

GRACE AND LIFE IN THE SCRIPTURES

1. Introduction: The Grace of God Has Appeared

In Titus 2:11 Paul announces, ‘The grace of God . . . has appeared.’ This is quite an announcement, and no less than that of John the Baptist and Jesus that the Kingdom is near. As we will see, under the history of grace, that God has ever planned this fact and era of grace. Paul also speaks of ‘the good news of the grace of God’, meaning that the Gospel is God's grace to man – a most important fact. Add to these many of the significant and important elements of grace, and we are confronted with a subject which is enthralling, as also that experience a man may know, and by which his fears may be abolished, and his knowledge of God be brought to fulness.

Since, however, many are vague as to the meaning and nature of grace, we must seek to understand these, so that we may obtain grace, stand in it, and ultimately receive the inheritance of grace (I Peter 3:7).

2. The Meaning of Grace

(i) Grace in the Old Testament

The New Testament teaching of grace is very clear. Generally speaking, it indicates that God is always out to do man good, so that we understand His holy love in action to be His grace. Man has no claim to grace, no merit to warrant this active love. Hence when we see grace in the N.T. we look for its counterpart in the Old Testament. We find it there, of course, but not fully as it is in the N.T. In the N.T. the ‘grace of God has appeared’. It had not previously appeared, at least not after the mode it is shown in the N.T. Here grace has triumphed over the condemnation of law. A new system of liberty is in operation. Hence grace can be seen clearly.

In the O.T. there are a few words which substitute for the N.T. word ‘grace’. These few words used, when brought together almost add up to the total meaning of grace in the N.T. Two primary words used are *chen* and *chesed*. The first carries the idea of being in receipt of favour, with the nuance that this is undeserved. Moses said to God ‘If I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I might find grace in thy sight’. (Exodus 33:13) In other places where it is used it denotes the stronger helping the weaker, e.g. in Genesis 32:5 Jacob (the weaker) appeals to Esau (the stronger) on the basis of his weakness... ‘That I might find favour in your sight’. Likewise Ruth to Boaz (Ruth 2:2, 10, 13), Hannah to Eli (I Sam. 1:18) and so on.

The word *chesed* is often translated 'loving kindness' or 'mercy', e.g. 'The Lord appeared unto me, saying, 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee'. (Jer. 31: 3). Zech. 12:10 uses the word which is translated variously as 'Spirit of grace', 'Spirit of compassion', 'Spirit of kindness' (A.V., R.S.V., Jerus. Bible). A study of a Bible concordance will give a good picture of these words, and others which come under the ideas of grace, graciousness, compassion, mercy and so on. However, even when these words are studied we should not miss the wider picture given of the grace of God in the O.T., that is to say the picture given even apart from these words. Man, far from being perpetually rejected is promised a Redeemer to defeat evil (Gen. 3:15 and kindred promises). The judgement of the Flood is met with the grace of the Noahic covenant. Man's fall into idolatry and shame is met with the Abrahamic Covenant, and later the Mosaic Covenant. It must not be said that these covenants fail as such, but the grace of God is promised in the New Covenant, which is indeed itself the ultimate out-working of the Abrahamic Covenant. See Genesis 8:20–22, 15:1–20, Exodus 24:1–8, Jer. 31: 31–34. Also grace can be traced in God's dealings with man, especially His own people.

(ii) Grace in the New Testament

We do not intend, here, to cover the various uses of the word 'grace' as we find it in the N.T., but rather indicate its general use. Later we will examine its specific usages in the text. The Greek word *charis* is sometimes used in the Greek version of the O.T. Its 190 times of use cover *chen* and *chesed*) but also other words which are only loosely associated with grace as such. In the N.T. the word *charis* covers the idea of God's acceptance of a person (e.g. Mary to be the mother of Jesus in Luke 1:28), but for the most part it has two general uses

- (a) God's favour, undeserved by man which brings salvation, and
- (b) The power of God which enables (weak) persons to live and work in the plan of God.

On a broader understanding it can be seen as God's whole action in history, especially as it relates to undeserving man.

The word *charis* is linked with the verbs and adjectives that relate to giving and thanksgiving. This set of words covers the wider picture of grace as it is in the N.T.

We must see, also, that grace in the O.T. and N.T. does not differ essentially. When we see God's pattern for history we see there is not so much a development of the concept of grace as there is a development of the history and plan of grace. By this we mean that as 'the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Christ Jesus', so grace does not blossom out fully for men to understand, until the events of Jesus, and the consequent coming of the Spirit. Nevertheless we must not think that God was not the God of grace in the O.T. He was, as we may easily see. However, His modes of grace were, for the most part, different from those we see in the N.T. God's attributes cannot possibly differ in any age or epoch, since God is eternal and immutable. The development of His revelation and salvation, is however, a process in time.

3. The True Source of Grace

Grace is no 'thing', as such, Grace is the very action of God, springing from His attitude and intention of love. None of this does man deserve, but God is 'the God of all grace' (I Peter 5:10). Israel had known Him as this when He declared His forgiveness and compassion (cf. Exodus 34:6, 7, Psalm 86:5, 15, Micah 7:18–19). Grace then is kindness and love in action, originating in God. Hence we speak of 'the grace of God' (Titus 2:11) which is really God acting. In accordance with this, almost all the Epistles of the N.T. say, 'Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. This means that grace comes from the Father. It is 'Fatherly grace'.

Again, grace derives from the Son. In addition to the salutations quoted there is the 'grace' of II Cor. 13:14: 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ' which is linked with 'the love of God', and 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'. I Cor. 16:23 repeats, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you', whilst John 1:14, 16–17 speaks of Christ being full of grace, and of the apostles having drawn from that grace. In II Cor. 8:9 Paul says, 'You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...' Grace, then, is the Son in operation, as is the Father, to do man good, even though man opposes himself.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is called 'the Spirit of grace'. This statement in Hebrews 10:29 is probably derived from Zechariah 12:10, but in its context is clear enough. The Holy Spirit is the one who communicates the grace of God, as is seen from I Cor. 2:12, Romans 5:5, John 16:12–15. For this reason, opposition to the Holy Spirit is opposition to grace (cf. Ephes. 4:30, Isaiah 63:10).

