

Great
and
Glorious Grace

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The Grace of Justification

STUDY ONE: THE NATURE OF GRACE

1. INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION OF GRACE

The most popular understanding of grace is ‘God’s unmerited favour.’ In the O.T. *chen* is favour (Gen. 6:8; 19:19), whilst *hesed* is loving kindness (Psalm 17:7; 63:3; Isa. 63:7). Whilst God is the God of grace in the O.T. yet no Hebrew word has the full content of the N.T. word *charis*. This greek word linked with graciousness, gracefulness, etc., was Christianised in the same way that the Greek word *agape* (love) was Christianised by the gospel. Acts 20:24 speaks of ‘the gospel of the grace of God’. Grace is God going towards sinful man to do him good. To speak of ‘unmerited favour’ is not to put man down but to warn him against the pride of human achievement.

2. The God of All Grace

Grace is never used in the plural. There are no ‘graces’. God is the God of all grace (I Pet. 5:10). Grace does not exist apart from Him and His Son. There is no grace of creation for all grace is God’s aid to helpless man in his salvation, sanctification and glorification. It is generally a restoring work. See salutations of the Epistles of the N.T. Grace is needed because man can do no pleasing works, or from himself (Ephes. 2:8–9; II Tim. 1:9–10; Titus 2:4–5). Grace is always with peace (N.T. letter-salutations) and truth (John 1:14). There is one grace but in order to understand its various works we have the following divisions:

(i) The Grace of Justification

Because man—being a sinner—cannot justify himself, God does. See Romans 1:19–17, 3:19–24; Gal. 2:16–21. Man is first justified by grace, then receives this work of grace by faith (Rom.5:1).

(ii) The Grace of Sanctification

Whatever is of faith is first of grace, for grace precedes faith and brings it to (believing) action. Salvation is by faith (cf. Acts 15:8,9,15) and so is sanctification (Acts 26:18). From I Corinthians 6:9–11 and Titus 3:4–7 we see holiness of life comes from grace, through faith.

(iii) The Grace of the Church

It may be better to say ‘grace in or on—the church’ rather than ‘grace of the church. Acts 4:33 shows great grace upon the church. The context shows what it was—love and unity amongst the brethren, and power for proclaiming the Gospel. There was always grace for living in the church (Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 20:32). It was through the grace of God that the church (a) ministered the word of God (Ephes 3:1–11), and (b) used the gifts (Rom. 12:3–13).

(iv) The Grace of Glorification

Peter speaks of ‘the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ’ (I Pet. 1:13). In other places this grace (of resurrection, eternal life, inheritance, glorification, priesthood, etc.) is spoken of and so is anticipated by faith and hope.

3. Conclusion on Grace

In the N.T. everything is accomplished through grace, i.e. the calling election of man, the redemption of man, and the glorification of man. Without grace man cannot live. His struggle is to live in God’s grace and not in his own–man’s– achievement. Grace is unacceptable to the natural man, and the person in Christ is always fighting a battle to accept the fact of grace–God’s goodness to undeserving man.

STUDY TWO: FORMS OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION

1. INTRODUCTION: THE DRIVE FOR SELF-JUSTIFICATION

Every human being—if honest—know that he or she has a drive for self-justification. This is seen in Genesis 3 as man and woman fell. In Genesis 4 Cain and Abel show two approaches to sacrifice—one of self-justification, the other of faith in grace (cf. Heb. 11:4). Where we have fallen short of the mark (Rom. 3:23) we seek to show we haven't. Because of guilt we cannot admit we have been wrong. We oppose justification by faith because it implies that man is not capable of saving himself (cf. Ephes. 2:8–9; II Tim. 1:9–10; Titus 2:4–5).

2. A CLEAR EXAMPLE OF SELF JUSTIFICATION

Luke 18:8–14. Note the elements:

- (i) Some justified themselves and so despised others,
- (ii) the Pharisee was qualified to worship in the court of sacrifice, and the taxgatherer wasn't,
- (iii) the Pharisee felt justified by his own works (cf. Psalm 143:2; Job 14:4; 15:14; Gal. 2:16), although even works of the law never justified anyone,
- (iv) the taxgatherer was in state of repentance and faith, and
- (v) the taxgatherer was justified, and not the Pharisee.

3. 'NOT HAVING MY OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS'

- (i) David and his righteousness, with and through repentance. See Psalm 32:1–4; Psalm 51.
- (ii) See King Saul, and I Samuel 15. Admission without repentance is a matter of remorse, of guilt but not grace (cf. II Cor 7:10)
- (iii) See Paul and Philippians, 3:6–10. Note Paul's dread of ever having 'my own righteousness'.
- (iv) See Peter and his reversion, Galatians 2:11–14, 3:10–12; Deut. 27:26. Cf. Galatians 5:3-4.

4. CONCLUSION: SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE HUMAN BARRIER TO GOD'S GRACE

The examples above show us that man tries by every means to justify himself, rather than face the fact that he needs the grace of God.

NCTM, Monday Night Class, 15th. February, 1st. Term, 1981, G.Bingham

STUDY THREE: MAN'S TERRIBLE DILEMMA

1. THE DILEMMA OF MAN

Man's dilemma—in particular fallen man's dilemma—before God is that God is holy and man is unholy. Man has guilt and since it is guilt of the law it must be punished. Both the law and God's holiness demand that punishment. Man can do nothing to do nothing to obliterate his sins and guilt, nor can he make himself into a non-sinner. He cannot reverse the past or control the future. He has no moral power to change himself. In the face of God's holiness man is doomed to judgement from which he cannot recover.

We now look at the two elements which place him this dilemma, i.e. (i) the fallenness of man, and (ii) the holiness of God.

2. THE SINFULNESS OF MAN

- (i) Man is dead to God, i.e. relationally dead to God (Gen. 2:17; 3:2–6; Ephes. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; cf. II Cor. 5:15).
- (ii) Man is separated from God by his sin (Isa. 59:2), and so hostile to Him (Col. 1:21; Rom. 1:30; Rom. 5:10) and without Him (Ephes. 2:11–12).
- (iii) Man is wholly a sinner (Rom. 5:12; Rom 3:23; Ephes. 2:1–3), and is under judgement for his sin (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:26–27), and cannot rescue himself from the penalty and judgement of sin.
- (iv) Man is morally polluted (Mark 7:20–23; cf. Jer. 17:9), and cannot cleanse himself. See Isaiah 57:19–21.
- (v) Man is under the wrath or curse of God (Rom. 1:18ff.; Rom. 7:1; Gal. 3:10). There is nothing man can do to neutralise this curse.
- (vi) Man cannot justify himself by the doing of (so-called) good works (Ephes. 2:8–9; II Tim. 1:9–10; Titus 3:5; cf. Luke 16:15; 18:9; Isa.64:6).

