

LEADING GRACE

FALL, 2022

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FREE GRACE ALLIANCE

BING - FREE GRACE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE
HAWLEY - THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD
PATE - GRACE FOR THE PROVERBS 31 WOMAN
FGA VISION STATEMENT - THINK BIGGER
MIKKELSEN - THE HOPE OF GLORY

**WHAT DIFFERENCE
DOES IT MAKE?**

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Leading Grace fall, 2022

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WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 25TH
STARKVILLE, MS

APRIL 28TH-30TH
ALLENWOOD, NJ

MAY 26TH-28TH
PORTAGE, WI

FGA REGIONAL CONFRENCES

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

THIS IS IT! OUR FIRST MAGAZINE THAT WE HAVE IN PHYSICAL FORM—LEADING GRACE! WHAT A BLESSING TO BE ABLE TO SEND OUT THE FREE GRACE MESSAGE TO ALL POINTS OF THE WORLD NOT JUST ELECTRONICALLY, BUT NOW IN A FORM THAT YOU CAN HOLD IN YOUR HANDS, FLIP THE PAGES, AND WHEN YOU ARE DONE—HAND IT TO YOUR FRIEND, NEIGHBOR, OR FELLOW LEADER IN MINISTRY. GOD IS SO GOOD TO BRING US TO THIS POINT IN OUR JOURNEY AS THE FREE GRACE ALLIANCE.

EVERY YEAR WE HAVE OUR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SECOND MONDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY OF OCTOBER. SINCE LAST OCTOBER'S CONFERENCE THERE HAS BEEN MUCH DONE AS AN ALLIANCE TO ADVANCE THE GRACE MESSAGE AROUND THE WORLD.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS:

- WE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED BY REGIONAL CONFERENCES BY MORE THAN 400%.
- WE HAD OUR FIRST TWO INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL CONFERENCES IN FINLAND AND GHANA.
- WE EXPANDED OUR MEMBERSHIP BY ABOUT 25%.
- OUR DONOR BASE HAS GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY.
- WE STARTED AN INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP FOR CHURCHES, COLLEGES, AND MISSIONARY ORGANIZATIONS.
- WE STARTED THE LEADING GRACE PODCAST.
- WE STARTED THE MAGAZINE YOU'RE READING, LEADING GRACE, WHICH COMES OUT FOUR TIMES A YEAR AND IS SENT TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS.
- AND WE PUT TOGETHER ANOTHER ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT A NEW LOCATION. THIS YEAR IT IS AT BEAR CREEK BIBLE CHURCH, IN KELLER, TEXAS.

ALL OF THIS WAS DONE BECAUSE THE MEMBERS OF THE FREE GRACE ALLIANCE, ALONG WITH OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GRANT HAWLEY, WHO JUST WENT FROM PART TIME TO FULL TIME WITH FGA, HAVE PUT IN MANY HOURS OF SERVICE TO THE LORD TO HELP ADVANCE OUR MISSION "TO CONNECT, ENCOURAGE, AND EQUIP THE BODY OF CHRIST TO ADVANCE THE GRACE MESSAGE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD."

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING WHAT THE LORD HAS IN STORE FOR THIS COMING YEAR! I KNOW, AS WE STAND FIRM FOR THE ORIGINAL GOSPEL, HE WILL DO GREAT WORK IN THE LIVES OF MANY AS THEY ARE ROOTED IN THIS TRUTH: FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THIS IS NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST" (EPHESIANS 2:8-9).

SERVING CHRIST WITH YOU – JOYFULLY,



JEREMY VANCE
PRESIDENT

FREE GRACE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

CHARLIE BING

**“IT TURNED MY WORLD
UPSIDE DOWN”**

...exclaimed Norman. He had traveled from California to meet me and tell me personally how my book on Lordship Salvation had changed his life. It happens that Norman's brother is the international director of a ministry that famously teaches Lordship Salvation. When he told his brother about his enlightenment, his brother—and his other siblings—cut off their relationship with him.

“FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I KNOW FOR SURE I AM GOING TO HEAVEN.”

“IT'S LIKE I'VE BEEN BORN AGAIN, AGAIN!”

“I FEEL LIKE I WAS LIVING UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW, BUT NOW I AM FREE.”

These represent comments I see or hear all the time when people are changed by God's amazing grace. What makes grace amazing is that it is totally undeserved and unearned by we who are sinners, yet it brings us the free gift of God's life that is eternal and secure. Here's how this Free Grace position makes a difference.

IT PRESERVES THE TRUE GOSPEL

We remember the warning of the apostle Paul in Galatians that anyone who preaches a gospel different from what he preached is under God's curse (Gal. 1:8-9). Changing the gospel warrants this severe penalty because if people don't hear a clear and true gospel, they will not be saved. Ask Martin Luther (when you bump into him in heaven) what difference a clear gospel of grace meant to him. Then refresh your knowledge of church history to see how Luther's discovery fueled the Protestant Reformation which brought the message of salvation to the whole world.

Sure, the Protestant church has more denominations and splinters than ice cream has flavors. There are some groups that are just wrong on the gospel, some careless, some inconsistent, and some adversarial, but one truth pervades all Christianity: Everyone who is truly saved, was saved by the gospel of free grace, no other way. They may later wander onto some weird path, but every born-again Christian came through the door of free grace.

And it doesn't take long for that gospel to be corrupted. Paul wasn't gone long from Galatia when he wrote them that warning. That's why I remind people that the gospel is only one generation away from extinction. We bear the awesome responsibility to preach and teach a clear gospel of unencumbered grace.