When we say God is the true source of grace, we really mean He is 'the God of all grace'. Nothing apart from Him is true grace. The Father initiates the action of grace, the Son mediates it, and the Spirit is the agent of that ministry, particularly in its applicative elements. That is why we can say 'Grace came by Jesus Christ...' and yet know that the 'grace of life' (I Peter 3:7) must come through 'the Spirit of life'.

4. The Epoch of Grace: Grace and Law

Two valuable passages for discussion on law and grace are Romans 5:12–20 and II Cor. 3:4–18. The first speaks of sin–death and obedience–life, linking this latter with grace. The second speaks of the dispensation of law and the dispensation of liberty, even though it does not mention the specific word 'grace'. In our study on grace and justification we will see the nature of grace in causing a man, who is a sinner, to be accounted as righteous. However, for our purposes we want to see that history is fairly clearly divided into two epochs:– (a) The epoch of law, and (b) The epoch of grace. Let us examine these two.

(a) The Epoch of Law.

In Romans 1:21 Paul indicates that God's nature may be known, as regards His righteousness, from the law. In Romans 10:1–3 he says that the Jews, in their regard for law were really ignorant of God's true righteousness. Nowhere in the Scriptures is the law of God regarded as being in any way wrong. It is not seen as unfavourable to man. Obedience to God's laws goes with true living and healthy uprightness. Abraham obeyed the laws of God even when they had not been written down, as such (Gen. 26:5). Israel received a written

law, the heart of which was the moral law (Exodus 20:1f). Paul indicates that Gentiles also may know the law of God (Romans 2:14–15). In the sense that God's moral law is permanent there will always be the epoch or principle of law. How then are we to understand two epochs – one of law and one of grace?

The answer is that man could never live, or receive life, simply by law. Were he to obey law fully, then he would certainly live by it (Gal. 3:12, Lev. 18:5). Paul says that the law is spiritual (Rom. 7:14) and is good (Rom. 7:16), but that man isn't. Hence he comes under the condemnation or curse of the law the moment he breaks it. For him it becomes 'the law of sin and death' (Romans 8:2). If he is under the law, then he is necessarily under its curse (Gal. 3:10). We mean then that he must be punished by the law. Since 'as long as a man lives he is under (the) law' (Rom. 7:1), then the plight of man is quite terrible. Even the pagan idolater is under the law/s of his god/s. See Gal. 4:8-11, Col. 2:20–23.

In other words, man from the fall onwards, has always been under law in one form or another. In rejecting God and His law (Rom. 1:19ff.) he has always to obey law in one form or another. Hence he is a slave to law. How, then, does he escape law, especially its constant tyranny? The answer is, 'by grace'.

(b) The Epoch of Grace

'The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ'. In regard to the giving of the law to Israel, both Stephen in Acts 7:38–39 and Paul in Gal. 3:19 infer that such was not given directly by God, but through angels, and hence it is not the ultimate. This in no way denigrates the nature of law, but denies that it is the ultimate which God has for man. 'God is one' says Paul (Gal. 3:20) and from this places promise above law. The promise was given directly, by God, to Abraham, and so law neither opposes nor cancels promise. In fact Paul, in Galatians 3, goes on to show that law subserves promise in that it shuts man up to faith so that he looks only to the promise to free him from the bondage and judgement of law.

In the widest sense all history has been the epoch of grace. Had not God had grace for Noah the entire human race would have perished. Had He punished as man deserved, then man would not have lived. Very broadly we can speak of 'the grace of creation', for God is not bound to create. Neither is He bound to sustain rebellious man in biological life. Yet He does, and this is grace. More wonderful than a simple long-suffering on God's part is His disclosed intention to redeem man. He has always given notices of His grace. In fact sacrifice and forgiveness are witnesses of that grace. In this sense man has always lived under grace. In all of this he is undeserving. Yet, over and beyond this, God had promised an era of grace which would be definitive. This He had planned prior to creation (e.g. II Tim. 1:9, Ephes. 1:4–7, etc.).

When, then, John records, 'The law came by Moses but grace and truth by Jesus Christ' he is saying that there are two very definite eras, one of law, and the other of grace. He does not mean Jesus abolishes law as such, or that grace is opposed to law, but he is saying that grace and truth free a man from the bondage of law's grip and condemnation (cf. John 8:31, 34, 36) so that man is free by knowing the truth and experiencing the grace of God in Christ.

By the era of grace we mean that era in which man is saved from the guilt of the law, and is liberated by grace to live in the continuing grace

of God. We will examine this in greater detail as we come now to the theme of grace and justification.

5. Grace and Justification

(i) Man's Dilemma

How much does man deserve judgement? Is he to be blamed for his evil? Did not God create him, as indeed he created Satan also, and does not man deserve a means whereby he is justified? These are questions which take us to the heart of the doctrine of creation. Man is created in the image of God. He is to reflect the very nature of God. Essential to the true nature of God is His self-determination. True moral choice then must lie at the heart of true manhood. As God is responsible for His own choices, so is man. Hence he is responsible for the consequences of his choice. If he deliberately goes against the natural order of the universe, he must bear in himself the ensuing consequences. On the other hand, if he accords his will with the true functional order of creation he will be at harmony with it, and reap the good outcome of serenity and useful well-being.

