God is not suggesting that we "be better." It is demanding that we "**be holy,**" as holy as God. The law is not implying that we "be nicer." It is requiring that we "**be loving,**" as loving as Christ. The law is not proposing that we "try harder." It is insisting that we "**be perfect,**" as perfect as our Father in heaven. The law of God is not asking us to improve ourselves or to be better than the next person. Many times this inaccurate statement is heard: "Just do the best that you can; what more could God require?" Well, God is demanding far beyond our human best. "*Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, **do you not hear the law?***" (Galatians 4:21). God's law is demanding that lives "**be holy,**" "**be loving,**" and "**be perfect.**" Moreover, **He Himself** is the **standard** of this holiness, love, and perfection.

Dear Lord God, You are holy and loving and perfect. In and of myself, I am none of these. I stand before You without any human resources that could measure up to these heavenly realities that You alone possess. I

thank You for Your mercy. I praise You for Your grace. I humbly bow before You, asking that You work more and more of Your holiness in and through my life. With no other hope than You, I ask that more of Your love might fill my life. Admitting my complete inadequacy, I ask You to transform me more and more into Your perfect image. Through Christ I pray, Amen.

## The Inability of the Law

*For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its **weakness** and **unprofitableness**, for the **law made nothing perfect**; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:18-19)*

God's word reveals that **His** law has a **strategic inability**. There is an arena in which the law has a "**weakness and unprofitableness**." The law **demands perfection**, **but** it offers **no perfecting resources**. "**The law made nothing perfect**." This **inability** is **certainly not** due to any **oversight** on God's part. Rather, this **inability** is related to that which God **never intended** for **His law** to **accomplish**.

The law of God was not given as a means for perfecting people (that is, of providing spiritual change). God's law was not designed to be a tool by which man could improve his spiritual condition in the sight of God. The **law** tells us **what** God wants to see in lives, **but** the law provides **no resource** to **effect** the necessary changes. Thus, attempting to begin or to develop a relationship with God by dependence upon our best performance will always be a hopeless venture.

**Anyone** who desires to **approach** a **holy** and **perfect God** must have a **more effective expectation** than one's **best personal performance**, measured by God's holy law. Anyone who wants to get to know God, to walk with Him, to live with Him through time and eternity, must find a better hope than the law of God. The **law of God cannot give** us an **initial standing** before God, that is, it **cannot justify** us. It cannot bring us a declaration of "not guilty" in His sight. The **law** is **also unable to develop an ongoing walk** of godliness before the Lord, that is, it **cannot sanctify** us. It cannot transform our lives day by day into the

image of Christ. For either of these precious blessings of God, a **"better hope"** is needed. God's **grace** is the **"better hope"** that allows us to *"draw near to God,"* initially in new birth and continually in a maturing intimacy.

Holy Father, You are perfect in character. Your law is perfect in standard. Your law rightly demands perfection of me. Father, I ask that You remind me often that I cannot live up to that divine requirement on my own resources. Bring to my remembrance this inability of Your law. Stir my heart to trust in that better hope. Lord, I desire to walk closely with You. Thus, I trust in Your grace as the only sufficient hope that will allow me to draw near to You, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

## The Inability of the Law to Justify

*Knowing that a **man** is **not justified** by the **works** of the **law** but by **faith** in **Jesus Christ**...But that **no one** is **justified** by the **law** in the sight of God is evident, for "The just shall live by faith." (Galatians 2:16 and 3:11)*

Our great initial need before God is to be **justified**, to have God Himself declare us **not guilty**, to have the Lord pronounce us **righteous in His sight**. At first glance this **appears** to be an **impossible** situation for man. **God**, our Judge, is **holy** by His nature. **Man** (because of sin) is **unholy** by nature. *"But we are **all** like an **unclean** thing, and **all** our righteousnesses are like **filthy rags**" (Isaiah 64:6).*

The consequences of such ungodliness are inevitably **universal** and appropriately **severe**. *"For **all** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...For the wages of sin is **death**" (Romans 3:23 and 6:23a).* The **just** sentence for **all** of humanity, in light of their sins against a pure, holy, and eternal God, is **death** (everlasting separation from God).

The law of God offers no help and provides no hope of remedying this dire situation. People are *"**not justified by the works of the law**."* Trying one's best to measure up to the law never produces a verdict of not guilty. In all of history, Jesus was the only one who could be evaluated by God's law and receive a declaration of living righteously. Jesus was *"in all points tempted as we are, yet **without sin**" (Hebrews 4:15).* No other person could ever perform sufficiently before God's law to achieve a declaration of righteousness. *"**No one is justified by the law in the sight of God.**"*

Vows and pledges of personal improvement offer no hope. Asking others how to strive more earnestly provides no assistance. **Only faith** supplies the necessary remedy. *"A man is not justified by the works of the law **but by faith in Jesus Christ**."* Trusting in our



own best efforts leaves us guilty before God. Trusting in Christ's perfect work on the cross makes us justified before God. *"The just shall live **by faith**."*

O Lord, my God, I praise You for Your glorious grace poured out upon me in justification. By Your grace alone You have declared me righteous in Your sight. I was totally guilty before Your holy law. I had no excuses and no hope of rescuing myself. Your law rightly condemned me, and I never could have reversed that verdict by my own performance. I trusted in Your Son, and You pronounced me righteous before You. To You, my Lord, I give all honor, glory, adoration, and thanksgiving, through Christ Jesus, my Savior, Amen.

## The Inability of the Law to Sanctify

*This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so **foolish**? Having **begun** in the **Spirit**, are you **now** being made **perfect** by the **flesh**? (Galatians 3:2-3)*

The first question here in [Galatians 3](#) again brings to mind issues of **justification**. *"Did you **receive** the **Spirit** by the **works** of the **law**, or by the **hearing** of **faith**?"* We received the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in our lives when we were born again, when we became children of God. This is also when the Lord declared us justified, righteous in His sight.

**How** did the **Spirit** come to **indwell** us? Was it by our **performance**, attempting to live up to the **law** of God? **No**, it was *"by the **hearing** of **faith**."* We heard the good news that Christ died for our sins. We heard the truth that Jesus could forgive us of our unrighteousness. **Faith** was stirred in our hearts as we considered that grand message. In simple, humble faith, we asked the Lord Jesus to come into our lives, to be our personal Savior. *"But as many as **received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who **believe** in **His name**"* ([John 1:12](#)).