THE SALVATION OF PEOPLE CAN BE HINDERED

After teaching the gospel of grace in one African country, an evangelist came up to me and said, “I repent; I have been telling people a long list of things they must do to be saved and I have been keeping them from heaven.” Since that discovery, this man has become a major force evangelizing his country with a clear gospel. His converts and disciples are many.

Those who preach that one must earn, keep, or prove their salvation by their works or performance, are keeping people from salvation. They put people in the impossible situation of trying to figure out when they have done enough or are committed enough to be saved. All that person can know is that he or she is doing better than some people. But God doesn’t grade on a curve; He grades on the cross—not what we do, but what Jesus did when He died for our sins. Because Jesus said, “It is finished!” there is nothing left to do. Those who fail to realize that Jesus paid it all cannot be saved until they realize their performance brings nothing to their salvation. The gospel of free grace offers the only possible way of salvation, because any “gospel” that makes salvation dependent on human performance nullifies God’s saving grace.

ASSURANCE IS POSSIBLE

When I spoke at a conference, a man came up to me and said, “I want you to know that for the last year, I have been able to sleep in peace.” He explained that he used to go to bed each night afraid he might die in his sleep and did not know if he would go to heaven. But ever since he heard my message on the gospel and eternal security the year before, he not only sleeps in peace, but he claims it has revolutionized his entire ministry.

We probably forget or don’t realize the inner turmoil and torment experienced by those who do not have assurance of salvation. And I’m talking about a lot of people who identify as Christians. Even pastors have admitted to me that they don’t know if they are going to heaven.

Opposing theological systems exasperate this situation. Arminians believe you can be sure you have salvation if you are living right today, but they are not sure it is secure because they can’t predict the future and you could sin and lose it. Strong Calvinists believe that all the elect are surely and eternally saved, but they don’t know who is elect until they see if the person perseveres in faith to the end of life. Only through the free grace of God can a believer have full assurance of salvation.

Our assurance is as clear as John 5:24: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” No room for uncertainty there! If you are convinced that Jesus is your Savior from sin who gives you eternal life, then you don’t ever need to doubt your future. That is possible only when grace is absolutely free.

**LOVE MATURES US
FEAR MAKES US DRAW BACK**

IT IS THE FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Love matures us; fear makes us draw back. When we know that God’s love for us can never be broken (Rom 8:35-39) and that He will never cast us out of eternal life (John 6:37), we can rest assured and grow in our relationship to Him. If we fear losing our salvation because we don’t understand the extent of God’s grace, we will focus on our performance to earn God’s favor rather than experience His unconditional love. Grace throws us on the power and sufficiency of God instead of our own power. Perry wrote me, “I have been a Christian since I was twelve years old, I am forty-eight now. I never had any victory over sin until I discovered...Free Grace teachings.”

Grace that is absolutely free and unconditional gives us the motivation to grow in our love for God instead of fearing Him. “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Anyone who thinks grace is based on performance, good works, or keeping sacraments will focus on self instead of the Savior. When we focus on ourselves, we have every right to doubt our salvation and God’s love because none of us is perfect. You can’t grow forward with confidence if you keep looking backward with doubts.

We understand that free grace is not conditioned on our performance, therefore, we can respond to God out of love and gratitude instead of obligation and fear. Christians can live a want-to life instead of a have-to life. We also become more enriched by the Bible when we understand that books like Hebrews and First John are not written to save people but are written to deepen a believer’s faith and intimacy with God.

IT MAKES BETTER SENSE OF THE BIBLE.

If one does not understand the unconditional nature of God’s grace and salvation by grace through faith, then many Bible passages will fall victim to poor interpretations. Understanding the gospel of grace allows Bible students to see the difference between salvation that is free and discipleship which is costly. They can distinguish between justification truth and sanctification truth, having a relationship with God and enjoying fellowship with God. They see the difference between passages that speak of entering the family of God and growing in the family of God. They see that Jesus, James, and the author of Hebrews do not contradict the apostle Paul who taught that we are saved “freely by His grace” (Rom 3:24) and “For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works...” (Eph 2:8-9). They understand that good works are a result, not a requirement, of salvation: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...” (Eph. 2:10).

IT MAKES MINISTRY MEANINGFUL.

When we are interpreting the Bible correctly, we are closer to understanding God’s purpose and sharing His Word more powerfully. We have a gospel of certainty. We do not have to say, “You can be saved by grace through faith—but you must have works to prove it,” or “You can be saved by grace through faith—until you really sin big,” or “You can be saved by grace through faith—if you turn from all of your sins.” Free Grace allows us to point people to the Lord Jesus Christ and His promise of eternal life instead of scrutinizing their own imperfect performance.

A Free Grace gospel helps us help other believers who struggle with sin rather than dismiss them as unbelievers. Also, church discipline makes sense when it is applied to sinning believers, not unsaved people. Furthermore, we can be more careful about who we support or partner with in ministry. We do not want to teach salvation and living by grace if a ministry partner teaches a gospel that brings people back under the law or a performance standard. We can boldly proclaim the gospel and tell people that they are free and they can know they are saved. We help them rest in God’s promise instead of their own efforts. Best of all, we can offer them a gospel of full assurance in an eternally secure salvation.

Free Grace should also motivate our ministries. A friend confessed to me that as a director of a ministry, he labored miserably under compulsion and an effort to be acceptable to God. When he discovered grace, he said, “For the first time in thirty years I am serving God with joy.”