Man's dilemma is that he has opposed God, rebelled, and in re-rationalising his universe has made all things anthropocentric, and not theocentric. Hence his whole being is awry. He cannot be a true existent in his universe when he denies its essential nature. He cannot find his true identity for he has denied, also, its essential nature. As a rebel he lies under condemnation of death. His will is so far gripped by his rebellion and evil that he cannot will to return to God, repent, and freshly relate to the truth, that is 'things-as-they-really-are'. The Bible depicts him as being responsible for his sinful attitude, and consequent sinful choices, as being under judgement for breaking the laws of creation, as also for refusing to be the servant of God within that creation. To sum up:– Man is sinful and under judgement. He has neither will nor ability to atone for his failure. God, from His point of view cannot accept the works of man's hands, and as the holy and righteous God He must not only uphold His law, but also carry out its judgements.¹

(ii) God's Grace Towards Man

In our 'history of grace' (below) we will see that God planned the operations of His grace before creation. He intended to display His nature as grace, in creation. There is a theological view which credits God with the attributes of holiness, righteousness and goodness. It agrees that God has a right to be wrathful against evil, but then also credits to Him the attributes of love and mercy. It says that in the ultimate, love and mercy triumph over justice. This is to suggest an internal conflict within God and to pit some of His attributes against others of His own, which is impossible. Another makeshift theology pictures God as really loving man

¹ The judgement of God must be seen in the light of creation, There is nothing deficient in the creation of man. His wrong use of will is what makes him worthy of judgement. The nature of God's holiness means He must be wrathful against sin and the sinner (Hab. 1:13, Nahum 1:2, Rom. 1:18, etc.) His wrath and judgements are righteous (Rom. 2:4–5). It is only sinful man's emotional reaction to God's wrath which brands that wrath as wrong.

and wishing to ‘let him off the hook’ of judgement. Hence the Cross is an ingenious device to do this. Christ bears the sins of man, satisfies the law, and ‘allows’ God to release man from judgement. An even more daring theology sees the declaration of man as justified as being a fiat of God. God in His own will can decide to justify man, and so He acquits him of his guilt. These three theologies are absurd, for they do not enter into the deeper questions of the nature of creation, of man, and of God. Were they to do so they would acknowledge that man's dilemma is not really met by their make–shift solutions.

The Biblical solution is as follows:

(a) **In Romans 1:16 – 3:31** Paul develops his argument that all men are sinful, and rightly under the wrath of God since they have rejected Him and gone their own way. In doing this they have ‘suppressed the truth’ in, and by, unrighteous acts. This applies to all men – both Jew and Gentile. Their practical acts demonstrate their evil. The law displays the righteousness of God and brings them to guilty silence. They cannot justify themselves. However, God has planned man's redemption, or, his justification. That is, God has planned a way by which man may be justified. To be justified is to be acquitted of the guilt and (so) judgement of the law. How has He done this? By making Christ the propitiation for the sins of man. Propitiation² must mean, in the ultimate, that God has poured His wrath on evil, and it has received its full judgement. Evil(sins) cannot be separated from the one who is the sinner. God has poured His wrath out on that sinner. This is shown in Gal. 3:13 as Christ becoming (the) curse for man. In II Cor. 5:21 he becomes sin for man. In Romans 6:6 he becomes sinful humanity as a corpus, and in I Peter 2:24 he bears the actual sins of humanity, taking their innate vitalism into himself and so bearing the wrath which is upon them. Hence the N.T. portrays him as ‘bearing away the sin’, ‘putting away sin’, making ‘purification for sin’, and so fulfilling the just demands of the law, and executing judgement upon sin itself. See Matt. 26:28, Hebrews 9:26, 9:14, 1:3, Romans 3:25–26, and 8:3.

Romans 3:21–26 shows that there is a righteousness of God which is not that known simply by law. It is justifying righteousness. Man is sinful but is ‘justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus whom God has put forward a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.’ Former sins which had seemed to be passed over, were never, in fact, really passed over. In the Cross they are judged. Hence the righteousness of the law is confirmed, and the justifying righteousness of God is effected. As Paul says, this is purely of grace. Faith must receive such grace, or grace's gift, but faith does nothing in the process, since faith is itself a gift (Phil. 1:29, Ephes. 2:8–9).

(b) **In Romans 5:12–21** Paul elaborates this grace of justification. He takes Adam to be a type of the man–to–come, Jesus. Adam is the negative type. Jesus the positive. Adam brings sin and death into the world by his disobedience. Christ brings life and justification by his obedience. All mankind is allied with Adam in his sin, hence it receives the power of sin over itself, and is doomed to sin's death–judgement. All mankind which is allied with Christ (through grace) is freed from the power of sin, is released from death, and this through justification. Terrible and enormous as are the dimensions of sin and death to the sinner (in Adam), they are, by comparison, piffling and infinitesimal against the vast dimensions of life and justification as brought to man in Christ. Certainly sin abounds (is powerful, pregnant, grim and dominating) but ‘grace much more abounds’,

² Cf. Living Faith No. 15 – ‘The Christian Doctrine of the Atonement’.

i.e. sin is dwarfed into puny pitifulness against the boundless dimensions of grace. The law came to delineate sin, and foment even more sin, but grace came to bring acquittal, imputed righteousness and to reign in brilliant and powerful sovereignty. Hence ‘much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through one man Christ Jesus’. Adam, once notorious in his dynamic rebellion against God is reduced to a pitiful wisp of an entity. Christ reigns gloriously, shedding his righteousness on redeemed mankind.

(iii) The ‘Free Gift’

Gifts, to rebellious man, are a mystery. He for his part cannot easily understand. Because he has rejected the nature of God which is to give freely, as also to forgive freely, man has to be acquisitive. He has had to work, and to get. He needs to build his barns, and hew out his reservoirs in order to secure himself against the hostile powers within his universe. He has to fight fate. He has to battle with alien forces. He dare not, indeed cannot believe that God is, simply, the Giver. Hence his attempts to secure himself.

He can understand religious bargaining. In all his religions he has the ‘quid pro quo’ principle. He will work to obtain his salvation. He is not past using bribes, for bribes are simply his ‘pay-off’ currency to a deity which is in need of his resources, and who will not give without getting. Hence the fact of grace remains a mystery with man, and the giving of God baffles him. He is suspicious. He cannot believe it. Hence his theology he adduces from the Bible must contain some elements which allow for synergism in salvation. Monergism, on God's side, is unacceptable. Man must receive a revelation of grace before he can accept a gratuitous justification.