The next two questions in our text apply this same biblical reasoning to **sanctification**. *"Are you so **foolish**? Having **begun** in the **Spirit**, are you **now** being made **perfect** by the **flesh**?"* To think that we can **advance** the **process** of **sanctification** (that is, progressive transformation unto Christlikeness) by our own **human resources** (that is, by the flesh) is **foolishness**. What a staggering thought! Just as we could **never** secure **justification** by our own **best efforts**, so it is true that we can **never** increase personal **sanctification** by our own **best efforts**. Yes, *"The just shall **live by faith**,"* initially and continually!

Dear Lord, I praise Your holy name for justifying me by faith in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I am so grateful that such a blessing did not depend upon my personal ability or merit. My heart is both convicted and encouraged that sanctification is by faith as well. I am convicted, because I have often thought and acted as though I could effect more practical righteousness by my own resources. I am encouraged that there is a way that actually works, and it depends upon trusting in You. O Lord, please remind me of this glorious, gracious provision day by day, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## The General Ability of the Law

*Then the LORD delivered to me **two tablets of stone** written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken..."You have heard that it was said...**But I say to you.**"* (Deuteronomy 9:10 and Matthew 5:27-28)

Although the **law of God** is **unable** to **justify** or **sanctify**, it **does have** some **strategic ability** in **God's plan** for man. These verses from the Torah (Hebrew for law) and the Sermon on the Mount help us reflect upon this matter. These two profound sections of the Bible pertain to the law of God. Torah refers to the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy. These books give an **extensive explanation** of the **message** of God's law. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) includes **Jesus' clarification** of **man's understanding** of the law.

When these portions of the Bible are read, studied, or taught, the **general ability** of the law is at work. In these passages the very **character** and **will** of **God** are revealed. The message related to those "**two tablets of stone**" spoke of **God's character**, "*I the Lord, your God, **am holy.***" The summary of this message expressed **God's will** for man, "**be holy.**" The details of the message indicated what holiness would be like in conduct toward God and in relationships with others. Jesus' words would eventually extend this message of holiness even into attitudes of the heart.

The law of God is His standard for spiritual measurement. By His law, God measures holiness in people's lives by revealing His will, which is based upon His holy character. This is why **all** of us "**fall short of the glory of God**" (Romans 3:23). **We don't measure up** to God's holy standard.

The measuring instruments of man are a helpful illustration of the law. When a tape measure is used to evaluate the height of

people, it measures growth or reveals the absence of it. It does not produce human growth. So it is with the law of God. The law describes and measures **what** God wants lives to look like. It does **not cause** such spiritual growth to appear. **Only God's grace** at work in our lives is the sufficient dynamic that **produces** spiritual growth.

O Lord, my hope, I give You praise for Your holy character, revealed in Your holy law. I agree with Your will, desiring holiness in my life. I also agree with You that I have fallen far short of Your glorious standard. Thank You for cleansing me of all unrighteousness. Thank You for clothing me in the righteousness of Your dear Son. Now I place my hope in You for any and all progress in the path of righteousness. O Lord, have Your way in my life, working Your will, by Your grace, through Jesus Christ my Lord, Amen.

## The Law Producing Accountability for Sin

*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that **every mouth** may be **stopped**, and **all the world** may become **guilty** before **God**...For by the **law** is the **knowledge** of **sin**. (Romans 3:19-20)*

**God's law** speaks to those who are **under the law**. This would certainly include the **Jews**, for the law of God was given to them in writing (first engraved on stones by God, then written on parchment in the Holy Scriptures). Yet, the law speaks to the **Gentiles** as well, since they have it inscribed upon their consciences. "[The Gentiles] *show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness*" (Romans 2:15). Thus, every Jew and every Gentile begins life under the law.

Remember, when the law speaks, it is saying, "be **holy**, be **loving**, be **perfect**." The result of all people having received this message (either externally in writing, or internally upon the conscience) is that "**every mouth** [is] **stopped**."

What would **we** say if we stood before God, and He evaluated our lives by His law? How could **we** answer if God said, "Here is your life; here is My law; now, give an account of yourself." Our "**mouths** [would be] **stopped**." We could provide no excuse, explanation, or justification.

The law produces accountability to God. And this accountability is universal. "**All the world** (is) **guilty before God**." There are no exceptions. Everyone in all the world is included. The **law** of God reveals to **all** humanity what **sin** really is.

Sin is **not** a **cultural phenomenon**. It is a **divine revelation** of what is absolutely unacceptable before God in light of His holy character. "**By the law is the knowledge of sin**." Man would have no insight into this matter were it not for the law of God. "*I would*



***not have known sin except through the law"*** (Romans 7:7a).

Murder, adultery, stealing, lying, coveting, etc. are all revealed to mankind by God's law. *"For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet'"* (Romans 7:7b).

Through God's law we are all accountable to Him for our sins.

O Lord God of holiness and love and all that is perfect, Your holy law has stopped my mouth. I have no excuse for my spiritual failure before Your perfect standard. What I have read in Your word confirms the convictions of my heart. My life would stand forever guilty in Your sight, if it were not for Your forgiving, justifying grace. Thank You for providing forgiveness of my sins and justifying me, when I could offer no justifying words or deeds of my own. As I look at the world of humanity all around me, please remind me that they are guilty before You, until they come to Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

## The Law Convicting the Rebellious

*But we know that the **law** is **good** if one uses it **lawfully**, knowing this: that the **law** is **not** made for a **righteous** person, but for the **lawless** and **insubordinate**, for the **ungodly** and for **sinner**s...**But** if you are **led** by the **Spirit**, you are **not under the law**. (1 Timothy 1:8-9 and Galatians 5:18)*

Although the **law** has some **God-given inabilities**, it is nevertheless **good**. *"Therefore the **law** is **holy**, and the **commandment holy and just and good**" (Romans 7:12).* It does have certain **abilities**, *"if one uses it **lawfully**."* One **unlawful** application of the law would be using it to obtain **justification** (a declaration of being righteous in God's sight). If anyone ever infers that attempted obedience to the law of God could potentially secure an overall verdict of "not guilty," that would be biblically **forbidden**.

Another **unlawful** application of God's law would be using it to obtain **sanctification** (progressive spiritual growth in the Lord). If a person imagines that they could grow in godliness by their best attempts at living up to the law, that, too, would be **prohibited** by God's word.

The law is *"for the **lawless** and **insubordinate**."* The law of God is for those who are rebellious at heart against the will and the ways of God. This truth, in its basic interpretation, is directed toward unbelievers, *"for the **ungodly** and for **sinner**s."* Herein we see that the **law** of God is **able** to **convict** unbelieving **rebels** of their defiance against a holy God.