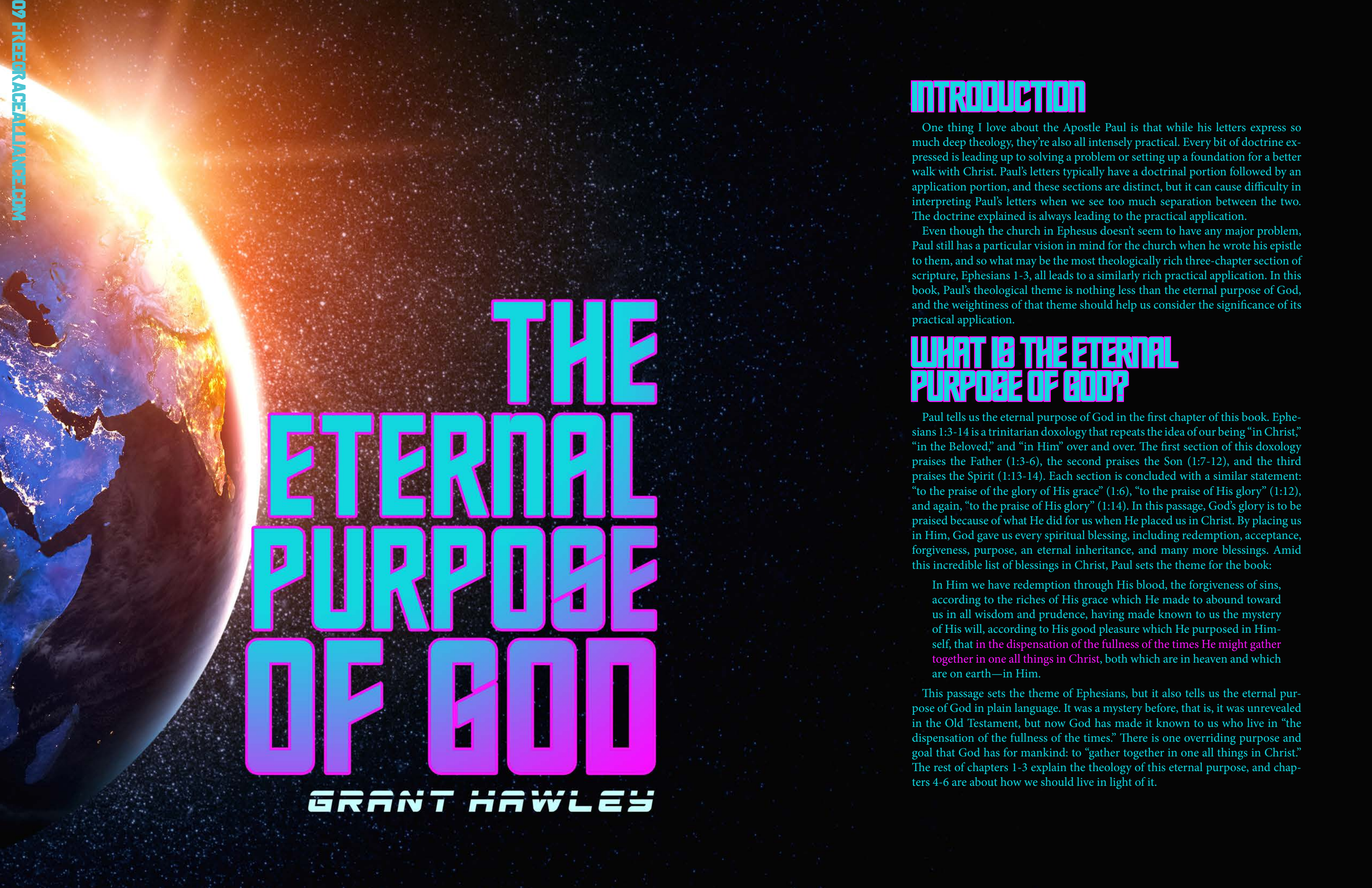
**WE HAVE A GOSPEL
OF CERTAINTY**

CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul and his companions were described by the Athenians as “these who have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Why were they able to say that? Because Paul and his co-laborers preached salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Paul’s purpose was “to testify to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24b)—and that was free grace.

What would it take for that to be said about us or the Free Grace Alliance? It takes the gospel of free grace shared graciously. That will make all the difference in the world.

**DR. CHARLES BING IS THE
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF
GRACELIFE MINISTRIES**



THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

GRANT HAWLEY

INTRODUCTION

One thing I love about the Apostle Paul is that while his letters express so much deep theology, they're also all intensely practical. Every bit of doctrine expressed is leading up to solving a problem or setting up a foundation for a better walk with Christ. Paul's letters typically have a doctrinal portion followed by an application portion, and these sections are distinct, but it can cause difficulty in interpreting Paul's letters when we see too much separation between the two. The doctrine explained is always leading to the practical application.

Even though the church in Ephesus doesn't seem to have any major problem, Paul still has a particular vision in mind for the church when he wrote his epistle to them, and so what may be the most theologically rich three-chapter section of scripture, Ephesians 1-3, all leads to a similarly rich practical application. In this book, Paul's theological theme is nothing less than the eternal purpose of God, and the weightiness of that theme should help us consider the significance of its practical application.

WHAT IS THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD?