3. THE IMMUTABLE HOLINESS OF GOD

By 'immutable' we mean 'unchanging'. That is God does not accommodate evil. His holiness is the basis and reason for his wrath when man attacks His holiness by his own impurity. I John 1:5; Isaiah 6:3; 57:15; Ezekiel 28:215; Ezekiel 36:22 Hosea 11:9; 11:12; Habakkuk 1:13 are some of the references which speak (a) of God's innate holiness, and (b) of His wrath upon evil. See also Romans 1:18–32.

What we have to grasp is (a) God's holiness must pour out wrath on evil, and set about to destroy all that is evil, and (b) God's holiness is also a redeeming holiness (especially where people come under covenant grace), as in Isaiah 14:14; 47:4.

God as holy and righteous must judge man in his sin, and bring judgement upon him. God's wrath gives man up to his own sin and destruction (Rom. 1:18, 24, 26, 28). 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behind iniquity' does not mean God is too squeamish to look on evil, but that looking upon it He judges and punishes it. God says, 'I will be no means clear the guilty,' Exod. 34:7; Nahum 1:3).

4. Man Too Morally Weak to Do Anything About His Sin

Man is a slave to sin (John 8:34; Rom. 6:23) and does not even have a will to turn from his sin, and should he will to do so cannot do so. Romans 5:6 says, 'While we were yet weak', and the word weak means 'utterly without strength'. The law gives him knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20) but it is too weak to help him (Rom. 8:3).

5. God, By Grace, Justifies the Ungodly

In this study we will not pursue the act of justifying grace, but assure ourselves that—according to Romans 3:21–26 justifies the sinner—by grace, and this is received by the sinner by faith.

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STUDY FOUR: THE GRACE OF THE CROSS—I: THE PENALTY PAID

1. INTRODUCTION: THE PENALTY OF SIN

Sin has four elements—its power, penalty, pervading presence, and its pollution. These four are inextricably linked. For example the power of sin lies in its guilt (Rom. 6:12–14; I Cor. 15:56; cf. Prov. 5:22-23; John 8:34), whilst pollution brings shame and slavery.

- (i) The penalty of sin relates to law (Rom. 3:19–20; Gal. 3:10, 13; cf. Gal. 2:19), and is also known as ‘the curse’ (Gal. 3:10, 13; cf. Deut. 27:26)..
- (ii) The penalty of sin is death (Rom. 6:7, 23; Ezek. 18:20; Heb. 9:27; Rom. 1:32). In Revelation 20: 14 and 21:8 ‘the second death’ is mentioned which is the ultimate punishment of sin.
- (iii) Man’s sin is primarily against God (Psalm 51:4), and deserves and receives God’s wrath (Rom. 1:18–32; 2:4–5; I Thess. 1:10; Psalm 7:11; Ezek. 7:8). This wrath can also be known as ‘the curse’.

2. Christ as God’s Propitiation Bears the Sins of Humanity

- (i) Sin bearing was a sacrificial action well known in the O.T. Cf. Leviticus chs. 4 and 5.
- (ii) Prophetically sin-bearing was predicted (Isa. 53; I Pet. 2:24; cf. I Pet. 1:10–11; John 1:29).
- (iii) Christ became the propitiatory sacrifice. See Romans 3:24; I John 4:10: cf. I John 2:2).
- (iv) His sacrifice was ‘to bear the sins of many’, and to be ‘numbered with the transgressors’.
- (v) God initiated this propitiation (I John 4:10; Rom. 3:24; II Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:6, 10).

3. The Bearing Was the Taking of the Wrath Which Was on Sin

The wrath of God as seen in Romans 1:24, 26, 28 is the same as ‘the curse’ in Galatians 3:10, 13. He suffered all, endured, and completed the action of taking guilt and pollution upon himself, bearing it to extinction, so that, ‘It is [was] finished’, cf. Rom. 8:1; 3:24.

STUDY FIVE: THE GRACE OF THE CROSS–II: PURIFICATION ACHIEVED

1. THE NATURE OF MAN’S IMPURITY

Man, created in the image of God, must be pure as God is pure, holy as He is holy (Lev.11:44; cf. I Pet. 1:15. Nothing that is unclean will see God (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14; Rev. 21:8; 22:11). He that is pure is blessed, (i) in seeing God (Matt. 5:8, Psalm 24:1–3; Rev. 22:4), and (ii) in seeing things as they are (Titus 1:15).

Sometimes scholars distinguish between the impurity of sin and the guilt of sin, but see Jeremiah 2:22; 33:8; Psalm 32:5 and Psalm 51:5ff. especially where guilt and pollution are both discussed. See also Isaiah 6:1-7 where guilt and pollution are both one.

God’s holiness is His separatedness from all that is evil and impure, and at the same time His action is destroying evil; and impurity.

2. Man Under Judgement Because of Impurity and Pollution

Man’s guilt and impurity are one together, and man is denied entrance into the Holy City and the presence of God when he is guilty and impure (see section 1–above). Man’s heart is impure (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:20f.), and even his works which he thinks to be pure are unclean (Isa. 65:6; Luke 16:15). There is no known method of purifying the heart (Jer. 2:22 cf. 4:14).

3. The Promises and Statements of Cleansing

(i) In the O.T. some promises are: Isaiah 4:2-4; Ezekiel 36:24–28; Zechariah 13:1, and in the N.T. John 1:29. Since promises of taking away of guilt are linked then Matthew 26:28 becomes a promise of cleansing. (ii) Statements of cleansing are many for in the O.T. promises are really statements, e.g. Ezekiel 36:24–28 and linked statements. Hebrews takes up the whole matter in chapters 8–10, whilst other Scriptures such as I Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:22 assure us of cleansing through Christ and the Spirit.

4. The Cross and the Cleansing of Human Pollution

Hebrews 1:3 states that Christ–through the Cross–made purification for sins. That the blood of Christ cleanses is the theme of Hebrews chapters 8–11, of I John 1:7, and of Revelation 7:14. Hebrews 9:14 speaks of the conscience being purified from dead works (i.e. sins) by the blood of Christ. The death, then, is the centre of cleansing. This could only be so if Christ had our sins laid upon him (Isa. 53:6, 11), had become sin (II Cor. 5:17). This means that he became one with man (Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Rom. 6:6; Gal. 3:10, 13), and so was an object of pollution. It was by taking the pollution and defilement into himself in the forms of human iniquity and the guilt of sin that his

holy conscience battled with these elements and destroyed them—'the enzymes eat the dirt'. In this way he 'made purification for sins', and takes away the sin of the world, and purifies the human conscience., i.e. he effected the catharsis of human pollution, so that now man may face God by the grace of cleansing.