However, by **implication**, there is an **insight** for **believers** here as well. As far as God is concerned, we are *"**not under law** but under **grace**" (Romans 6:14).* Yet, only those who walk according to the Spirit **fully enjoy** the daily blessings of that reality. *"**But if you are led by the Spirit**, you are **not under the law**."* When

followers of the Lord Jesus walk according to the **flesh**, they **practically** place themselves under a **performance** code. They put themselves under the law for practical day by day living. The message of the law, which is for the rebellious, also has the capacity to expose this unacceptable condition within the life of a self-sufficient believer.

Dear God of all Grace, I confess that I formerly lived in lawless rebellion against You. Lord, Your Holy Spirit convicted me of my self-righteous defiance against Your holy law. By Your grace You justified me, as I cried out in faith to Your Son. Lord, now I earnestly ask You to convict me of those times when I attempt to live by the self-righteous resources of my own flesh. Lord, I need to be sanctified daily by Your grace, even as You previously justified me by Your grace. I praise You that such a work is abundantly available through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

## The Law Tutoring People to Christ

*Therefore the **law** was our **tutor** to **bring** us to **Christ**, that we might be justified by faith. But after **faith** has come, we are **no longer under a tutor**. (Galatians 3:24-25)*

The **ultimate ability** of the **law** of God is its capacity to **tutor people to Christ**. "*The **law** was our **tutor** to **bring** us to **Christ**.*" It is the plan of God to use His law to inform us about our great need for Jesus Christ. Remember the **summaries** of the law of God: "be **holy**, be **loving**, be **perfect**."

The law demands that we be **holy**. We are convicted that we are not holy. Thereby, the law is saying to us: "**You need Jesus Christ**." The law requires that we be loving. We realize that we are not **loving**. Thereby, the law is declaring to us: "**You need Jesus Christ**." The law insists that we be **perfect**. We know that we are not perfect. Thereby, the law is announcing to us: "**You need Jesus Christ**." In this process the law functions as **tutor** (schoolmaster or child-trainer), instructing people of their need for that which only **Christ** can provide through **His grace**.

Now that we have responded to the law's tutoring work, we are no longer under the tutor. Now that we have placed our faith in Jesus Christ, we are no longer under the law. "*But after **faith** has come, we are **no longer under a tutor**.*"

Whereas we once were told by the law to be holy, now we **look** to **Christ** for all **personal holiness**. "*But of Him **you** are **in Christ Jesus**, who **became for us...righteousness and sanctification***" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Whereas we once were told by the law to be loving, now we **look** to the **Spirit** of Christ for all the **love** that our lives are to show forth. "*But the **fruit of the Spirit is love***" (Galatians 5:22).

Whereas we once were told by the law to be **perfect**, now we **look** to the **Lord** for all of the **perfecting** process. *"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you **will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ"* ([Philippians 1:6](#)).

O Lord, my Redeemer, thank You for using Your law as a tutor to lead me to Jesus Christ. Your law was so correct regarding my desperate need of a Savior. Now I rejoice that I am no longer under that tutor. What a delight to relate to You by faith and not by performance. What a precious blessing to humbly hope in the Lord Jesus for righteousness and love and growth. How wonderful to look to a gracious, loving Person, the Lord Jesus, instead of to a perfect unyielding standard, the law. Lord Jesus, please complete in me the good work of Your grace that began when I first believed in You. In Your name, and for Your glory, I pray, Amen.

## Jesus Fulfilling the Law

*"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy **but to fulfill**." (Matthew 5:17)*

The **standard** of the **law** of God is **infinitely** high and lofty: *"be **holy**, be **loving**, be **perfect**."* This is because the law reflects the very **character** of **God**. In light of this, we may wonder if there is any way that the law can be fulfilled. **How** could the righteous demands of the law **ever** be met in **our** lives? The answer to this vital question is contained in the truth that **Jesus** came *"to fulfill" the law.*

*Consider how comprehensive was Jesus' fulfillment of the law. He fulfilled the law in His **life**, becoming our **example**. As Jesus lived, He showed us what life would look like if one could always, in every way, live up to the heavenly standards of God. Jesus' testimony was "I **always** do those things that **please Him**" (John 8:29).*

Further, He fulfilled the law in His **death**, becoming **our** substitutionary **sacrifice**. The law included a **penalty** for violation, and that penalty was **death**. *"The **soul** who **sins** shall **die**...For the **wages** of **sin** is **death**" (Ezekiel 18:4 and Romans 6:23).* Jesus lovingly died in our place to pay that penalty which we owed. *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, **Christ died for us**" (Romans 5:8).* Additionally, He wants to fulfill the law now **in our daily experience**, by being **our life**: *"**Christ** who is **our life**" (Colossians 3:4).* The Lord Jesus wants to live in and through the lives of His disciples, as we daily put our faith in Him. *"It is **no** longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the **life** which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20).* Yes, **Jesus fulfills the law comprehensively!**



Dear Father of Glory, what marvelous grace—what marvelous grace! Such a thorough provision is supplied by Your grace. Through the work of Jesus, my Lord, the law is fulfilled. Its holy demands are met on my behalf. My failure before Your law is fully covered by Your grace. Lord Jesus, thank You for paying the penalty for my sins. My desire to grow in the righteous life that You lived, and that the law describes, is fully available by Your grace. O Lord, this is grace upon grace. For this I praise You, and I rejoice with expectation. Lord Jesus, by faith I now look to You to be my life this day. Lord, inhabit my heart and shape my attitudes, my words, my relationships, and my deeds, I pray in Your mighty name, Amen.

## Righteousness through Christ in Justification

*But now the **righteousness** of God **apart from the law** is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the **righteousness of God, through faith** in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for **all** have **sinned** and **fall short** of the glory of God, being **justified freely** by **His grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:21-24)*

The basic manner in which Jesus fulfills the law of God for us is by **justifying** us "**freely by His grace.**" He does this by offering us "**the righteousness of God through faith.**"

In the gospel of Jesus Christ, "**the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed.**" It is the **same** righteousness that is spoken of in the **law**, that is, "**being witnessed by the Law.**" In the **law**, **righteousness** is an **impossible** standard being **imposed**. In the **gospel**, **righteousness** is a **gracious gift** being **offered**. This **gift of righteousness** is available to **all** who **believe**, to all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord. This gift is, of course, **free** to the recipients. Yet, it was made available at **great cost** to the giver. This gift cost the Father His only begotten Son. This gift cost the Son His own life, as He paid the price of redemption to buy us back from the slave market of sin and death.