Paul tells us the eternal purpose of God in the first chapter of this book. Ephesians 1:3-14 is a trinitarian doxology that repeats the idea of our being "in Christ," "in the Beloved," and "in Him" over and over. The first section of this doxology praises the Father (1:3-6), the second praises the Son (1:7-12), and the third praises the Spirit (1:13-14). Each section is concluded with a similar statement: "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (1:6), "to the praise of His glory" (1:12), and again, "to the praise of His glory" (1:14). In this passage, God's glory is to be praised because of what He did for us when He placed us in Christ. By placing us in Him, God gave us every spiritual blessing, including redemption, acceptance, forgiveness, purpose, an eternal inheritance, and many more blessings. Amid this incredible list of blessings in Christ, Paul sets the theme for the book:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

This passage sets the theme of Ephesians, but it also tells us the eternal purpose of God in plain language. It was a mystery before, that is, it was unrevealed in the Old Testament, but now God has made it known to us who live in "the dispensation of the fullness of the times." There is one overriding purpose and goal that God has for mankind: to "gather together in one all things in Christ." The rest of chapters 1-3 explain the theology of this eternal purpose, and chapters 4-6 are about how we should live in light of it.

What's more is that even in the doctrinal portion of Ephesians, we learn that we are called to participation in this work. After stating God's purpose in 1:9-10, Paul writes, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (1:11). Because of theological baggage, it can be difficult to understand words like "predestined" as the author intends them in their contexts, and the translation doesn't help. The Greek word here doesn't mean to have someone's destiny set ahead of time, but to have someone's ordination set out ahead of time, to be given a purpose to pursue. As Paul says it in the next chapter, there are "good works, which God has prepared beforehand in order that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:10b). It's important to connect the purpose mentioned in 1:11 with its definition in vv 9-10. The purpose God has for us is to participate in His work to "gather together in one all things in Christ." It's an incredible calling, building up and edifying the one Body of Christ in love (4:15-16).

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS

In 1:15-23, Paul tells us his prayer for the Ephesians, and that prayer has to do with opening their eyes to understanding. In this prayer, he prays that God will open their eyes to understand three things, "the hope of His calling" (18b), which has to do with our participation in His body (compare 3:1-7), "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (18c), which has to do with understanding the glory Christ receives through His inheritance, the Church (compare 3:8-13), and "what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" (19a), which is beyond our imagination (compare 3:14-21).

Paul also goes on to explain this power toward us who believe in the following context:

...according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The period and chapter break here are unfortunate, because the verb "fills" near the end of v 23 has another object, "you" from 2:1. Something like the following is appropriate: "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all, even you who were

dead in trespasses and sins..." What Paul is saying is that "even you" are the Body of Christ, filled by Him, and God did this for us even though we "were dead in trespasses and sins." The state of who we were apart from Christ was dire, but God intervened because He loved us so much (2:4), and by His grace, He saved us through faith apart from works (2:8-9). That's why the Church is God's masterpiece (2:10), because He took us, who were so unworthy, and brought us together as members of Christ's very body.

ONE NEW MAN

We get the first command right in the middle of the doctrinal portion of Ephesians in 2:11, where Paul tells the Ephesian believers:

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (2:11-12)

He doesn't want them to forget where they came from, so that they will never cease to be thankful for God's matchless grace. And after this short reminder, Paul continues to talk about what God has done in bringing them into the Body of Christ:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made **BOTH ONE**, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances,

so as to create in Himself **ONE** new man from the **TWO**,

thus making peace,

and that He might reconcile them **BOTH** to God in **ONE BODY** through the cross,

thereby putting to death the enmity.

And He came and preached peace

to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we **BOTH** have access by **ONE** Spirit to the Father. (2:13-18)

The Law is "holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12), but in addition to making all the world guilty before God (Rom 3:19-20), it kept Jews and Gentiles separate (Acts 10:28a), and it was a source of enmity between the two. Through His work on the Cross, Jesus made the two into one new man, thus making peace.

THE TRINITY WORKING TOGETHER WITH ONE PURPOSE

It was a little over a decade ago when what Paul was trying to accomplish in writing Ephesians sunk into my heart, and outside of when I first came to Free Grace theology in college, or when I first came to faith in Christ as a young child, I can't think of an idea that has impacted me so deeply. It was while studying on an airplane that I noticed the thing that brought it all together for me. Three times in the book, Paul groups three words together that all begin with the Greek prefix *sun-*, which means "together" (2:5-6, 19-22; and 3:6). Each *sun-* word in each of these triplets contains an allusion to a previously mentioned work of the Father, of the Son, or of the Holy Spirit, and all of the triplets have to do with gathering us together in one Body in Christ:

...even when we were dead in trespasses, **made us alive together** with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and **raised us up together**, and **made us sit together** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus... (2:5-6)

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but **fellow citizens** with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, **being fitted together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are **being built together** for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (2:19-22)

that the Gentiles should be **fellow heirs**, of the **same body**, and **partakers [together]** of His promise in Christ through the gospel (3:6) [in these quotes, pink font marks the words beginning with the prefix *sun-* in the Greek]

The Trinity is working together to accomplish that one eternal purpose to bring all things together in Christ. Seeing this helped me to realize that Paul is weaving the theme of gathering together in one all things in Christ throughout the book, emphasizing that it is God's priority.