Thus I Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5 and Hebrews 9:14 (cf. Rev. 7:14) speak of the purification which is effected in us as the fruit of the Cross, by means application by Christ and the Holy Spirit.

STUDY SIX: THE GRACE OF THE CROSS—III: THE ENEMIES DEFEATED

1. INTRODUCTION: SINFUL MAN & THE ENEMIES

Section 2 (below) shows us the vast array of enemies which face sinful man. We note that they - for the most part - conceal themselves because primarily Satan, the flesh and sin are deceivers. We should realise that we are responsible for being under their power. Man needs to extricate himself from these enemies. However he cannot liberate himself for he is the slave or victim of these terrible 'lords' which dominate him. For this principle see John 8:34; Rom. 6:16; Prov. 5:22-23; II Tim. 2:26. For man's innate weakness, see Rom. 5:6; Rom. 7:13-15; Isaiah 40:6-9; I Pet. 1:24-25.

2. THE POWER AND MEANS OF KEEPING MAN IN BONDAGE

Had man not sinned he would never have been subject to any of the enemies. It is the guilt of sin which keeps man in bondage. This can be seen in relation to the enemies:-

- (i) Sin. John 6:34 with Rom. 6:12-14; I Cor. 15:55-56; Psalm 32:3-4.
- (ii) Satan. Jude 9 (cf. John 14:30-31), Heb. 2:14-15 (cf. Luke 11:21f.).
- (iii) The world powers and the World. Col. 2:14-15; Gal. 1:4; 6:14.
- (iv) The flesh. Rom. 8:12; Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 2:11-15.
- (v) Death. Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 6:23; I Cor.; 15:55-56; cf. I John 4:16-18.
- (vi) The Law. Gal. 3:10; Exod 34:7b; Rom. 3:19-20; Gal. 2:19.
- (vii) Conscience. Rom. 2:15-16; Heb. 10:2, 22.
- (viii) The wrath of God. Rom. 1:18; Psalm. 7:11; 38:1ff; I Thess. 1:10.

If we examine all these references, and their implications we will be driven to see that it is only guilt of sin which holds man in bondage to the enemies.

3. THE NATURE OF HUMAN GUILT

In Psalm 32:5 says, 'thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin', Isaiah 6:7, 'Your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven,' Jer. 33:8, 'I will cleanse them from the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.' 'Guilt of sin' then is significant. It is inseparable for sin. There is no sin without guilt, or guilt without sin. The two are one, and their components are such things as dread, fear, uneasiness, confusion, sense of wrongdoing, rebellion, self-justification and self atonement, heaviness, etc. Guilt is (i) objective, i.e. something we have done which is culpable, and (ii) subjective, i.e. something we 'feel'. The latter is not trustworthy, being no indication of the extent of our guilt. Guilt, strictly speaking, is punishment, hence 'I will forgive all the guilt of their sin,' must mean, 'I will remit the punishment.'

4. THE DESTRUCTION OF MAN'S GUILT: THE DEFEAT OF THE ENEMIES

Matt. 26:28 linked the cross with Jer. 31:31-34 (cf. Ezek. 36:24-28). It was for the remission of sins, i.e. remission of guilt. The following references show Christ bore both sin and guilt on the cross:- I Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Isaiah 53:4-6; 10-12; II Cor. 5:21; and became a curse for us (Gal. 3:10-14), making purification of our sins in their pollution and guilt (Heb. 1:3; cf. Heb. 9:14; 10:22; I Pet. 1:22).

What happened on the cross met the demand of the law (Gal. 2:19-20; Rom. 3:24ff; I John 4:10; Gal. 3:13-14). It also took the accusation of all evil against mankind (John 14:30-31; cf. Jude 9, Luke 22:53) upon which both Satan (Heb. 2:14-15), and the evil worldly powers (Col. 2:14-15) depend for their hold over mankind. By being made sin (II Cor. 5:21), fallen mankind (Rom. 6:6), the flesh (Gal. 5:24), and thus bearing human guilt, Christ defeated the enemy by his death and resurrection. The death and resurrection are the one act of atonement (Rom.4:25) by which all enemies are defeated. This Christ's assertions as found in John 12:31; Luke 11:21ff.; John 14:30-31 and 16:11 were fulfilled, and Zechariah's prophetic words of Luke 1:71-75 were justified.

4. THE ENEMIES ARE DEFEATED TOTALLY BY THE ATONEMENT

The one factor by which man is held in bondage - guilt - was dealt with in Christ's suffering. Now the enemies have no hold upon mankind.

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STUDY SEVEN: THE GRACE OF JUSTIFICATION BY RESURRECTION

1. INTRODUCTION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

The apostolic message was 'Jesus is Lord!' This was the equivalent of saying, 'Jesus has risen!' Romans 10:9 shows that to believe in the Lordship because of the resurrection was salvation to the one believing. Christ had told the disciples he must be crucified and rise again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). He showed them the Scriptures which testified to this after he had risen (Luke 24: 25–27, 44–45). The significance of this would have been apparent to the disciples—the Jesus who had died on the Friday was alive in the Sunday, not just revived from death, but having died and was alive for evermore (Luke 24: 41; John 20:19, 26). The meaning was clear—Jesus had died for sins as he had said (Matt. 26:28), and now he was alive so that must mean he was stronger than sin because he was stronger than death, therefore his death had been efficacious.

The Message of the Resurrection Goes On

The proclamation of the Gospel (kerugma) in the Acts was that of Lordship-Resurrection. Peter and Paul's sermons are based on this combination. Paul shows from I Corinthians 1:17–25 that the Cross was central to his message of salvation and his letters confirm this, e.g. Romans chapters 1–8. Acts 13: 26–41 is Paul's first recorded sermon, and in it he majors on the resurrection, and then draws the conclusion in verses 38–39 that on the basis of the resurrection he can declare, (a) the forgiveness of sins, and (b) justification from the guilt of the law.

The Resurrection, Forgiveness and Justification

Forgiveness and justification are inseparable (cf. Romans 4:1–12; Ps. 32:12). In I Corinthians 15:12–19 Paul points out that if Christ had not risen from the dead, then so far as the forgiveness of sins is concerned he would have died in vain. Had Christ borne the sins of mankind but had been killed by death, then he would not have borne the sins effectively. His resurrection was needed to effect this, his rising proving his power over death, and so over sin, and the guilt of the law. This is shown effectively in I Corinthians 15:55–56.