Every person ever created needs this redemption price paid for them. "**For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**" Now, for all who believe in the Lord Jesus, the righteousness of God is imputed to them (that is, credited as a gift to their heavenly account). Thereby, the Lord God justifies us "**freely by His grace.**" The Lord declares us righteous in His sight by giving to us "**the righteousness of God which is through faith.**"

Dear Lord, I am so grateful that Your message of righteousness did not come through the law alone. Otherwise, Lord, I would have been condemned before You forever. Thank You for speaking to us of righteousness through Your glorious gospel of grace. I rejoice in You that I am now righteous in Your sight, through faith in Your beloved Son. Lord, I am learning that the righteousness I need for daily sanctification must also come from Jesus, by that same grace, through that same kind of trust. What good, good news is Your grand gospel! I magnify and praise You through Christ, my Lord, Amen.

## Righteousness through Christ in Sanctification

*For what the **law** could **not** do in that it was **weak** through the **flesh**, **God did** by **sending** His own **Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the **righteous requirement** of the **law** might be **fulfilled in us** who do **not walk** according to the **flesh** **but** according to the **Spirit**. (Romans 8:3-4)*

How wonderful it is to be "**justified freely by His grace**" (Romans 3:24). Yet, what disappointment and discouragement awaits us, if we do not learn that God desires to **sanctify** us **freely by His grace** as well. This plan of God, as we should expect, hinges upon the work of Jesus Christ, as we depend upon Him.

In matters of **justification**, as well as **sanctification**, the **law** has a **weakness**. This weakness is that **man**, by natural human resources (the **flesh**), **cannot** live up to the **standards** of **God**. Thus, to accomplish what the law could never accomplish, the Father sent His Son. "**For what the *law* could *not* do in that it was *weak* through the *flesh*, *God did* by *sending* His own *Son*."** Jesus came as a man and died on the cross to eradicate the consequences of sin. This death of Christ certainly provided **justification** for all who would believe in the Lord Jesus. Yet, the next verse reveals that through His sacrificial death practical **sanctification** is available day by day **through faith** in the Lord. "**That the *righteous requirement* of the *law* might be *fulfilled in us* who do *not walk* according to the *flesh* *but* according to the *Spirit*."**

The word "**walk**" makes [Romans 8:4](#) a verse on progressive **sanctification**, not justification. **Justification** takes place with the first **moment** of faith in Christ. **Sanctification** continues **step by step**, day by day, throughout the life of a believer.

Think of this grand truth. God's grace provides a way "**that the *righteous requirement* of the *law* might be *fulfilled in us*."** Remember, the heavenly demand is "**be *holy*,**" be like Christ.

This transformation of life takes place daily in the life of any believer who does "***not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.***" If we **renounce** the natural resources of man and **trust** in the Lord Jesus step by step through life, His **Holy Spirit** accomplishes His **sanctifying** work **in us** by the **grace** of God.

O Lord of compassion and generosity, what bountiful grace You offer to us; grace that justifies and grace that sanctifies. How foolish and unnecessary have been my futile attempts to fulfill the lofty requirements of Your holy law by my own feeble efforts. Father, how thrilling and encouraging to see that You have provided a gracious and effective way for me to grow in Christlikeness. This day I place my hope for godly progress in the irreplaceable work of Your Holy Spirit in me, in Jesus' name, Amen.

# Law and Grace, Old Covenant and New Covenant

*The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the **tablets of the covenant**...For **the law** was given **through Moses**, but **grace** and truth came **through Jesus Christ**..."This cup is the **new covenant** in My blood."* (Deuteronomy 9:11; John 1:17, and Luke 22:20)

In our meditations upon **law** and **grace**, we have also been considering (though not yet mentioning) the principal characteristics of the **Old Covenant** and the **New Covenant**. When the Lord wrote the message of His law upon stone tablets for Moses, He was prescribing the terms of the **Old Covenant**. *"The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the **tablets of the covenant**."* When Jesus came into the world to die on the cross, the Lord was establishing the New Covenant. *"This cup is the **new covenant** in My blood."*

These two covenants of law and grace present one of the major contrasting themes in the word of God. *"For **the law** was given **through Moses**, but **grace** and truth came **through Jesus Christ**."* Understanding the differences between these two covenants is of utmost importance for living the Christian life as God intends.

God's **law** tells us that He desires **holiness** to characterize the way we live. **Only** God's **grace** can **provide** such godliness in our lives. God's **law** tells us that He wants Christlike **love** to permeate our attitudes and relationships. **Only** God's **grace** can develop such love in us. God's **law** tells us that He desires the **perfections** of the Father to be growing in us. **Only** God's **grace** is sufficient to carry out such a process of transformation. The **law** of God is the "**what**"; the **grace** of God is the "**how**". The **law** of God **reveals sin**; the **grace** of God **forgives sin**. The **law** of God **indicates** man's **problem**; the **grace** of God **provides** God's **remedy**. The **law** of God demands **performance** by **man**; the **grace** of God offers **provision** from **God**. The **law** of God is

the **standard**; the **grace** of God is the **means**. The **law** of God is the spiritual **measuring rod** that **evaluates** lives; the **grace** of God is the **nurturing resource** that **produces** spiritual life. The **law** of God **tells** us of the **character** of God; the **grace** of God **reproduces** that **character** in us. The **law** of God is the **effect** God wants to **see**; the **grace** of God is the **cause** that **brings forth** that effect.

Lord God of truth, help me to rightly divide Your truth. Enlighten my spiritual understanding that I might increasingly grasp the differences between law and grace. Show me the full implications of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Your word impresses me with the enormous significance of these issues. Thank You for Your patience concerning my negligence or confusion on these matters. O Lord, I earnestly desire to live a righteous and holy life. Teach me the path of humble dependence upon Your glorious grace, through Jesus, my Lord and my life, Amen.