I still remember vividly sitting on that plane with Ephesians open on my tray table and all of these things kept hitting me. Wave after wave—much more than is covered in this article—showing me how central this one theme, this one purpose is to God's eternal plan. Every single thing God is doing in this dispensation has to do with bringing all things—without distinction between Jew and Gentile or any other worldly distinction—together in "one new man"

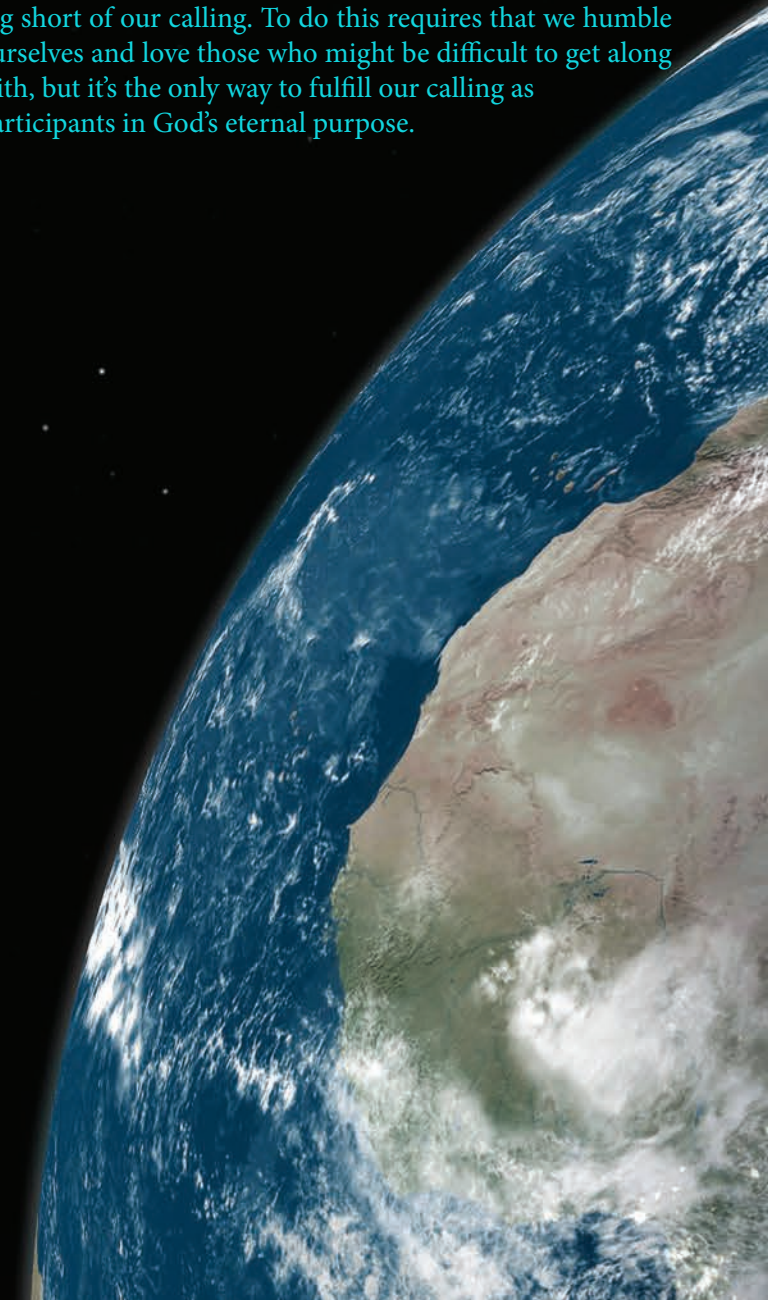
in Christ. Paul says that making this mystery known is the essence of his ministry in 3:8-11, and his other letters bear this out as well.

CONCLUSION: A WORTHY WALK

With all this in mind, is it any wonder that Paul defines a worthy walk the way he does?

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4:1-3, emphasis added)

If we are not working towards God's purpose to bring the whole world into a unified body in Christ, we are falling short of our calling. To do this requires that we humble ourselves and love those who might be difficult to get along with, but it's the only way to fulfill our calling as participants in God's eternal purpose.





REACH + TRAIN UNBELIEVERS BELIEVERS IN THE SAME WEEKEND!

"IT'S ONE OF THE EASIEST EVENTS TO INVITE UNBELIEVERS TO."
- DR. R. LARRY MOYER

WHAT MAKES A WILD GAME FEAST EFFECTIVE?

The feast presents a great outreach opportunity for your church to reach the community. It also builds relationships with businesses that are willing to donate door prizes towards the feast. Normally, a minimum of 50% of those attending are non-Christians. Churches can make this as small or big as they want with displays, door prizes, seminars, etc.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE TO PREPARE?

Ideally 6 months, but a minimum of 4 months.

HOW DO WE PREPARE?

The first step is to secure a Saturday & Sunday date on Dr. Larry Moyer's schedule. EvanTell then sends a complete preparation manual that clearly lays out how to prepare step by step. Larry is willing to come for just the Wild Game Feast, however, when possible, the Sunday morning service & seminar give added opportunity & ministry to the weekend.

IS ANY MONTH PREFERRED?

Wild Game Feasts are most effective January-August. It is important to have it on a weekend when the calendar before & after the event allow this to receive the sole attention. It shouldn't be crowded between other activities.

WHAT IF WE HAVE FURTHER QUESTIONS?

Call Larry's direct line at 214.420.6326 or email him at lmoyer@evantell.org. Larry or his assistant will be happy to talk to you.

EVANTELL

is a ministry committed to a clear presentation of the gospel through a careful study of Scripture. EvanTell's mission is to declare the gospel, clearly and simply, activate believers around the world, and to prepare the upcoming generations to reach the lost.

For more information on EvanTell and its ministries, please visit our website at evantell.org.