The way in which man does this is to posit some action of man within the scope of conviction of sin, repentance, faith, and the receiving of salvation. If he is cut off from doing this he must then proceed to the states of regeneration and sanctification and here posit that these are synergistic. In doing this he confuses the nature of grace, obscuring it, and so saving his own pride.

6. THE HISTORY OF GRACE

Before we proceed to ‘the grace of life’, we need to see the Biblical schema of grace. If, lazily, we think that grace is an expedient of God to meet a contingency which faces God in man's sin, then we are deeply mistaken. To subject God to our time—categories is, to say the least, foolish. His fore-knowledge must never be seen as Him looking ahead and making allowances for what He sees will happen. The thrust of Scripture is that God ‘accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will’ (Ephes. 1:11). Hence we find that His whole grace-schema falls into the following lines:

(i) Grace is Planned Prior to Creation

In II Timothy 1:9 Paul speaks of, ‘God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago’. The phrase ‘ages

ago' is in Greek **pro chronon aionion**, that is, 'before times eternal'. Hence grace was planned from before time. Similarly in Ephesians 1:5–6 Paul says, 'He predestined us in love to be his sons, through Christ Jesus, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved'. In reality Paul is saying that before time God had planned that His grace should be shown in sonship and salvation. From this we deduce the fact that in eternity He was already the God of grace, and that His intention was to display His grace in time and eternity.

In such grace, of course, we must include creation. It is of God's grace that He creates us. Likewise it is of His grace that He sustains His creation. However, grace is truly delineated in undeserved redemption. We may also add that God has made known His plan of grace from eternity. See Acts 15:18, Acts 3:21, Romans 16:25–26, cf. Ephes. 1:4, 3:14 Titus 1:2, I Peter 1:20, John 17:24, Rev. 13:8.

(ii) Grace is Prophesied So That Man May Know its Coming

In Acts 15:7–18 Peter is speaking at the Council of Jerusalem which is deciding whether the Gentiles are, in fact, recipients of the grace of God. He says, 'We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will'. In the same passage James is also speaking. He quotes the prophets as indicating that the Gentiles will also receive grace, and says, 'The Lord...has made known these things from eternity'. (Cf. Acts 3:21) In other words, grace has been prophesied. This is precisely what Peter is indicating in his first letter. In 1:10 he says, 'The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours...' Of course we will not find prophecies verbally related to grace, as such, but the whole thrust of their prophetic message was the grace of God. This consisted of the new covenant, the kingdom, the coming of forgiveness, the gift of the Spirit and the Messianic reign of the Son. All of these are elements of grace.

The prophets also contrasted the era of law with the new era of righteousness under the total reign of God. They indicated that whatever grace there was within the system of the old covenant – and there was certainly grace within it – yet this was not to be compared with the grace which was to come. We can see that Paul's debate on 'law' and 'promise' in the Galatian Epistle is precisely on this point. The prophets gave men hope for the full grace of God.

(iii) The Grace of God Has Appeared

Titus 2:11 says, 'The grace of God—has appeared for the salvation of all men...' This of course is the equivalent of, 'We beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ'. (John 1:14–16). It is the same as '...when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared...that we might be justified by His grace...' (Titus 3:4–7). It is the same as, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...'

It means that the salvation promised by the prophets has now come, and this in visible form. There is no grace of God but what is seen here in physical form. He is 'the visible expression of the invisible God'. He is man yet 'in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead, bodily'. The grace of God is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is visible, active grace. Grace has come amongst mankind, and walks and talks in intelligible, knowable human terms. We can come to know grace, touch and feel him, as also

see him. Grace has arrived. The prophets do not need to predict any more, nor encourage, nor exhort. Grace has happened.

Paul's words now become intelligible. 'You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich'. (II Cor. 8:9). All of his life, his ministry, his death, resurrection and ascension was grace-in-action, and the grace of it remains forever, not simply as a memorial to him, but as the living, effective nature of God Himself.

(iv) The Present and Continuing Tense of Grace

In salvation, sanctification and indeed all of Christian living, grace is the keynote. It is at once the source and the supply as we will see under our study of 'the grace of life', so that we do not have to enlarge on it here. All comes by grace, and all continues by grace. Hence Paul says, 'Through him (Jesus) we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand...' (Rom. 5:2). In II Cor. 6:1-2 we are told that this is the day of grace and we are to receive it fully, and not 'in an empty way'. Likewise Peter sums up his first letter by saying, 'I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God: stand fast in it'. (5:12). In other words, grace continues its work in every part of this age. We stand only because of grace, and only in grace. This is why Paul advises Timothy, 'You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus'.

(v) The Grace Which is to Come

We recognise the simple fact that grace has not finished its work. The ultimate redemption of the body will be the final work of grace. What grace has accomplished on the Cross and by the Resurrection is yet to come to completion. When it does it will be in the person and action of Jesus Christ. For this reason Peter says, 'Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'. (I Peter 1:13). There are not, of course, two graces, but one grace which has already appeared in the person of Christ, and the full benefits of which will come at his appearing. In fact when he is revealed grace will be completed, that is, the work of grace will come to its fulfilment in the redeemed. Likewise in I Peter 5:10 grace has a future connotation – 'After you have suffered awhile, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish and strengthen you'.

Another element of future grace, or rather the fruits of grace, will be His people. In Ephesians 2:4-7 Paul says, 'But God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. This links with Ephesians 1:5-6, 'He predestined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved'. Both passages tell us that in eternity the grace of God will ever be shown by what he has made us through Christ. In fact, it is only in the ultimate that the full grace of God will be shown, when He has raised us from the depths to the heights, when He has renewed us from depravity to total glory. That will be the sum of

His grace. We will truly see His kindness and mercy and love.