## The Promise of a New Covenant

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when **I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel...I will **put My law** in their **minds**, and **write it** on their **hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people...they **all shall know Me**, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the LORD. "For I will **forgive their iniquity**, and **their sin I will remember no more.**" (Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34)*

Long ago, God promised a **new covenant** of **grace** for His people Israel. *"**I will make a new covenant** with the house of Israel."* Some day, the Israelites will turn to Messiah as a group and enter into this promised covenant of grace. *"And so **all Israel** will be **saved**, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins'" (Romans 11:26-27).* This will take place when the Lord Jesus returns to this earth. *"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the **Spirit of grace and supplication**; then **they will look on Me** whom they have **pierced**; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10).*

Meanwhile, the **church** of the Lord Jesus, comprised of all Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ, **already** has the **new covenant** instituted for her. *"This cup is the **new covenant** in My blood" (Luke 22:20).*

Note the astounding **three-fold** provisions this new covenant offers by faith to all believers today. First, there is the **forgiveness** of sins. *"For I will **forgive their iniquity**, and **their sin I will remember no more.**"* Second, there is the opportunity to have an **intimate relationship** with God. *"They **all shall know Me**, from the least of them to the greatest of them."* Third, there is the **internal working** of the Lord God Almighty **enabling** and



**changing** people's lives from the inner core of their being. *"I will put My law **in their minds**, and write it **on their hearts**."*

Almighty God, the provisions of Your new covenant of grace are staggering in their richness! Forgiveness of sins by You, intimacy with You, and inner transformation from You—all of this is mine through faith in Your Son, my Savior. O Lord, what bountiful grace You make available to us in Christ! I fully and desperately need all three of these wondrous workings that You alone can provide. I praise You for the gift of forgiveness of sins. I seek You for increased intimacy with You. I look to You to be shaping my life according to Your will, from the inside out, all through the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

## The New Covenant Inaugurated for the Church

*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...And the Holy Spirit also **witnesses to us**..."This is the **covenant** that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts"...Therefore, **brethren**, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a **new and living way** which **He consecrated for us**. (Hebrews 8:6; 10:15-16, 19-20)*

This **new covenant** of **grace** (promised to Israel eventually) has **already** been **inaugurated** for the **church** now. The book of Hebrews documents this fact repeatedly. *"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."* Here in [chapter 8, verse 6](#), the new covenant is referred to as *"a **better covenant**."* Then, the instituting of this new covenant is described in the past tense, *"**was established**."* It has **already** been put into **operation** for the **church**.

In [Hebrews 10:16](#), the promise of the **new covenant** is quoted from [Jeremiah 31](#). *"This is **the covenant** that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts."* In the previous verse, we are told that this quote from Jeremiah includes a message from the Holy Spirit to us, the church of Jesus Christ. *"And the Holy Spirit also **witnesses to us**."*

Furthermore, in [Hebrews 10:19-20](#), the **new covenant** is applied to the access of the *"**brethren**"* (the **church**, God's children) to their holy God and Father. *"Therefore, **brethren**, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a **new and living way** which **He consecrated for us**."* Through His death on the cross, Jesus consecrated (that is, inaugurated, instituted, established, put into operation) the **new covenant** for us today! Of course, this all fits perfectly with the application of the **new covenant** to the **church** celebrating the **Lord's Supper**. *"In the*

*same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the **new covenant** in My blood'" (1 Corinthians 11:25).*

Dear Lord of Glory, I rejoice with great gladness that Your new covenant of grace is the wondrous manner in which I am invited to relate to You. In this rich covenant, I have found forgiveness of all my sins. Praise be to Your name! In this bountiful arrangement, I can grow in intimacy with You. Blessed be Your name! In this generous provision, I anticipate being changed and enabled by You from deep within my heart. Glory be to Your name forevermore!

## The New and Living Way

*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a **new and living way** which He consecrated for us. (Hebrews 10:19-20)*

Here, life under the **new covenant of grace** is described as the "**new and living way**." This could be contrasted with the "**old and dying way**" of attempting to live under the **old covenant of law**. The "**newness**" of grace is **not** really a matter of **time** sequence, because the grace of God actually precedes the law in man's history with God. The "**tree of life**" in the garden of Eden was God's provision of **grace** for Adam and Eve. The **promises** of God to Abraham (given hundreds of years before the law) depended upon the **faithful grace of God**, not the **legal performance of Abraham**.

The "**newness**" of grace is its everyday **freshness** and **vitality**. Day by day, by the grace of God, fresh measures of life are abundantly available to those who look to the Lord as their supply. This makes life with God fresh and new every day. Under the **old covenant**, only **one** person, the High Priest, could enter into the intimate presence of God in the Holy of Holies. Furthermore, this was only allowed **one** day a **year**. Such **limited access** would certainly "**get old**" in the hearts of all who **hungered after** the living God.

Now, under the **new covenant of grace**, **every** believer in Jesus (our great High Priest) can confidently approach the Lord personally **any** moment of **every** day: "**Having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus**." Through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, which forgives all of our sins, we can **speak** to the Lord and enjoy **His presence** in our lives **continually**. Jeremiah gave some early insight into this kind of fresh and vital relationship with God. "**Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new**

*every morning; great is **Your faithfulness**. 'The **LORD** is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I **hope in Him!**'"* (Lamentations 3:22-24).

The Apostle Paul wrote profoundly concerning such "newness."  
*"But now we have been **delivered** from the **law**, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the **newness** of the **Spirit** and **not** in the **oldness** of the **letter**"* (Romans 7:6).  
This is the *"**new and living way**."* This will **never** "get old."

O Lord of life, my heart yearns for this new and living way. O, how I long to dwell in Your presence day by day! Lord, I confess that every attempt to base intimacy with You on my best performance has always become so old and dying, so stale and lifeless. My soul is stirred with hope in You and this better way. O Lord, teach me to walk by this new and living way, in the name of Jesus, my great High Priest, Amen.

## Living as Servants of the New Covenant

*Not that we are **sufficient** of ourselves to think of **anything** as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as **ministers** of the **new covenant**, not of the **letter** but of the **Spirit**; for the **letter** kills, but the **Spirit** gives life.* (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

We who follow the Lord Jesus Christ are "**ministers of the new covenant**." The term "**minister**" means **servant**. The phrase "**new covenant**" speaks of relating to God **by grace**. Thus, we are those who **serve God** by the **resources** of **His grace**. Our day by day lives, lived in service of the Lord God Almighty, are to be developed by the grace of God at work in us. What is involved in this biblical, heavenly approach to life here on earth?

The **first** issue pertains to **our inadequacy**. "**Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves**." So often we overlook our personal insufficiency or try to convince ourselves that we can become sufficient with just a little more time, effort, or preparation. This approach is in direct disagreement with the Lord. God wants us to agree with Him. Even when we begin to face our spiritual inability to produce the kind of life God is looking for, we easily underestimate the extent of our deficiency. We may think that we are just not able to produce **as much as** God desires to see in our lives. The Lord has a more radical viewpoint. He says that we are not able to supply "**anything**" that He wants to see. Again, God wants us to agree with Him.