GRACE FOR THE PROVERBS 31 WOMAN

CARMEN PATE

INTRODUCTION

God is all about grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 says “For by grace [God’s unmerited favor] you are saved through faith [My salvation is secure because I have trusted Jesus for forgiveness of my sins and for eternity with Him.], and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God; [it is all, 100%, His doing.] it is not from works, [I couldn’t earn it.] so that no one can boast. [All glory belongs to the Lord.]”

For those who have placed their faith in Christ, we are eternally His. So, we can now live a thank you life, not a life of duty trying to earn God’s acceptance. We are totally accepted, fully forgiven, unconditionally loved. But then we come to Proverbs 31:10-31. We women have read this passage over and over again trying to determine what we are supposed to think about this woman. Maybe you’re thinking:

“ I am exhausted just hearing what she accomplishes and quite frankly, a little annoyed if that is the standard for me. After all, this is the 21st century:
Do I really need to sew my garments when there are department stores and credit cards?
Does fast food take out from restaurants across town count as bringing food from afar?
Am I really supposed to plant a vineyard? I can’t even keep ivy alive!”

I hear you! But you see, the enemy wants us to read this passage and think, “This is ridiculous,” and then set it aside, never to consider the blessing God has in it for you and me. So, let’s reconsider this passage through fresh eyes. You see, I truly believe God intended Proverbs 31 to elevate and praise womanhood. Yes, you read that correctly.

WISDOM

The entire book of Proverbs is about wisdom. Chapter 31 is considered by many commentators to be sage advice King Solomon received from His mother, Bathsheba. Being a woman, she uses the example of women in her day to teach Solomon, or ‘Lemuel,’ as she affectionately addressed him. Her focus was not so much the activities of the woman, but the wisdom and character that direct the activities that she wants to stress.

Verses 10-31 were written as an acrostic poem, with the first word of each line beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, written in succession. I believe God inspired King Solomon to write what he learned in a way that could be easily memorized, not by women, but by men! In fact, in the Jewish culture, the passage is to be memorized as a song of praise to the women in their lives. The purpose of the poem in that culture, even today, is to draw attention to the often-overlooked glory of the everyday woman. So, Proverbs 31 should not be interpreted as a job description, or a task list to be accomplished, but a celebration of wisdom in action. And I have to chuckle that God knew that only a multitasked woman could best represent wisdom in action!

“Who can find a virtuous and capable wife?” (vs.10) It’s a rhetorical question. She is rare! Not because God didn’t make very many women of character and wisdom, but few women see those qualities in themselves and many don’t know that by staying yielded to the Lord those qualities rise to the surface, so that others notice.

CULTIVATION

Proverbs 31 reveals the character of a woman that God already sees in you though you may not yet see her in yourself. God designed you to have her heart and attitude, and His Spirit in you is making the transformation as you grow in your knowledge and love for Jesus. Imagine God saying to you today, “A woman of valor is who you are, but only by my power working in you will you experience the full reality. So, stay in my hand and let me mold you.” So, what does He desire to mold in you?

CHARACTER

1. “She is clothed with strength and dignity.”(v 25) Her endurance, her self-confidence, her significance, all comes from the Lord. It is what people see in her, beyond physical beauty. She believes God’s truths over Satan’s lies and she rests in God’s promises.

2. “She laughs without fear of the future.” Her trust and confidence in the Lord prepares her for whatever life may bring her way. She knows that nothing can happen without God’s approval. She doesn’t worry about tomorrow because it is under God’s control, and she knows that she is not God.

3. “When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instruction with kindness.” (v 26) Matthew 12:34 tells us that what comes out of our mouths is the overflow of our heart. So, if we fill our heart and mind with God’s word, and apply His words to our life, we will speak wisdom. And to balance those nuggets of truth will be grace, kindness and love.

GOOD WORKS

Ephesians 2:10 tells us we are God’s masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do the works He planned for us long before we were born. God equips each of us with different strengths, skills, gifts, talents, and passion to accomplish what He calls us to do where He has placed us. So what are her good works?

1. “She carefully watches everything in her household, and suffers nothing from laziness” (v 27). This is not about keeping a perfectly clean, beautifully decorated home. This is about being a good steward of your time, talent, and treasure. We aren’t to waste what God has given us.

2. “She is energetic and strong” (v 17). No, she doesn’t have a lifetime membership to “24 Hour Fitness.” But this is about taking care of yourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit. Doctors always say that if people would just move our bodies, there would be fewer health issues. But caring for our bodies also includes rest, so when God asks, “who will go for me?” we can respond, “Here I am, send me.”

RELATIONSHIPS

God’s will for our lives is ultimately defined by our relationships, with Christ first and then with those He loves. Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek God first, and all the things you need will be added, including loving relationships.

1. “Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life” (v 11).

You don’t have to be married to make application. Do your friends, coworkers, classmates, and family trust you? Do you build them up behind their backs? Do you keep your word? Do you keep conversations confidential? Do you offer your strengths to help instead of pointing out another’s weakness? Trust must be earned, and it is up to us to earn it.

2. “She extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy” (v 20). Only Christ living in and through us will prompt us to show His love and compassion to a hurting world. Only His love will draw us to go out of our way to serve those less fortunate. But when we do? The blessing will always be ours.

CONCLUSION

Proverbs 31 is about character, good works, and relationships. God sees your commitment and your heart’s desire to love and serve Him well. He sees the tears because your dreams have been shattered—a financial setback, a relationship that went bad, a health diagnoses that rocked your world, the loss of someone you loved most, this side of heaven. God also sees you praying, reading the word, stepping out in faith every single day, and not giving up hope, because you trust His plan.