(vi) Conclusion to the History of Grace

As we have indicated, God was ever the God of grace. Grace did not come to be simply because of the fall of man. God had planned that in time His grace would be shown, and that in eternity it would be forever displayed. Hence we must not think of His grace gradually growing, and culminating in Christ, but rather that the action of His grace—plan was gradually fulfilled, and progressively unveiled. What He had ever intended He has gone about fulfilling, and hope sees the ultimate fulfilment and is drawn towards that. It is then, true to say that He is ‘the God of all grace.’

7. The Grace of Life

Strictly speaking, the term ‘heirs of the grace of life’ refers to those who, having obtained eternal life through Christ, will inherit all its fulness and benefits as they pass into eternity. However, the word contains other elements. Created life is a gift of God (cf. Gen. 2:7, Jer. 2:13). Likewise, that life is continually sustained by the providential grace of God (e.g. Psalm 104:29–30, Matt. 5:43–48, Col. 1:17, etc.)

What concerns US is the actual life we receive from God. Romans 6:23, contrasting it with death says, ‘The gift (charisma) of God is eternal life. ‘Charisma’ can almost be translated ‘grace–gift’. How then does this gift come to be, and how is it obtained? Having been obtained, how does one live or stand in it? We will seek to find the answers to these questions.

(i) The Appearing of Grace

Titus 2:11 says, ‘The grace of God has appeared’. We saw that it has appeared in Christ, the Son, ‘full of grace and truth’. Truth—has been lost to sinful man because of his rejection of God (Romans 1:19–32). Truth has now appeared in Christ, and knowing this truth, men will become free (John 8:32). Men had not believed that the Father was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). This is why the Son has come to show that grace and truth.

We now come to the amazing fact that all of the Godhead walked and talked in Jesus Christ. He said, ‘He that has seen me has seen the Father’. He also said that he did nothing but what the Father showed him. He was given all things by the Father, so that nothing existed outside of him which was the Father, and the Father's. He said the Father showed him all things. He said he spoke nothing from himself; the Father who dwelled in him was doing the works. (See John 5:19ff., 3:35, Matt. 11:27, John 14: 6–10). All this being true, then Paul's statements such as, ‘...in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell’, ‘...in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily’ are really saying that when we see the Son we actually see the Father, and what the Son does is what God the Father does. This is also indicated in Hebrews 1:3.

We may well study the Gospels for they show us the intimate life of the Son. He lives so closely to the Father, through prayer and obedience, that the actions of the Son are those of the Father. In this way the Son glorifies the Father, and so, too, the Father glorifies the Son. Prayer is no mere devotional exercise, and no merely pious ritual. It is the

union—and—communion exercise of the Son with His Father, so that nothing may mar this twin—action of the Father—Son ministry.

Put in another way – Christ is all the grace of God, in action. Prophets have prophesied of the grace of God (I Peter 1:10f.) and even the acts of God have proclaimed it. Angelic visitants have come from time to time to communicate the graciousness of God. Nothing, however, has ever actuated it in totality so that man may be fully released from sin, judgement, and doom. The means by which this is done is the incarnation of the Son of God. Incarnate, he walks and talks and acts in the streets and roads and places where men live, move and act. He ‘walks as though he were Godhead exposed’. As he walks and talks he moves to the final actions which will seal grace for all time. He moves towards the Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension, and when at great cost he effects these, grace is then available for man.

(ii) The Receiving of Saving Grace

Twice, within a few verses, Paul says ‘By grace you have been saved’. (Ephes. 2:5, 8). The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, acting as and for the Father (‘the God of all grace’) is now available for man. He is justified by grace as a free gift (Rom. 3:24). He has received ‘the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness’, which is ‘the charisma of eternal life’. This includes the gift of forgiveness of all sins. It also includes purification from sins. The gift is, in fact, eternal life itself, now beginning to be experienced here, in this human scene. With it comes the gift of love. One knows the Father and the Son. One received the great gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the true ‘grace of life’.

This receiving is by faith. ‘We know that a man is not justified by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no man be justified... if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose... we have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christjustified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus’. (See Gal. 2:16–21, Rom. 3:24). In all this action faith is not a work, but a gift itself. In fact, in Acts 18:27 believers are described as ‘those who through grace had believed’. Faith then is ‘all of grace’.

The mode of receiving grace and its fruits is first to repent. Repentance is itself a gift (Acts 5:31, 11:18). Forgiveness is a gift (Acts 5:31). Justification is a gift (Rom. 5:17). The renewal or regeneration of the Holy Spirit is a work of God and not man it is of grace (Titus 3:3–7). The sonship of the Father is also a gift (Gal. 4:4–6) as is also the Spirit of His Son who comes to make sonship living and palpable (Gal. 4:6, Rom. 8: 15). The love that flows into the heart comes gift—wise (Romans 5:5). There is nothing then that is of man. It is all gift, i.e. grace. As we have said, sinful man finds such giving very strange. He is apt to be suspicious of it, and humiliated by having to receive it. One thing alone will convince him of its great value – his extreme need, and the awful suffering of the Cross. Grace is never cheap: it is always free. This is shown in the enormous cost paid to bring life to the sinner. Hebrews 2:9 says, ‘We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour for the suffering of death, so that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man’.