The **second** issue pertains to **God's adequacy**. "**Our sufficiency is from God**." The sufficient resources for living the Christian life are to be found **in God alone**. We are to be the **recipients** of God's grace, that is, His fully adequate supply. We are **not** to think we are the **manufacturers** of that grace. **God** is our **source** of **all** that is needed for **godly living**. Once more, God wants us to agree with Him.

The difference between living by **God's** supply or by **our own** resources is a "**life and death**" matter. *"The letter **kills**, but the Spirit gives **life**."* Attempting to live the Christian life by **our** capabilities will eventually leave us exhausted, discouraged, condemned. Whereas, **depending** upon the **Spirit** of God to supply the **abundant grace** of God leaves us **strengthened, encouraged, and comforted**.

Lord God of all grace, I humbly admit that I have often held a perspective so different from Yours on this subject of sufficiency. I have repeatedly behaved as though the Christian life depended upon what I could do from my own resources. Lord, this has always resulted in spiritual deadness. Please teach me to trust in Your Holy Spirit to bring forth into my experience the full sufficiency of Your immeasurable grace, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## Other Ways to Describe New Covenant Living

*"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross** daily, and **follow Me**"...**be filled with the Spirit**..."I have come that they may have **life**, and that they may have it **more abundantly**." (Luke 9:23; Ephesians 5:18; and John 10:10)*

Living as servants of the new covenant is **not** some **exclusive**, **elitist** religious concept, available **only** to an initiated **few**. Rather, it is just **one way** to **describe** the life that is to be experienced by all who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For many believers, these terms involve **unfamiliar** language.

Some **familiar** terminology that describes the **same** biblical reality would be "**Christian discipleship**." A disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. In Luke 9:23, Jesus explained what was involved in following Him as a disciple. *"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross** daily, and **follow Me**.'" In order to follow the Lord, a person must be willing to **renounce** the **self-life**, which is produced by one's own sufficiency. Then, that person must agree that such a **self-produced** life deserves to be **judged** and **separated** from God. Finally, **everything** that is needed for godly living must be found by pursuing a **growing relationship** with the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Some other terminology that depicts the essence of new covenant living would be "the **Spirit-filled life**." *"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **be filled with the Spirit**."* The Lord calls His people away from earthly influences that can dominate and diminish lives and urges us to **live** by the **fullness** of **His Spirit**. When Christians answer this call, they are willing to live by **God's** powerful, unlimited resources, instead of by **man's** feeble, finite means.



One other familiar phrase that comprises the same reality as life in the new covenant is "the **abundant life**." *"I have come that they may have **life**, and that they may have it **more abundantly**."*

When Jesus came into this world, His mission was not only to rescue us from the consequences of our sins but also to provide us with "**abundant life**," a spiritually enriched life that only **He** could produce in us.

New covenant living-it is the same reality as "**Christian discipleship**," "the **Spirit-filled life**," and "the **abundant life**."

Lord Jesus, I thank You so much for speaking of life in Christ in diverse terminologies. I want to be Your true disciple. I want to be Spirit-filled. I want to live the abundant life. Each perspective offers beautiful insights and necessary confirmations. Lord, help me also to understand and embrace the refreshing language of Your new covenant of grace. Dear Savior, I need all of the life-giving insights that Your rich vocabulary is designed to unfold!

## New Covenant Provided by the Blood of Christ

*"This cup is the new covenant **in My blood**, which is shed for you"... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...but with **the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (Luke 22:20 and 1 Peter 1:18-19)*

The well-known words from the Lord's Supper in [Luke 22:20](#) remind us that the **glorious riches** of **grace** found in the **new covenant** are all **provided** by the **shed blood** of Jesus Christ, as He died on the cross for us. *"This cup is the new covenant **in My blood**, which is shed for you."* Customarily, we think of **forgiveness** of **sins** when we hear these words. Forgiveness is certainly included in the blessings secured by the death of our Lord. Notice, however, that Jesus did **not** say "this cup is **forgiveness** in My blood." He said, *"This cup is the **new covenant** in My blood."*

The new covenant is far more than forgiveness of sins. As previously indicated, the Scriptures reveal that the new covenant has **three** basic areas of blessings. First is the **forgiveness** of sins. *"Their **sins** and their **lawless deeds** I will remember no more"* ([Hebrews 8:12](#)). Second is an **intimate relationship** with the Lord. *"All shall **know Me**, from the least of them to the greatest of them"* ([Hebrews 8:11](#)). Third is an **internal** work of God producing an increasingly godly life in and through us. *"I will put My laws **in their mind** and write them **on their hearts**"* ([Hebrews 8:10](#)). The word of God further confirms that all of these grand blessings depend upon God's provision, not our performance. *"**Not** that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of **anything** as being **from ourselves**, but our sufficiency is **from God**"* ([2 Corinthians 3:5](#)).

How can it be that such measureless spiritual abundance becomes ours through the new covenant of grace? Well, consider the **amazing** and **effective** redemption price paid to establish this

new covenant. *"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...but with **the precious blood of Christ.**"* This new covenant was not purchased with limited earthly wealth, like silver and gold. Rather, it was paid for by infinite heavenly treasure, the blood of Christ. No wonder the new covenant provides such amazing and effective resources for all who depend upon the One who died for them.

One final reflection-realizing **all** that the **cup** of the new covenant **represents** can turn the Lord's Supper from a "religious snack" into a "spiritual feast"!

Dear Heavenly Father, You have surely provided grace upon grace—complete forgiveness, intimate relationship, divine enablement! Yet, how could any less be supplied by such a rich price! Lord Jesus, thank You for pouring out Your life's blood to make such irreplaceable necessities available. Father, please bring to my remembrance day by day the wondrous riches of the new covenant that You want me to draw upon by faith, through Christ, my Lord, Amen.

## The Initial Grace of God

*"I will **forgive** their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more"...For **by grace you have been saved** through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Jeremiah 31:34 and Ephesians 2:8-9)*

Again, we have the opportunity to compare justifying grace and sanctifying grace, **initial grace** and **ongoing grace**. This is always an edifying and valuable exercise, since we tend to forget that we are **sanctified** through the **same means** that we are **justified**.

The **initial grace** that impacted our lives forever was the **justifying, forgiving grace** of God. The prophets of old proclaimed this hope. The writers of the New Testament related it to us today. *"I will **forgive** their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more"* (Jeremiah 31:34; also in Hebrews 8:12). When we repented of our sins and called upon the name of the Lord, we were forgiven and justified, declared not guilty and righteous in His sight.