The key verse is Romans 4:25, 'Jesus our Lord was put to death for our sins and raised for our justification'. This is closely linked with Galatians 2:16–21 where the law kills Paul (in the Cross; cf. Rom. 7:9) in the death of Christ, and Christ raises him from the dead—having borne his sins—so that now he is alive. The parallel to this is Romans 6:7–10, i.e. we died when Christ died, and rose when he rose, and so are justified from sin.

Further confirmation is found in Colossians 2:14–25 and Romans 3:24ff. These passages show that the guilt or accusation of the law was dealt with in the Cross and confirmed in the Resurrection.

The Grace of Resurrection in Justification

We must not think of the act of the Cross and Resurrection merely as a theological matter. It was a matter of the Father's initiating the terrible death of the Cross (Acts 2:22–23; I John 4:10; II Cor. 5:21) and the Son's participation in dying, the tomb, and the rising again. Thus grace is the active goodness of God as He sets forth His Son to be a propitiation, and the active goodness of the Son as carries out the work of destroying guilt of sin, satisfying the demands of the law, thus justifying the sinful and ungodly who now believe.

STUDY EIGHT: THE GRACE OF THE CROSS–IV: MAN JUSTIFIED

THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE UNGODLY

We come now to the crux of the matter. All men are sinners, actually sinning (Rom. 3:23) and in Adam all have sinned (Rom. 5:12), i.e. by original sin.. By their sin all are doomed to judgement and death—'the second death'—since all will be judged (Rev. 20:11–15). The wrath of God is upon sinners (Rom. 1:18; I Thess. 1:10). Yet God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5; 5:8). Romans 3:19 (cf. Gal. 2:16f; Ps. 143:2) shows that the law can only bring the sinner to guilt or accountability and not justify him. We have seen that sin separates man from God, and that man is not truly man until he is one with God (John 17:3; I John 5:20). From Romans 3:9–18 and 5:5–10 we see man is an enemy of God, is ungodly (without God and anti-God), is a sinner and is under the wrath of God. We have noted that his dilemma is that he cannot justify himself. Exodus 34:7 and Nahum 1:2 say that God will not acquit the guilty. Habakkuk 1:13 says God cannot look on sin, i.e. without judging it. Romans 1:18 speaks of the constant revelation of that wrath, and I Thessalonians 1:10 says it is still coming. Isaiah 59:2 says sin separates man from God, and Isaiah 64:6 says man's so called 'righteous deeds' are but as filthy rags, i.e. nothing man does can justify himself.

Why Man Needs Justification

From God's point of view man is doomed unless somehow he can be justified. When man recognises that he is thrown into fear, or anger, or both. Man needs justification to be delivered from doom. Yet there is also his need to know God and be one with him. The 'whole of man is to fear God and keep his commandments' (Eccles. 12:13), and man has not done this, nor can he. He must live with guilt unless he is justified. He has a heart need of God, whether he will admit that or not. When the Spirit comes and convicts man of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:7–11) he is ready to receive the truth of grace, i.e. that of himself he can do nothing but God's gift of grace will redeem him (Ephes. 2:6, 8; Rom. 3:24; Rom. 5:17–21).

The Way of Justification

In Romans 1:16–3:24 Paul shows the way of justification, i.e. (i) man is a sinner under wrath, and this includes Jews as well as Gentiles for none has kept the law truly, (ii) God has—so to speak—two righteousnesses, the first being that of the law, and the second being justifying righteousness, i.e. that righteousness which accounts a sinner to be righteous on the basis of the propitiatory death of Christ. In this second righteousness it is seen that no human sin has ever been passed over for all sins receives its judgement in the death of Christ, and so nothing remains unjudged, all sins receives God's due wrath upon it. Christ, in fact, receives the wrath and so 'expends' God's wrath without it destroying the sinner. This is primarily an act of God the

Father, and secondly, though co-operatively, the act of the Son. In fact both act together. This justification is to be believed as God's plan to redeem the sinner, and it must be believed in, and received—by faith.

Justification is By Grace and by Faith

As we have previously seen grace is always prior to faith, but faith must receive or appropriate what grace offers, i.e. the free gift of justification (Rom. 3:24). This has been the case—at least from the time of Abel—but only in Christ has true satisfaction been made to God for the violation of His holiness. Leviticus 17:11 shows that even sacrifice is a gift of God, and indeed Romans 3:24 and I John 4:10 show that propitiation is primarily an act of God in which the Son acts, but God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:19–21) for He made Christ to be sin, and laid on him the iniquity of us all. Faith sees and appropriates this act of grace and so a man is justified.

The Fruits of Justification

In a way of speaking there are two sets of fruit, (i) the immediate fruit of justification, of acquittal from the charge of sin, and so on 'no condemnation'. This brings immediate relief and joy as also the knowledge of freedom (Rom. 6:7, 'He that has died is justified from sin', cf. Psalm 32:1–2; Rom. 4:7–8) and, (ii) the second set of fruit is the continuing in the truth of 'no condemnation', and the movement into tribulation, testing and growing in maturity (Rom. 5:2–5). When we read Romans 6 we learn that we must go on reckoning on our death with Christ and our resurrection to life with him, and so live in the truth of this. As by faith we received the gift of grace, so by faith we go on reckoning on the fact of our justification. Galatians 2:11–21 warns us against leaving faith in grace, to faith in our own works under law. Galatians 5:1–6 warns us against this.

STUDY NINE: THE GRACE THAT IS NO GRACE

‘RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN’

In II Corinthians 6:1–2 Paul enjoins his listeners not to ‘accept the grace of God in vain’. Jerusalem Bible has, ‘not to neglect the grace of God that you have received,’ and N.E.B has, ‘do not let it go for nothing’. It must mean we can receive the grace of God ‘in vain’ which means ‘in an empty way’. The question is, ‘How can this happen?’ The following are some of the answers.

Empty Receiving of Grace

Note: The principle in all the following methods of receiving the grace of God in an empty way is man’s desire to have part in his own salvation. This saves his ego, particularly the religious part of it.