(iii) Deficient Views of Grace

One of our statements was that grace is God constantly doing good to man, even though man opposes himself. We also saw that grace is totally unmerited by man. It is God's gracious action to redeem and renew man in the image of God. Hence the initiative always comes from God. Whilst sinful man may come to a deep relief through grace, it will not be long before he is tempted to think that grace in some way also depends upon him, or he may have some false views of grace. We must look at these:

- (a) **In Romans 6:1ff.** Paul discusses the abuse of grace. 'Because sin abounds', he says, 'And grace even more abounds, shall we then sin that grace may abound?' This is patently, absurd. The person asking the question has not truly understood grace.
- (b) **In Jude 4,** the writer speaks of 'some who long ago were designated for ...condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ'. Jude then proceeds to describe the evil of such persons. Peter, too, describes them, 'They promise...freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption, for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved'. (II Peter 2:19).
- (c) **In II Cor. 6:1–3** Paul says, 'Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain, for he says, 'At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation'. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation'. This is a very important statement, since it is directed not to people who are coming to salvation, but those who presume they have come to it. They have accepted the grace of God. Paul warns against this acceptance being in a vain or empty way. What does he mean? Surely he means that one can take grace for granted. That one can receive the benefits of grace carelessly. One can under-estimate it. That grace of God will not appear as 'amazing grace', but curiously enough as 'just grace' or, even, 'deserved grace'. Phil. 2:12–13 calls for fear and trembling in the working out of salvation, and a recognition that God is working within one, not that we are working to fulfil His will but that He is working. We may work with Him, but, then, only from Him.
- (d) **There is a dire warning in Hebrews 12:14–17.** The writer says, 'Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God: that no 'root of bitterness' spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled'. He then points to Esau as an example of man who was bitter, and did not live at peace with all men. What does it mean to 'fail to obtain the grace of God'? The answer lies within the context of the Epistle. In 4:16 the readers are urged to come to 'the throne of grace' so that they may receive mercy and 'find grace to help in time of need'. One of these times of need relates to reconciliation with the brethren, and consequent holiness. If one does not come to the grace available one fails to obtain it' Likewise in 3:12 one can come to a heart of evil unbelief because of the deceit of sin. One has failed to obtain grace in time of need. Even more dire is the warning against apostasy in 6:1–8 and 10:26–31. Here one 'outrages the Spirit of grace' (v29). The first problem is failing to obtain available grace, the second is to reject it altogether. The latter is called apostasy.

(iv) Grace Received for the Life of Holiness

In Hebrews 12:14–17 we saw that reconciliation with all men and holiness are interlinked, and both derive from grace. In Romans 5 Paul speaks of sin abounding but grace much more abounding, meaning that sin has been dealt with in the Cross of Christ. He says in 6:1ff., that the believer's death with Christ justifies him from sin. That is, the penalty has been taken away and so sin's power is broken. Believers are now dead to sin. To be dead to sin is to be dead to its guilt, and thus to its power. Because of this he commands, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions'. He adds, 'For sin shall have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace'. By this he means that the power of sin lies in guilt, and guilt has been taken away, entirely, by grace. This thought is repeated in I Cor. 15:55–56 where Paul says the power of sin is the law, and points out that the penalty of the law – death – has been taken away by Christ.

It must be seen then that holiness³ is dependent upon two aspects or actions of grace:– (a) The cleansing of the Cross which purifies the believer, and (b) The taking away of guilt which frees man from the (legal and actual) bondage of sin. Man is now free to obey, and obedience to God's will is the essence of true holiness. The demand to yield our members and body to God and holiness (Rom. 6:15ff., 12:1–2) cannot be obeyed unless one is free to yield such to Him. There is the further sense, of course, in which one is continually contingent upon the grace of God for every element of the spiritual life.

In regard to having new life, and living in it, Paul says, '...by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain'. (I Cor. 15:10). He indicates that grace has done wonderful things for those who are its recipients, 'I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and knowledge...' (I Cor. 1:4–5). The resources then for life are in 'the grace of life'. Hence the various admonitions, '...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus' (II Tim. 2:1). Likewise Peter says, '...this is the true grace of God: stand fast in it'. (I Peter 5:12).

There are many other such references to tell us that the Christian life is one lived in grace. We need to remind ourselves continually that grace is not an element, thing, or power, but the very action of Christ himself. As we have seen, he was grace embodied, personified, actional. He is the grace of God. Hence when he indwells his people, and believers in particular, that grace works to them, and in them. In the next section we will see how it works through them.

(v) Grace Received for Ministry

In the 'grace of life' is the rich element of purpose. Man was created to do the will of God and has lost heavily in refusing to do it. In fact, obedience to the will of God is one of the strongest elements of true being. Hence when in Christ he is redeemed and regenerated by grace, he is renewed to true being. True being relates to fulfilling the plan of God in general and his part in it in particular. Paul is an excellent example of this. In regard to calling he says, 'But when he who had set me apart before I was

³ See, for the whole subject, Living Faith No. 6 'Sanctification: The Doctrine of Christian Holiness'.

born, and had called me through his grace...' He means that one is called not only into life but also into ministry by grace. Again in Ephesians 3:7 he says, 'I was wade a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power'. In Ephes. 3:2 he speaks of being 'entrusted by God with the grace he meant for you' ('a stewardship of God's grace'). In Romans 12:3 he speaks of 'the grace given to me' for teaching them concerning the gifts. In I Cor. 3:10 this is a commission. In Galatians 2:7-9 Paul says that the apostles 'perceived the grace that was given to me', and saw that it was right that Paul should go to the Gentiles. In Romans 1:5 Paul says distinctly, 'Jesus Christ.... through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith...', and adds in Rom. 15:15f of 'the grace given to me by God to be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles'.

This grace of the ministry has two elements:

- (a) The designated ministry is a grace of God, and
- (b) It is carried out by the grace of God.

This brings us to the fact that grace in ministry reads as though it were 'strength' or 'power' and in fact it is, but not as detached from the Godhead. Just as Christ was the grace of God embodied and working in the human sphere, so his grace is himself working in and through his Body, the church – his people.

Examples of this 'strength' or 'power' are seen in Acts. In 4:33, following an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we read that '...with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all'. Stephen, in 6:8 is 'full of grace and power', and 'did great wonders and signs among the people'. In I Cor. 15:10 Paul says that he is what he is by the grace of God and says that God's grace towards him was not in vain, for, to the contrary, 'I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me'. A passage such as II Cor. 3:5 explains that he always saw his sufficiency as coming not from his own resources, but from God. In Acts 14:26, 15:40 and 20:32 we read such statements as 'they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled', 'commended by the brethren to the grace of God', 'I commend you to the Lord and the word of his grace'. All of these indicate the Lord actively working in his people for ministry. In Phil. 1:7 Paul, speaking of shared ministry, says, '...you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel'.