The New Living translation of verses 30-31 says:

Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised. Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.

GOD IS SAYING TO YOU RIGHT NOW, “WOMAN OF VALOR, YOU ARE WORTHY OF PRAISE!”



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THINK BIGGER

MISSION

To advance the gospel throughout the world by connecting, encouraging, and equipping Free Grace people and ministries.

PERSPECTIVE

We need to think much bigger. There are nearly 8 Billion people in the world and only a fraction have ever heard the clear, pure gospel of God's grace in Christ. Paul says God "is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we ask or think" and we know that He wants people to hear of God's grace even more than we do. We need to allow Him to move us and work together and support one another as we go.

WHY GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF FGA'S EFFORTS IS NEEDED

- The people of the world are not hearing a clear and accurate gospel message
- Not enough Free Grace pastors being trained even to replace those who are retiring or otherwise leaving the pastorate, let alone allowing for growth or multiplication
- Key leaders nearing end of ministry
- There is a need for development of new leaders and the ensuring of the legacy of the faithful brethren from the older generations
- Lack of data or data organization about Free Grace people and ministries
- It's hard to find solid Free Grace materials
- Many people who can benefit from or serve with FGA are not connected with us

GOING ON OFFENSE

The number of Free Grace people is small, and much of our dialogue about various issues is heard primarily by those who already hold to Free Grace theology and often we don't move the ball forward through these discussions. If our focus is only defending, the billions of people who have not yet heard the clear, true gospel still won't hear. While we will defend the gospel as well, as a ministry, our focus going forward will primarily be to advance the gospel, so that the whole world can hear that Christ died for their sins, that He rose from the grave, and that by simply believing, they can be eternally secure in Him. We're going on offense.

WHAT IS FGA ALREADY DOING?

REGIONAL CONFERENCES AND SERVING CHURCHES

This past year, we were able to have regional conferences in the Northwest and Southeast, along with Ghana, and Finland. We were also able to teach the word at churches in Hungary and an unnamed country in Asia.

LEADING GRACE MAGAZINE

We publish the magazine quarterly, previously electronic-only, but now in print as well.

Leading Grace Podcast

Available on Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts

Publishing Our First Book

The second edition of Free Grace Theology: 5 Ways It Magnifies the Gospel is available on Kindle.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

FGA has made fruitful connections with many organizations, both domestically and abroad.

GROWING MEMBERSHIP

FGA's membership is growing every month.

UNTIL NOW, FGA HAS NOT HAD ANY FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES. THIS WORK IS JUST BEGINNING. WE NEED TO THINK BIGGER.



WHAT CAN FGA AS AN ORGANIZATION DO GOING FORWARD?

PHASE I – STARTS NOW, FOCUS FOR NEXT 12–24 MONTHS

- Find the many thousands of Free Grace people and ministries around the world get them connected with FGA
- Expand FGA Regional Conference schedule to cover the US and more annually
- Aggregation of existing FGA-related ministry resources
- Develop network of regional representatives to provide pulpit fill and other services to FGA member churches and other FGA member institutions, to help make connections, and to plan and execute FGA Regional Conferences.

Phase 2

- Production and distribution of training and resources still needed
- Begin Worldwide Missions and Church Planting Initiative
 - * Providing various kinds of training programs for training pastors (some already existing), and supporting the efforts of church planters and organizations who send church planters
 - * Expanding training seminars for international pastors by equipping local teachers to lead these seminars

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Pray
- Join FGA if you haven't already
- Encourage your church or other ministry to join FGA
- Host an FGA regional conference
- Share your Free Grace resources with FGA so we can make them available through our website (sermons, sermon notes, training materials, graphics, etc.)
- Volunteer to be an FGA regional representative (this is a great opportunity for people who are retired from ministry, but still want to teach the word and serve local churches)
- Speak at FGA regional conferences
- Support FGA financially. We are in need of ongoing financial support, and the need is both urgent and significant. To see this ministry grow, we need both staff and an operating budget.
- Encourage individuals you know who believe Free Grace is important to join and/or support FGA
- Encourage your local church to support FGA as part of your missions budget

COMMITMENTS

As we go forward, we want you to know of these commitments we have to God and to you, as our members:

- We are committed to the FGA Covenant and believe in it as strongly as you do, and will ensure that all FGA conference messages, published materials, and other resources are always consistent with the covenant.
- FGA will continue to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, loving our brothers who differ from us, even as we hold firmly to the truth of the gospel as expressed in the Covenant.
- FGA will steward God's resources well, using them wisely to advance the gospel.



RECENTERED
GROUP



Ed and Judy Underwood

Recentered Group was born from the church's growing need to recenter on Jesus' two priorities—making disciples and loving one another.

We transform churches through a deep recentering process that reconnects Christians and their leaders to the central teachings of Jesus.

"I think I can. I think I can."

How many times have we heard the story of "The Little Engine That Could"? The moral of the story is to believe you can do something and you can do it. With enough belief and willpower, you can do anything you set your mind to. The story asks us to believe in ourselves. This is a very humanistic way of thinking of life. We as humans have chosen to believe we can be like God, greater than God, and independent from God our Creator, just like those who built the Tower of Babel. "And they said, 'Come, let's build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered abroad over the face of all the earth'" (Gen 11:4). They wanted to be self-empowered and disregarded God's command for them to "fill the earth". Humanity was never supposed to live independent of God but to rely on Him, believe His word, and follow Him.