- (i) We simply salvation by grace by doing nothing about it, perhaps intending to accept it eventually. Hebrews 2:3 shows the danger not in rejecting but in neglecting so great salvation.
- (ii) Having received the grace of God in justification we then set about trying to justify ourselves by law, by works of our own. That is we think that we sustain, maintain and retain justification by what we do! For such efforts see Gal. 1:6–9; 2:16–21; 3:1–5, 10; 4:8–11; 5:4.
- (iii) We become ‘antinomian’, i.e. reject the principle of obedience to the law altogether. See Romans 6:1f; II Peter 2:19f. Titus 2:11–14 rejects this view altogether, showing that salvation produces a radical and dynamic change of life.
- (iv) Some are confused in thinking that justification is by grace, but that sanctification is by works, i.e. our own works when both are by grace (Acts 26:17–18; Heb. 10:14; I Cor. 6:9–11). People who hold this wrong view of grace can never be sure they are truly justified until they are sanctified, i.e. until they see the fruits of sanctification. This being so they will never feel justified since no one comes to complete practical holiness of living. Note: Our next term’s studies are on the grace of sanctification.
- (v) Some see grace as ‘a power’. They feel that it is a power which they can use. In fact they see it as the power of the Holy Spirit, and Hebrews 10:29 speaks of ‘the Spirit of grace’. (Note: The term ‘Spirit of grace’ can mean, ‘the Spirit given to believing man by the grace of God.’). They think, then, that they have left saving grace, and have moved into an active grace of doing works through the use of power. They leave behind their beginnings—the Cross and the Resurrection—thinking them not to be present working powers, and they ‘get on with the job’, by doing works, using gifts and helping others. In fact there continues to be the power of the Cross (I Cor. 1:18) and the power of the resurrection (Phil. 3:10), and they are the grace which goes on working, i.e. ‘the word of His grace’. Paul saw grace as the power of God and that his work proceeded from that grace alone (I Cor. 15:10; cf. II Cor. 12:7–10).

- (vi) Some speak of using ‘the means of grace’ such as prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, the sacraments—and so on. They think that these are means to grace, when they are only means of grace, i.e. the means which grace uses to assist us, and not what we use in order to ‘get’ grace!
- (vii) We need to read the 7 letters in chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation. At least five churches thought they were working under grace when they were not wholly doing so, and were told where they were wrong. This highlights the point that at any time we may think we are receiving the grace of God in a full way, and are not.

Receiving the Grace of God in a Full Way

When we remember that grace is God Himself working, that we can accomplish nothing of ourselves, and grace is not as commodity to be used by us, then we will remain humbly dependent upon grace, and in that way will know we need grace. In receiving it gratefully we will see the fruit of grace in our lives.

STUDY TEN: LIVING IN THE GRACE OF THE CROSS

‘RECEIVE NOT THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN’

In our last Study (9) we saw how we can receive the grace of God in an empty way. The following points will help us to go on living in grace, and ‘by grace alone’.

(i) The grace of God has brought us to salvation

Titus 2:11–14; Romans 3:24; and Ephesians 2:8–10 (cf. Acts 15:17; 20:24) show us that we are justified by grace, through faith, without human works. This means all our past is dealt with, i.e. the penalty of our sins before the law. We are free to live without condemnation (Rom. 8:2).

(ii) The grace of God has killed us as we were

Galatians 2:20 (cf. Rom. 6:6) shows us that we have been crucified with Christ. Because of our sinfulness we needed to be crucified. Anyone who has not gone through the Cross has not yet come under the grace of God. (This can be seen in I Pet. 2:24; II Cor. 5:21). When we see how evil we were we see the vastness of grace (Rom. 5:12–21).

(iii) The grace of God that daily defeats the power of sin

Romans 6:1–14 (cf. I Cor. 15:56) shows us that since the penalty of sin has been borne, then we have no guilt (Rom. 8:2) and are no longer under the curse (Gal. 3:13–14), and so are in a blessed state (Rom. 4: 6–8; Psalm 32:1–2). The ‘blessed state’ aids us to live in joy and assurance, whilst the absence of guilt (also a state of joy) breaks the power of sin, since sin’s power lies in guilt. Thus, provided we live by faith in Christ’s justifying work we remain in grace. Justification cannot be undone, but we can fail to live in its fulness.

(iv) The grace of God daily defeats the world

Galatians 1:4 shows Christ gave himself for our sins and so delivered us from this present evil age (the world-system). We are crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14), and it to us. It does not attract us, nor us, it. Col. 2:14–15 shows that the work of the Cross defeated the powers of the world. Hebrews 2:14–15 shows that the Cross defeated ‘the prince of this world’, i.e. Satan. Because of the continuing power of the Cross we live daily in grace.

(v) The grace of God daily defeats the power of the flesh

Galatians 5:24 (cf. Rom. 8:12) shows us the flesh was crucified at the Cross, i.e. by the destruction of our guilt of sin. When we walk in grace by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 18; Rom. 8:13) we are no longer under the law and so the power of the flesh. Far from doing the works of the flesh we bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19–23).

(vi) The grace of God daily keeps us in holiness

This is the theme of our studies of Term 2 so that we will not open up the subject, but note it is so (Rom. 6:15–23).

(vii) The grace of God goes on keeping us in all things

See Acts 4:33; 13:43; 20:32. In all the Epistles the apostles commend their readers to the grace of God.

We Live in Grace When We Exercise Ministry

Grace is given for ministry, and not only for justification., This is seen in passages such as Ephesians 3:1–11; Romans 12:3f; I Corinthians 15:10. See Acts 4:33; 6:5; 14:26Ñamongst other references.

The Defence Against Not Living in Grace

Study 9 showed how we can slip from grace, though grace does not desert us. The primary problem is the thinking we have that somehow we are sufficient of ourselves. We are not sufficient of ourselves (II Cor. 3:5), but His grace is sufficient for us (II Cor. 12:1—10). Philippians 3:6 is the key, i.e. we must never think we have righteousness of ourselves.

The Grace of Holiness

STUDY ONE: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS-I

MAN NEEDS HOLINESS

The Nature of Holiness

We all have some idea of holiness, i.e. moral purity, cleanness, and a way of life consistent with this. In regard to God holiness is separatedness from all that is evil and profane (worldly), but His holiness is dynamic, i.e. it sets out to destroy all evil, 'I am the Holy One of Israel—your Redeemer'. In regard to man holiness is first creational, and when lost cannot be restored by self-effort or self-atonement. God sanctifies Israel (Exod. 19:5–6), and His church (John 17:17: cf. I Pet. 2:9–10), i.e. makes them holy. Holiness is consecration in this case, i.e. setting an object, person or people apart for His special use. Holiness comes from purification by God (e.g. through the Cross), and at the same time men and women are consecrated (called sanctification), whilst God works for their practical holiness of living. This covers holiness in general.

The Demand for Holiness

(i) The demand for holiness comes primarily from God (Lev. 11:44; Exod. 19:5–6; I Pet. 1:13–16). There can be no relationship or union with God apart from holiness, by nature of the case. The second demand for holiness comes from one's self. Just as in the matter of bodily cleansing a person is refreshed and renewed, so in the cleansing of mind, heart and spirit. No one is truly free until holy. Human beings seek to effect holiness, but by nature of the case they cannot.