We may conclude then, that the gift of ministry, as also the power to fulfil it, is the grace of God. Nevertheless this is not all. Everything which God gives is His grace gift, so the ministry in its various elements is a gift to the church. With that gift, in order that it might be effective, are also given the gifts of Christ, or, as some say, 'the gifts of the Spirit'.

(vi) The Grace Gifts⁴

Various lists are given of the gifts of Christ to his church (cf. Rom.

⁴ On the whole matter of God giving His gifts see Living Faith No. 3 'The Giver, the Gifts, and the Giving'.

12:3ff., I Cor. 12:4ff., I Peter 4:10–11, Ephes. 4:7–11). In Ephesians 4: 7–11 Paul tells us that the victory of the Cross was the means whereby Christ gave gifts to men. He says these are gifts to the church rather than simply to persons, e.g. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Such gifts are for the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ – in love. In I Cor. 12 these gifts, out of their great variety and diversity, accomplish the unity of the Body. In Romans 12 they are very practical gifts. Charisma, (or, gift) as we have seen, derives from the word charis (or, grace). Hence these are not natural powers of man, but endowments given by Christ (Ephes. 4:8) and distributed by the Spirit (I Cor. 12:8f.). In fact, they issue from the largesse of grace which is Christ himself.

Verse 7 of Ephesians 4 is most interesting and helpful. It says, ‘Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift’. This must mean, that each gift given is part of the whole grace of God, and so each gift is a sharing in that grace. In Romans 12:6 the thought is repeated: ‘Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us...’ Nevertheless, with the gift is also ‘a measure of faith’. This measure determines the use of the gift. One is not to over-reach himself in the use of the grace-gift. He is to have a sober estimate of himself, and recognise what God has given him, and for what purpose. The use of this grace is described well in the various passages referred to above.

We may then, come to this conclusion, that salvation, the Christian life in holiness, fruitfulness and service is all dependent upon the grace of God, and that the plenitude of grace is always available for those who will do the will of God and live dependently upon Him.

8. The Weakness of Man and The Power of Grace

The classic passage which describes this is II Cor. 12. In this Paul is told that when he is weak, then he is strong, and that God's grace is sufficient for him in his weakness. Before we examine this in detail, let us look at man as weak and strong.

Creationally, man could only be strong as a man is strong. Man was never called to be more than man, and made his great mistake when he sought to be, that is, to be ‘as God’. Man, rightly understood, is a creature (also, son, servant) contingent upon God for his true being. In himself he is weak; contingent upon God he is strong – as a man' What he possesses is the gifts God has given both of being and personality, as well as the gifts of creation which are spread about him for his use. Once God had said of him, ‘There will be nothing that man will not be able to do’ (see Genesis 11:6). Nevertheless man has misused and abused the gifts. The principle Paul put to the Corinthian Christians (I Cor. 4:7) is valid for all. ‘What is there that you have which you have not received, and if you have received it, why do you boast as though it were not a gift?’

We are aware that man was weakened morally by the Fall. However, was man ever strong morally? The answer is, ‘Only when wholly contingent upon God’. The same obtains for redeemed man. He is impotent to produce moral action out of himself. If anyone ever demonstrated complete contingency it was Jesus. He sought to do only his Father's will. Hence he was very strong. God's resources were available for him in the union-and-union relationship. He was simply being what true man should be.

Now, however, we need to examine what might be called the power of redeemed man. We agree that fallen man has no moral power. Paul puts it in Romans 5:6 'For while we were still helpless (without strength, aesthetic) Christ died for the ungodly'. Does redeemed man, then, have moral power? The answer is, 'No, not of himself'. He has true moral choice because he has been liberated from evil, but of himself he has no power to effect moral actions. He delights in the law of God. He wills to do good, but finds he cannot (a) Do the good he would, or (b) Desist from the evil he would not do. It is the passage of Romans 7:14–25 which is the locus classicus of the argument, and the one which has been most debated. The variety of interpretations is interesting, if not very helpful. We need not go into these, but gather the actual sense of the passage. Summed up it appears as this: 'The Law of itself, is spiritual. I, of myself, am not spiritual, as such. However, I seek to obey the law. In fact my will desires this. I find, however, that when I try to do good and desist from evil, I am thwarted. I insist that my will is not in it. I find that sin, of itself, is stronger than I am, of myself. I see sin as forcing me into what I do not wish to do, and preventing me from what I wish to do. I am tired of such conflict, exhausted, in fact. Who will deliver me? I thank God that (ultimately) Christ will set me free from this body of death, this body of humiliation. I sum up myself:– With the law of my mind (my intention) I serve God, but with the flesh (under constraint of sin) I serve sin. Sin of itself is more powerful than I am of myself'.

If this principle did not obtain, then grace, for the believer, would be redundant. Sin still abounds. Grace needs to 'super-abound'. Hence all the Scriptures on grace which we have quoted, e.g. 'Stand fast in the grace' 'Be strong in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus'. 'Great grace was upon them all'. We see now that grace is that active power of God which enables a redeemed person to accomplish what he could never accomplish in his own strength, be it holiness of life, fruitfulness in character, or ministry in operation. When we see this we begin to understand the admonitions to live in grace, and to be under 'the word of grace'.

We have also noticed man's tendency to slip away from contingency. He wishes to accomplish things for God. The Old Testament and the New show us men who seek to do God's thing for Him, or apart from Him. There is always failure in these cases. Hence the brilliant chapter on strength, weakness and grace which is that of II Cor. 12. Here we see the great Paul having been given an abundance of revelations. No man can sustain such without pride. God ever so slowly opens His great truths to His children, just enough so that they will not fall into pride. This fall is the key to the nature of Satan and Adam. Hence God drives a stake into the flesh of Paul. Paul asks, three times, for deliverance. He is told that such a stake is necessary, or otherwise Paul will be above himself. So God makes him weak. Only when he is weak can God's grace be known in its wonderful power. Paul can do in grace that which is far beyond his natural weakness. Where grace is present, weakness does not count. The point is, of course, that grace is now seen to be grace, and is not confused with the natural strength of man. Man, 'cut down to size' is both truly and happily man, in his true nature. He is strong in the contingency of grace'

9. The Gracious Man: The Man of Grace

Paul says, 'By the grace of God I am what I am'. In this he is sincere. He is not ashamed of what he is. He tells us to esteem others as better than ourselves, and to have a sane estimate of ourselves. He has much time for humility, but little for inferiority. He is glad of what he is in grace.