Grace Truth #1: The Work

My husband and I have found a mutual hobby, bicycling. We both enjoy riding and have ridden many miles together. This past summer we decided to ride our bikes on a couple of the San Juan Islands of Washington State. I personally had been riding in the spring to prepare for the trip but on flat old railroad track trails. The mostly flat terrain did not train me for the long rolling hills of the island. I thought I was in decent shape to make the 18-mile ride, but the many hills started to burn and deplete my willpower. The next day we rode 30 miles on the hills and in the heat. At one point I told myself to "dig-in" and "you got this". My husband had suggested we try out ebikes, but to me it felt like cheating, so he suffered along with me. In fact, we met several people who used ebikes, but they insisted they only used them to "assist" them when the hills got too hard.

Does anyone else struggle with this in their spiritual life? Do you ever feel like you need to be the best person you can, doing the best job you can, living the best life you can, and only taking assistance when absolutely necessary? It is engrained into at least the American culture. We have such phrases as "self-made man"; "be all that you can be"; or "no pain, no gain".



Grace to Save and to Keep

For many years this is how I came to God. Every time I failed and sinned I would ask God to help or “assist” me in being better, acting better, and not to sin. I felt like a failure, always having to point out how weak I was and how I needed God to fix the struggle I was in. I felt ashamed I was not strong enough on my own and was afraid of His wrath. I felt like a little child coming to God as a stern Father who disapproved of me and then resigned to forgive me once again.

However, Romans 5:8-11 says:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also celebrate in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

I lived as if Jesus would only pay for my sin if I was good enough to earn His grace, but since I was a sinner He would have to “assist” me in this endeavor. On the other hand, I had also been living as if I needed to “assist” Jesus in keeping me right with God by continually working hard to be good and obey. However, Jesus did not die reluctantly but paid the price for our sins freely and lovingly. He is also powerful enough to finish the work of our salvation on His own. He does not need an assist. Not only did Jesus die for us but He made peace with God on our behalf. We are no longer under His wrath. Jesus paid it all! God knew I was not perfect and still chose to save me. He knows I am not perfect and keeps me. His death saved me, and His life keeps me. Faith in Christ's work alone brings peace and freedom into our lives.

Grace Truth #2: The Power

Imagine with me once again the roads of San Juan Island. The road is not flat and there are not just downhills but there are also uphill. And the downhill on the way to the destination are the uphill on the way back. My husband and I traveled 9 miles across the island to see the Cattle Point Lighthouse established on the Hudson's Bay Company ranch in 1853. As we began swiftly descending down the last hill, we saw a sign warning travelers of the 10% road grade. (As a reference, any number over 7% is considered steep.) It was scary fast going down and a chore going up. We biked half-way up the hill and breathlessly walked our bikes the rest of the way. We joked about not being too proud to walk, but it felt like the walk of shame. Not only could we have used an

“assist”, but full empowerment would have been welcomed and would have allowed us to enjoy and complete the tour of the island. We accomplished what we could in our own physical strength to conquer those hills, but a fully powered bike would have allowed us to do so much more.

Grace to Live and to Serve

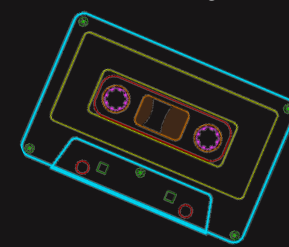
Many times, we struggle through life on our own believing that we can or should live this life on our own, to be a self-made man or woman. We tell ourselves that if we were the best person we could be, we would not need anyone, even God. We are too proud and ashamed. Many times, we call for help only when our situations are dire and by then require much more time investment and struggle. One of

**Jesus did not
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strength**

the last things Jesus told his disciples before He left them was that in this life there would be struggles but to have courage because He had overcome the world (Jn 16:33). Jesus did not expect His disciples to overcome the world and their struggles by their own strength and willpower. Jesus overcame the world by conquering Satan, sin, and death by His death and resurrection to life. And He also did not leave His disciples alone. He sent a Helper, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:17).

The Holy Spirit is not just a power assist to strengthen us when we struggle, but He dwells in us to be our full empowerment and guide for daily living.

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom 8:11).



It Is Finished

When we believe by faith in Christ's work for us on the cross, He gives His Spirit to indwell us, empower us, and guide us as we allow Him to fill us. Believers are not to be self-reliant, but to rely on Christ. Paul exhorts the Philippian church to have the same mind as Christ (Phil 2:5), that of a servant. Peter encourages believers to serve one another using God's words and utilizing the strength He provides (1 Pt 4:11). We are to rely on God's power and strength, His words, and His guidance.

The work of our salvation from Satan, sin, and death was completed by Christ's death on the cross. For those who believe this glorious message, they are rescued. Paul shares this message to the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Colossae:

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:13-14)

But not only does Paul share the gospel message of redemption and reconciliation, he shares a message of the hope for this life. He proclaims the message of “Christ in you which is the hope of glory”. (Col. 1:27). He shared a message of not just Christ crucified but the risen Christ in every believer enabling them to grow, mature, and be made complete in Christ (Col 1:28). For the believers of Ephesus Paul prays:

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.” (Eph 1:18-19)

What difference does God's grace make? His grace makes all the difference for me. Christ alone abounds in greatness of power to bring me peace, freedom, life, hope, and maturity. May our hearts understand our hope and God's glory in our salvation and His great power to keep and empower all those who rely on Him. Christ in you is the hope of glory!

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