This saving work of God on our behalf was all accomplished by the **grace** of God. *"For **by grace you have been saved**."* The saving grace of God is applied to lives as they **trust in** Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. *"By grace you have been saved **through faith**."*

None of this process **originates** in man. **All** of it **comes** from **God**. *"And that **not of yourselves**; it is the **gift of God**."* No aspect of salvation derives from the efforts of man, so no one will ever be able to brag about their contribution in being saved. *"**Not of works**, lest anyone should boast."* All glory, now and forever, will go to the Lord Himself. *"He who glories, let him **glory in the Lord**"* (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Yes, even faith does not source in man. Jesus is *"the **author** and finisher of our faith"* ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). When we believed upon the Lord Jesus, it was in response to an authoring, revealing work that He was doing on our behalf. Jesus manifested Himself to us through the gospel as One who was able to save us sinners. The Holy Spirit was convicting us of our need. We trusted in His saving work for us. Thereby, He **authored** faith in us. *"**Worthy is the Lamb** who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing"* ([Revelation 5:12](#)).

As we have seen previously (and will have opportunity to examine again and again), the **grace** of God, of which we partook for **new birth** and **justification**, is the **same grace** that must continually be at work in us for **growth** and **sanctification**.

O Lord God of my salvation, I clearly see the full extent to which my being saved depended upon Your saving grace! Thank You for this priceless gift of grace. How glorious it is to stand justified in Your sight. Now that I might grow daily in a life of sanctification, I look to You and Your necessary grace, Amen.

## The Ongoing Grace of God

*"I will put My law **in their minds, and write it on their hearts**"...it is good that the heart be established by grace. (Jeremiah 31:33 and Hebrews 13:9)*

Our initial encounter with the grace of God involved forgiveness and justification. *"In Him we have our redemption through His blood, the **forgiveness** of sins, **according to the riches** of His **grace**" (Ephesians 1:7).* Rich measures of God's grace washed away our sins and gave us new life in Christ. Of course, that initial justifying work of God could not exhaust His grace. Rather, it was **"according to the riches** of His grace." There are **unlimited riches** yet available for our daily sanctification, our **ongoing growth** in Christ.

Hebrews 13:9 is one of the many places in Scripture that indicate progressive **sanctification** (that is, growth in godliness) is **by grace**. *"It is good that the heart be **established by grace**."* This truth clearly pertains to sanctification and growth, not justification and new birth. At regeneration, we are given a new heart. *"I will give you a **new heart** and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh"* (Ezekiel 36:26). Then, after receiving a new, soft, responsive heart, the **spiritual stabilization** of that new heart must follow.

It is from **within** the **heart** that the **development** of **applied righteousness** must proceed. What is eventually seen and heard in our daily Christian lives sources from within the core of our inner being. *"Keep your **heart** with all diligence, for **out of it spring the issues of life**" (Proverbs 4:23).* The Lord wants to work from deep within us. *"I will put My law **in their minds, and write it on their hearts**."*

If an **unstable, inconsistent** life is being expressed **outwardly**, an **unestablished heart** within is the **cause**. Jesus taught that *"out of the abundance of the **heart** the mouth speaks"* ([Matthew 12:34](#)). Whatever is developing and filling up our inner man will eventually come out to be seen and heard.

In order to **develop** in us an **increasingly** mature, Christlike walk, our **heart** must be **established**. The **law** of God is **not** designed to change men's hearts. God's grace is the **essential** and **sufficient** cause to bring about this desired work of godliness. *"It is good that the heart be **established by grace**."*

Once more we have powerful biblical insight showing us that grace is not only God's provision to forgive and birth us into His family, but **grace** is also **His resource** for the **ongoing** work of **maturing** us as His children.

O Lord, my strength, would You do a powerful work of Your grace deep within my heart? I do not want to displease You or dishonor You by an immature and unstable life. Lord, forgive any futile attempts to change my heart by striving before the law. Your gracious work in me is my only hope!



## Growing in the Grace of God

*But **grow in the grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)*

Let's reflect upon some of the heavenly territory we have explored thus far. **Grace** is for spiritual **growth** and **progress** in the Lord. It is not intended **only** for birthing and starting out with the Lord.

*"But **grow in the grace**...of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

**Growth** in Christ **always** results as God's **grace** works in us.

At times, we can be apprehensive about such an emphasis upon God's grace. We become concerned that irresponsibility, ungodliness, laziness, or indulgence will result. We can rest assured on the promises and purposes of God that **true grace** does **not** produce such consequences. **Ungodly** living **always** involves the **flesh** of man, which is inclined toward **licentiousness** and **legalism**.

**Licentiousness** hopes to **turn grace** into a means by which **sinful indulgence** is acceptable. *"For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who **turn the grace** of our God into*

***licentiousness**" (Jude v.4). **Legalism** aspires to add **religious performance** to **grace**, thereby appealing to the **self-righteous** hopes of man. "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you **now being made perfect by the flesh**?" (Galatians 3:2-3).*

When a person **truly lives** by the **grace** of God, **righteousness** results, not ungodliness. As a person **increasingly** learns to **draw** upon God's **grace** for daily living, **Christlikeness** develops, not worldliness. As **grace** becomes our **resource** for life, **sin diminishes**; it does not increase. *"For **sin shall not have dominion** over you: **for you are not under law but under grace**" (Romans 6:14).*



*The **temptation** is to **rely** upon the **law** of God in order to **generate godliness**. The demand of the law to be **holy, loving, and perfect** becomes a false security to our flesh. We think that by hearing, repeating, or striving to meet this demand, we can thereby accomplish it. Let us not forget that "the **law** made **nothing perfect**; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a **better hope**" (Hebrews 7:18-19). God's **grace** is the "*better hope*" that does not fail to bring forth what God desires.*

The Lord has ordained for us a life-long involvement with His grace. He wants to work "**grace for [upon] grace**" (John 1:16) for the rest of our days. This is the "**new and living way**" (Hebrews 10:20). Perhaps this could all be summarized in another acronym on grace: "**Glorious Realities As Christ Empowers**."

Gracious Father, how bountiful is Your provision for my spiritual growth. How foolish of me to think that I need more for developing in godliness than Your grace supplies. O Lord, I long to grow in the image of Christ. I beseech You, remind me and convince me that Your grace is the only sufficient hope. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

## The New Covenant: Grace, Not Law

*"I will make a **new covenant**...**not according to the covenant I made**... **the gospel of the grace of God**. (Jeremiah 31:31-32 and Acts 20:24)"*

The old covenant of **law** was the covenant that God made with Israel *"in the day that [He] took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt"* (Jeremiah 31:32b). The promise through Jeremiah was that the Lord would make a different type of covenant some day, *"**not according to** [that] **covenant**."* This new covenant would be a covenant of **grace**, provided by the Lord Jesus Christ. *"For **the law** was given **through Moses**, but **grace and truth** came **through Jesus Christ**"* (John 1:17).