(ii) Without holiness no one can see God (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14; Psa. 24:3-5) for impurity affects the mind (Psa. 18:25–26; Isa. 5:20–21; Titus 1:15). Uncleaness bans man forever from God (Isa. 59:2; Rev. 21:27; 22:11).

God is the Prime Mover in Holiness

God is the 'the Holy One of Israel'. He is above all, yet dwells in man to revive him i.e. to bring him to full life (Isa. 57:15). Christ is 'the Holy One of God', and the Spirit is 'the Holy Spirit'. God created man pure (Gen. 1:26–27). Because man wanted to become as God and not simply remain like God he became impure (Jer. 17:9; Isa. 57:20–21; Mark 7:20f.). God's grace has not only forgiven and justified him from his sins, but He has also sanctified him by (a) purification (I Cor. 6:11; Heb. 1:3; 9:14), but also consecrated him to Himself (I Cor. 6:11; I Pet. 1:2) and enables him to live in practical holiness (Phil. 1:6; 2:12–13; II Cor., 7:1; I John 3:3). These things we will see as our terms studies proceed. God indeed sanctifies by grace'!

NCTM. Monday Night Classes, 2nd. Term, May 2nd 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY TWO: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS–II

WE MUST ALL BE PURIFIED

God's Elective Grace

By 'elective grace' we mean that before time God planned our holiness or sanctification. This is seen in Ephesians 1:3–7; I Peter 1:2–3; Romans 1:6–7; I Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; II Thessalonians 2:13–14. In this sense sanctification is before justification, although in another sense holiness is a fruit of justification.

The Grace of Purification

- (i) Purification will mean nothing to us unless first we see (a) we are impure, being defiled by sin, and (b) we can do nothing about purifying ourselves. That we are impure cannot be seen just by seeking to look at, or for, our impurity. Only by seeing God can we see our own impurity (Isa. 6:5 ; Luke 5:8). All forms of guilt are uncleanness (Psa. 32:5; Isa. 6:7; Jer. 33:8; Heb. 9:14; I John 1:9).
- (ii) The impurity of man is seen in the following passages: Jeremiah 17:9; Isaiah 4:4; 57:20–21; Ezekiel 36: 25; Mark 7:20–23; cf. Romans 3:9–18. This impurity is indelible.
- (iii) Man has a (ontological) need for purity, i.e. he must be purified. He is forced to resort to ritual cleanings by–by nature of the case–they cannot satisfy. David expressed the need for cleansing (Psa. 51:6–10). Since man cannot purify himself, then it must be by grace that God does it.
- (iv) The sacrifices cleansed the offerers in the Old Testament. Cf. Leviticus 4, 26, 31; 5:5–6, 10, 13, 16, 18 (where forgiveness is given) and Hebrews 9:22 where sins are cleansed by blood (cf. I John 1:7, 9 10:22).).
- (v) Promises of purification were made in the O.T beyond the O.T. sacrifices (Zech. 13:1; Isa. 4:4; Ezek. 24:25. They are often looked upon as accomplished (Isa. 1:18, 43:25; 44:22). See also John 1:29 and Matthew 26:28.
- (vi) Christ effected purification (Heb. 1:3; 9:14). This purification is received by repentance and faith (Acts 3:19; 15:8–9; 22:16; I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5–7; I Pet. 1:2, 22; Rev. 7:14).

Conclusion: Cleansing is by Grace, Received by Faith

We are impure. The impure cannot stand before a holy God. Man cannot effect his own cleansing. God effects it by the Cross. The Spirit applies the work of the Cross as man has faith. The cleansing of the person is the basis for holy living. All things are by grace, or they would not be sufficient. Grace is total; that is, we are thoroughly cleansed through the grace of the Cross, specially as this grace comes to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit

NCTM. Monday Night Classes, 2nd. Term, May 9th., 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY THREE: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS—III

GRACE OF DELIVERANCE FROM AN UNCLEAN CONSCIENCE

Introduction to the Matter of Conscience

The following Scriptures speak of ‘a good or clear conscience’, I Timothy 1:5. Acts 24:16; II Timothy 1:3, I Timothy 1:19, and Romans 9:1. In Acts 24:16 Paul said, ‘I always take pains to have a clear conscience towards God and man’. It is certain then that Christian man can have a good and clear (pure) conscience. In order to understand what this means we must examine the matter of conscience.

Conscience was originally *inwit*, i.e. internal knowledge and discernment of oneself and what was one was doing. The Latin word can be translated ‘co-knowledge’, i.e. knowledge of oneself, or awareness. It also carried the idea of co-awareness, i.e. with another. The Greek word *syneidesis* also carries that idea. On the widest sense we can say that when man is aware of God he becomes truly aware of himself, so of right and wrong in regard to himself. Sibbes the Puritan said, ‘Conscience is the knowledge of God’, and Meander said, ‘Conscience is God in every man.’

The Old Testament and Conscience

There is no word in the O.T. for conscience. The closest is ‘heart’ and heart to the Israelite meant his whole being, i.e. knowing, willing and feeling. David spoke of his heart smiting him (I Sam. 24:5; II Sam. 24:10; cf. Job. 27:6) which is equal to conscience.

Conscience and Law

Jeremiah 17:1 speaks of sin written indelibly on the heart. This sensing of one’s evil—or good—comes through the conscience. The terms of reference are always law. Now law may be God’s or man’s and only the enlightened conscience can discern the difference. Conscience per se is not necessarily a good guide.

The Power of Conscience

Conscience is probably the most potent factor or faculty in man. By reason of the conscience man can be kept in misery (cf. Psalm 32:3–4) or lifted to heights of joy. It is the ‘contact point’ of both the Holy Spirit and Satan. P.T. Forsyth has said, ‘Conscience is the most universal thing of all. It makes man, makes him one, and makes him eternal. That which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world.’ The following references show the power of the conscience,

To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. Titus 1:15.

By rejecting conscience certain people have made shipwreck of their faith. I Timothy 1:19.

Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. Hebrews 10:22.

The blood of Christ purify your conscience from dead works. Heb. 9:14.

through the pretensions of liar whose consciences are seared. I Timothy 4:2.

If the worshippers had been once cleansed, they would have no more consciousness [conscience] of sin. Hebrews 10:2.

their conscience being weak is defiled. I Cor. 8:7–10.

I have served God with a conscience to this day. Acts 23:1.

a clear conscience towards God. Acts 24:16.

My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. Romans 9:1.