He would not be where he was, but for grace. He would not be doing what he was doing but for grace. He boasts in nothing but the Cross. He sees that he has no sufficiency of himself, but he acknowledges the sufficiency is there in him – from God. He can say to the Colossians, ‘...the day you heard and understood the grace of God in truth’. (1:6). Like them he knows what grace is all about. Hence nothing he exhorts others to do does he himself fail to do. He reckons on his death with Christ. He lives in the grace of justification. He does not allow sin to reign in his mortal body. He has yielded up his members in obedience to righteousness. He lives in the forgiveness of God. He understands God's grace to be displayed by his sonship of the Father.

Yet this Paul is not other than are we. He always knew the battle with sin and the evil powers. He wrestled with the enemies of man and the Gospel He was no different from us. He did, however, understand the open secret of grace. Hence he could warn the Galatians against seeking to come under the law. He says, ‘I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different Gospel’. (1:8). He adds, ‘I testify to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.’ (5:3–4).

One of the most powerful statements regarding grace is that of Titus 2: 11–13, ‘For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ’. That is what grace does. Far from encouraging laxity and indolence, and light views of sin, it sensitises us to holiness, a right obedience, and to practical godliness. Does it then do other things?

The answer is yes. The man under grace becomes gracious. David who sinned terribly in his affair with Bath-sheba was stricken deeply by his own evil, as Psalm 51 indicates. At the same time, he was generous to those who sinned against him. Shimel was one such. Even though he had abused the king and could have been killed for treason, David forgave him. Likewise in the N.T. it is the man who is forgiven who forgives, the man who is loved who loves, and the man who is under grace who flows out grace to others. The statement of Ephes. 1:5–7 that those who are made sons are to ‘the praise of the glory of His grace’ undoubtedly means, ‘Being raised from sinfulness to sonship displays the glory of God's grace’. At the same time, the sons are not truly to the praise of the glory of his grace unless they, too, flow out in grace to others. This is what all true sons really do. When persons are gracious to others then the source of their actions must be seen to be the grace of God towards them.

Our conclusion then is that the God of grace begets sons and creatures of grace. They can relax under the God of grace. Their ministry is not a tensed striving, but a response to grace. Enabled by the power of grace Christ and the Spirit working in them – they display the powerful ease of grace in the things they do, Being free they become slaves to all men (I Cor. 9:19) that they may win the more. Such grace is the true testimony to grace received from God.

Thrilling, then, is Paul's statement of II Cor. 4:15,

‘For all things are for your sakes,
that the grace which is spreading
to more and more people,
may cause the giving of thanks
to abound to the glory of God.’

10. The Ultimate Glory of Grace – The Grace of Glory

Already we have seen, in the history of grace, that man will be to ‘the praise of the glory of His grace’ (Ephes. 1:6). What does this mean, but that which should have come under eternal judgement – fallen man – is lifted to the dignity of a son of God. This polluted thing has been purified. This rebellious creature has been transformed by love, and included in the eternal family of the Father. Nothing but grace could have accomplished that, and the cost of this grace is priceless.

The measurement of the grace is what it achieves in man. It achieves this in order that man may become ‘to the praise of His glory’ (Ephes. 1: 12–14). In other words, God's grace is that He brings man to glory, and for that matter brings all creation to glory which is eternal. That is why Peter says, ‘Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ’. The verse itself means that one's whole moral and ethical life is gripped by the hope of what will happen. What will happen is that grace will have its total and utter fulfilment when Jesus appears. This fulfilment is the glorification of the believer.

Here the believer lives in hope of justification, of sonship, of glorification (Gal. 5:5, Romans 8:18–23), and hope itself is a fixed assurance of the future. When man is glorified then hope will no longer be necessary. Romans 8:29 shows that we will be conformed to the likeness of His Son, and I John 3:1–3 indicates that ‘we shall be like him’, whilst Phil. 3:21 tells us we shall have a body of glory which is like his. The amazing nature of grace here, where we are transformed from lost creatures to new creatures, will be even more amazing when the true sons of God shine forth in glory.

As though that were not enough, we are told that the present heavens and earth will pass away, or be renewed and purified (Rev. 21:1–2, II Peter 3:10ff.), and that the Holy City, the New Jerusalem will descend to the new earth, ‘having the glory of God’. This is the ‘house of God’ in which are ‘many dwelling places’ (John 14:1–3, cf. Ephes. 2:21–22), and in which the glorified live and serve God purposefully for eternity.

No wonder Peter says, of believers, ‘Though you have not seen him, you love him, and though you do not see him now, but believe in him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory’. By ‘full of glory’ he means that believers, now, have something of the joy of glory itself. No wonder they wait for his appearing when the grace of glory will be there in fullness.

What continues to be stunning to the redeemed (who says, ‘By the grace of God I am what I am’) is his view of the boundless grace of God, which is meeting daily – even momentarily – his every need, overriding his sin, and keeping him in guiltlessness and forgiveness. To know that God's throne for him is not one of judgement, but ‘the throne of grace’, and that he can always come

'in time of need', is to have views of the grace of God which deeply motivate him to responsive love. Humbled by this, he receives 'more grace' (James 4:6) and 'grows in grace' (II Peter 3:18), always having in view 'the grace of our Lord Jesus, who though he were rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty might become rich'. (II Cor. 8:9). Seeing the riches which are his, he also, out of the largesse of grace, acts in grace towards all men, giving thanks to God.

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