The **law** of God was an **impossible** way to **relate** to the **Lord**. It required **perfection**, but it offered **no** perfecting **assistance**. It was able, however, to **convince** people of their **need** for the **grace** of Christ found in the new covenant. *"The **law** was our **tutor to bring us to Christ**"* (Galatians 3:24).

Now, we live and proclaim this new covenant of grace, the *"**new and living way which He consecrated for us**"* (Hebrews 10:20). This was the mission and message of which the Apostle Paul spoke. *"The ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to **testify to the gospel of the grace of God**"* (Acts 20:24). The gospel is all about the grace of God, not about law. *"The word of the truth of the **gospel**, which has come to you...the **grace of God**"* (Colossians 1:5-6).

Gospel means "glad tidings," or "**good news**." The good news of the grace of God provided through Jesus Christ is the supreme message for man in all of creation. In fact, the gospel of grace is such good news that some **unbelievers** initially reject it as "**too good to be true**." Indeed, it is an astounding reality to consider that forgiveness, justification, and new birth are **all** available **"by**

***grace...through faith...the gift of God, not of works"*** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Perhaps, we should not be surprised that we **believers** sometimes react in this same manner when we consider the message of **grace** for **growth** and **sanctification**. To hear that the entire Christian life is to be "***grace upon grace***" (John 1:16) may at first seem to us "**too good to be true.**"

At times we may ask, "Isn't there any **human responsibility** in God's plan of salvation?" Yes, there is. The saved and unsaved alike must always be **willing** to **respond** to the offer of God's grace in Christ. We **must all relate properly** to the Lord Jesus for every work of grace, because it is "***the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ***" (2 Corinthians 8:9). In **all matters**, we must **seek Him** and **trust in Him**.

Lord God of the new covenant, how glorious is the good news of Your grace! I praise You for Your patience when I act as though transforming grace is too good to be true. I want to seek after the Lord Jesus and trust in Him this day, with all my heart, Amen.

## The Ability of God's Grace

*And 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**. (Acts 20:32)*

God's grace has such marvelous ability. It is able to give the **eternal inheritance** of God to His children. It is also able to **build up** their lives here on earth for greater service and increased fruitfulness.

It is by the grace of the Lord that we can anticipate being recipients of a heavenly **inheritance**. *"The word of His **grace**, which is **able to ... give you an inheritance**."* One qualifies for an inheritance by being born into a family. We have been **born** into the **family of God**. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who **believe in His name**: who were **born...of God**" (John 1:12-13).* We who believe in Jesus are God's children, *"and if children, then **heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**" (Romans 8:17).* We are blessed beyond measure to know that heavenly treasures of fellowship, worship, and service await God's children in glory above. **All** of these eternal riches are ours by the **grace** of God **alone**.

God's amazing grace also has the ability to **build us up** as we await our inheritance here on earth below: *"The word of His **grace**, which is **able to build you up**."* This edification process involves having our **spiritual roots** of **hunger** and **trust** growing deep **into** the **Lord**. Christ wants our lives to undergo **continual spiritual construction** and **transformation**. He wants our **character** to become increasingly **stabilized** in **the faith**, as revealed in His word. *"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, **rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith**" (Colossians 2:6-7).*

It is the will of God that we be **edified**. *"Let **all things** be done for **edification**" (1 Corinthians 14:26).* All along the way from new birth into His family until our full heavenly inheritance as His family, God desires that His children be spiritually strengthened and increasingly developed in Christian maturity. Our **ministry** to **one another** can be **instrumental** in this edification process. *"Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may **edify** another...Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to **edification**" (Romans 14:19; 15:2).* It is **essential** to **remember**, however, that God's **grace** is what **accomplishes** the building up process: *"The word of His **grace**, which is **able to build you up**."*

My God and Father, I rejoice exceedingly as I think of the inheritance that You are preparing for me by Your grace. O Lord, my strength, I need Your mighty work of grace that I might be edified myself and be edifying to Your children. Please purge my life of any matters that are not edifying, all by the grace of Jesus, my Lord, Amen.

## God's Grace Teaching Us

*For the **grace of God** that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts**, we should live **soberly, righteously, and godly** in the present age, **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.** (Titus 2:11-13)*

Time and again, we have considered the connection between **grace and justification**. *"Being **justified** freely by His **grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...In Him we have redemption through His blood, the **forgiveness** of sins, according to the riches of His **grace**" (Romans 3:24 and Ephesians 1:7).* Now, we have an opportunity to ponder once more the relationship between **grace and sanctification**. *"For the **grace of God** that brings salvation has appeared to all men."* It is God's grace that brings salvation to mankind. For nearly 2,000 years, that saving grace of the Lord has been offered to humanity through the preaching of the gospel. This particular verse now adds another function to the work of grace. *"For the **grace of God** [is] **teaching us.**"*

The grace of God not only saves the souls of all who believe; it also works in believers' lives to teach and instruct them. God's grace, working through His word (*"The **word** of His **grace**"-Acts 20:32*), **instructs** and **shapes** our thinking and living: *"**Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts**, we should live **soberly, righteously, and godly** in the present age."* It is the will of our Heavenly Father that His children turn away from that which is worldly and spiritually compromising. He wants us to walk in godliness, in Christlikeness. **God** works this **into** our **hearts** by His **grace**.

God's grace also develops expectant lives, eager to have the Lord Jesus return for His people: *"**Looking for the blessed hope***

*and glorious appearing of our **great God and Savior Jesus Christ.***"

The **grace** of God **impacting** our **hearts** through **His word** by **His Spirit** is His **divine means** to bring about such **transformation** in us. To view sanctification as something **we** can **produce** through our own **performance** (that is, by **law**) is akin to **overlooking** God's **grace** and **underestimating** the **provisions** of the **cross** of Christ. *"I do **not set aside the grace of God**; for if **righteousness** comes through the **law**, then **Christ** died in **vain**"* ([Galatians 2:21](#)).

Dear Jesus, my great God and Savior, I want to live in eager anticipation of Your return. Meanwhile, I desire to please You by growing in godliness and in applied righteousness. Thank You for Your longsuffering love, patiently teaching me by Your grace—the grace that I sometimes neglect, attempting to produce these realities by the striving of my flesh. From such vanity I turn to hope in You, Lord Jesus, Amen.