Love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. I Tim. 1:5.

holding faith and a good conscience. I Tim. 1:19.

Purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Hebrews 9:14.

our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. Hebrews 10:22.

The Evil, Corrupt and Impure Conscience

This really a conscience which keeps its host constantly conscious of the evil he has committed. When conscious of evil the mind fights the conscience, seeking to subdue it, and so the deceit of sin takes over and hardens the heart (Heb. 3:13–14). The conscience becomes seared (I Tim. 4:2), i.e. insensitive, or it can become morbid, i.e. overly sensitive to failure and so guilty. See Isaiah 5:20–21; 57:20–21. It is a frightening thing to live with an evil conscience, a corrupt conscience, and seared conscience.

The Grace of Purification of the Conscience

A key verse is Hebrews 9:15. With this see Hebrews 10:1–22. Once the conscience is free of ‘dead works’ i.e. sins (Heb. 6:1f.), then the person has a pure or good conscience, out of which issues the love (I Tim. 1:5), true worship (Heb. 9:14; cf. Rev.7:14–15). This conscience operates truly by faith (I Tim. 1:19), in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 9:1), and is a true guide. Titus 1:15 also shows that the pure conscience ‘sees no evil’, i.e. is not critical. Titus 3:3–7 and 2:11–14 should be studied. The advice of Acts 14:16 is a good one. The experience of Romans 9:1 is a safeguard against any wrong use of conscience.

The key to purification is the Cross and the Cross only. It brings a once-for-all cleansing, and at the same time this cleansing is applied daily, even momentarily.

NCTM. Monday Night Classes, 2nd. Term, May 23rd., 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY FOUR: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS-IV

THE FORMS OF HOLINESS

The Ways of Seeing Holiness

We should have recognised by now that both justification and sanctification are acts of God's grace, which we appropriate by faith. We are now going to look at holiness (sanctification) from various angles. Although the Bible is not a systematic-or even a thematic textbook-on theology, yet because we are human, and think in certain ways, it is helpful to set out materials and principles found within the Scriptures. So then we will try to formulate some aspects of holiness.

The Ways in Which We Can Look at Holiness

1. Elective Holiness

It is evident from a number of Bible statements that before time God planned the holiness of his chosen people. Whilst it is not easy for us to understand this, we need to see it is so, otherwise we would have no confidence in a holiness which was unplanned or came from our human endeavours. See Ephes. 1:4; I Pet. 1:2; II Thess. 2:13. Such choice is of course God's grace.

2. Separative Holiness

By this we mean that act of God by which He declares and consecrates sinful people to be not only His righteous but His holy people. We have to say that such choice and calling is of grace, and not human effort. See I Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Rom. 1:7.

3. Crisis or Critical Holiness

This is the act, initiated by God, by which certain persons have the purifying work of the Cross applied to them. By this act they are cleansed of their sinful impurity and its stains, and are made new. Such acts can be washing or cleansing (Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 10:22; I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5). In the O.T. see Isa. 1:18; 4:4; Ezek. 36:25-26; Psa. 51:7, Isa. 6:5-7. This act effects a pure heart (I Tim. 1:5; Titus 1:15), a pure conscience (Heb. 9:14) and a pure mind (II Tim. 2:22). Such a work is preceded by conviction of sin, righteous and judgement through the Spirit (John 16:7-11) out of which come repentance and faith (gifts of God) and so forgiveness of sin and justification. God in His grace elects us to holiness, separates us to Himself and carries out the crisis of cleansing (Acts 15:9; 26:18), so that holiness now becomes a practical experience in our lives.

4. Practical or Experimental Holiness

I Thess. 4:7 states that 'God has not called us for uncleanness but *in* holiness'. The *calling is* holy, and the process of calling is holy. So Peter says, 'as he who called you

is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, "You shall be holy for I am holy." See also II Cor. 7:1; I Thess. 3:12-13; Phil. 1:9-11; Heb. 12:14; II Pet. 3:11-14. We will deal with the outworking of this practical holiness in Study 5 'Practical Holiness Outworked'.

5. Corporate Holiness

By this we mean the holiness which results from being a member of the body of Christ the church- and living in its life of holiness. A good basic passage is I Pet. 2:4-10. When we realise that the church is headed up by Christ, that he is our Prophet, Priest and King, and that we are therefore the (a) prophetic community, (b) the priestly community and (c) the royal (kingly) i.e. the community expressing Christ in his life and actions then it is in these actions that practical holiness is worked out.

6. Eschatological Holiness

The *eschaton* is the last time (or, times) when all things will be brought to a head as God has planned. We see from passages such as Ephes. 5:26-27; Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; Col. 1:22 and I Thess. 5:23-25 that God has not only purposed ultimate holiness but is now accomplishing it. Our holiness will be in the Holy City where only that which is pure is admitted (cf. Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:11) and that which is impure is destroyed.

The Incentives to All Holiness

When we realise the nature of eschatological holiness as well as the present joy and peace of personal holiness then we are motivated or constrained to be holy, live holy lives, and be done with that which is impure. See I John 3:1-3; Rom. 8:29; Rev. 22:4-5 and see them in the light of II Cor. 6:14-7:1.

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STUDY FIVE: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS–V

PRACTICAL HOLINESS OUTWORKED–I

The Call to Holiness

We are called to be holy (I Thess. 1:4–7; I Pet. 1:13–17; I Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7). The call and its appointed fulfilment assures us we have been sanctified by faith, and so encourages us to go on in holiness (cf. II Cor. 6:14–7:1; I John 3:1–3).

The Prophylactic Preparation

Our mindset determines the way we will live. In Romans 5:3–8 Paul talks about the mindset of the flesh, and the mindset of the Spirit. One is death-dealing, the other life-giving. Our mindset can be a preventative against sin and failure. Alertness gives us the edge on invading sin. We ought to be aware of the deceptive nature of sin and all evil (Gen. 3:13–14). We need to look closely at the following injunctions for preparation for winning the battle for holiness:

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Be sober, be watchful (I Pet. 5:6, 8a).

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God (James 4:6–7).

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to thy word. I have laid up thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee (Psa. 119:9–10).

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 Pet. 1:13).

Being strong in the Lord and the power of his might . . .praying with all prayer and supplication (Eph. 6:10, 18a).

Pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17).

Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall (I Cor. 10:12).

Look to yourself lest you, too, be tempted (Gal. 6:1)

Let us not grow weary in well-doing (Gal. 6:9).

Do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17).

Let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works . . . encouraging one another (Heb. 10:24–25).

Let the word of God dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Col. 3:16).

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth (Col. 3:2).

As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him (Col. 2:6).

‘We look not at the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen’ (II Cor. 3:18).

Finally, brethren, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Phil. 4:8).

These passages speak about humility, dependence upon God, preparedness, use of the Lord’s power, awareness of sin’s persistence in action, mutual exhortation and a deliberate setting of the mind upon true things. When a person sins, it is more often than not that he (she) has been dilatory, slack, careless and not on the alert. In one sense sin was committed away back at the point of culpable slackness. See the exhortations of Romans 13:11–14 and Ephes. 5:14. ‘Vigilance is the price of liberty’.

Examples of Failure to Exercise Prophylactic Vigilance

The principle is ‘Having begun in the Spirit are you now made perfect (complete) by the flesh?’ Examples of this are as follows:

- (i) Samson as he gradually gave away his secret.
- (ii) David with Bathsheba. He now ‘went not into battle’.
- (iii) Saul with his growing arrogance (I Samuel ch. 15).
- (iv) Elijah after his great victory at Mount Carmel.
- (v) Demas, after having companied with Paul (Col. 4:14), went the way of the world (II Tim. 4:10).

NCTM. Monday Night Classes, 2nd. Term, June 6th., 1988. G.Bingham

STUDY SIX: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS–VI

PRACTICAL HOLINESS OUTWORKED–II

Constraints to Holy Living

The constraints to living in practical holiness are, (i) i.e. love constrains us to live holy lives (II Cor. 5:14; I John 3:1–3; Phil. 1:9–11), (ii) holy fear is also a constraint (cf. Psalm 130:1–3), (iii) love of purity is also an incentive (Matt. 5:8, Psa. 24:1–3), (iv) love of God’s law (Rom. 7:22; cf. Psa. 1) also inspires us to holy obedience, although, but if this is a legalism, and our obedience does not arise from grace, then such so-called obedience is a bondage.

Ways of Living in Practical Holiness

The following principles are helpful. We must realise that our actions are prompted and aided by God, and dependent upon Him, through the Spirit.

(i) Concentration.

Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 12:2; II Corinthians 3:18 and II Corinthians 4:18 speak of concentrating on Christ, on right things, and on unseen things. See Abraham (Heb. 11:10), Moses (Heb. 11:27), Paul (Phil. 3:12–13), all of us (I Pet. 18; Rom. 5:1–5; I John 3:1–3). This means a matter of suffering (II Cor. 4:7–18; Rom. 8:18). Concentration is also linked with,

(ii) Meditation

This is on God Himself (Psa. 63:1–8; 42:8, 119:55), His works (Psa. 8:3; 112:2; 145:5), His word and His law (Joshua 1:8; Psa 119:15; 23). The opposite of this is James 1:23–24, whilst true meditation is seen in James 1:25. If, then, we meditate, using our time profitably, we will grow in holiness.

(iii) Realisation.

This sometimes called ‘reckoning’ (cf. Rom. 6:11) i.e. knowing (‘we know’, e.g. Rom. 6:6), and acting on the truth, especially of the power that is within us (Ephes. 1:17–19; 3:16, 20; Phil. 4:13; Rom. 8:37).

(iv) Imitation.

Not mimicking, but imitating, knowing it is natural and right to do so, (a) Christ (I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17), (b) the Father (Ephes. 5:1), thus becoming examples (I Thess. 1:7–8, 2:14). We have something practical before us, knowing we cannot go wrong in doing this—by His help.

(v) Habitation.

That is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in us (Gal. 2:20; I John 17:20–21; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25; John 14:15–23; 15:1f). That is we are inhabited by God! This remarkable state is shown to us by the Spirit (I John 3:24; I John 4:13). Indeed Christ dwells in our heart by the Holy Spirit (Ephes. 3:16). Christ dwells in order to bring us to glory (Col. 1:27), the Spirit to holiness and resurrection (Rom. 8:9–11), and the Father also for this purpose (Phil. 1:6; 2:12–13). At the same time we inhabit Him—Father and Son (I Thess. 1:1; John 15:1–8; I John 4:16).

Note: In our next study we will consider further ways of living in practical holiness.

NCTM. Monday Night Classes, 2nd. Term, June 20th., 1988. G.Bingham

STUDY SEVEN: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS—VII

PRACTICAL HOLINESS OUTWORKED—III

Note: These studies are a continuation of the previous study and are numbered continuous with the points set out there.

(vi) Abstinence.

Paul said, 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity' (I Thess. 4:3). For the meaning and use of the word 'abstain', i.e. don't do it,' see Acts 5:20, 29 ('abstain from the pollution of idols and from unchastity'); I Thessalonians 5:22 ('abstain from every appearance of evil') so abstention mean 'lay off from doing'. It is as simple as that, i.e. 'Just don't do it.' In this category comes I Peter 2:11, 'abstain from the passions of the flesh that war against your soul'. This may appear to be oversimplified, but is the same as II Timothy 2:22, 'Shun youthful passions', and I Corinthians 6:18, 'Shun immorality'. Without doubt God gives the power to resist unholiness by ignoring, and refusing any involvement with evil.

(vii) Mortification.

This means the putting to death of evil by a deliberate choice. Of course we need the power of the Holy Spirit to do this (Rom. 8:13), and in him we can do this. In Colossians 3:3–5 Paul says, 'For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: immorality, impurity, passions, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry.'

He means, 'Since you died when Christ died (i.e. you died in his death), don't give life to anything that is evil, but rather destroy it.' He means that we kill what is foreign to our new life. Of course we cannot kill what has not already been killed by the Cross. In Galatians 5:24 Paul says, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.' He means, 'Christ's people see fallen human fleshliness dealt with upon the Cross; their faith sees it there and their faith leaves it there.' In practical terms we simply consider these fleshly things as having been defeated, that we are dead to them, are not under their domination, and we refuse them power (cf. Rom. 6:12–14). Again see Romans 8:13 for the power to 'put to death the deeds of the body'.

(vii) Vivification.

This unusual word means 'to bring to life', or 'to give life to'. If we kill what is evil we give life, power and action to what is true and pure. We nourish the good things and the right actions. We give every opportunity for them to flourish. We nurture them. Mortification can be seen in Colossians 3:5–10 i.e. 'putting to death' or, 'putting away' (such as anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk'), whilst vivification is seen in 3:12–17 i.e. the 'putting on', or 'giving life to' (such as 'compassion, kindness, meekness, lowliness and patience') i.e. the good things of holiness.

(viii) Loving.

This may sound strange, but in relation to vivification Paul says, ‘put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.’ As a matter of fact, love is one of the keys to holiness, not only for motivation and constraint (cf. II Cor. 5:14; John 14:15; cf. I John 4:19), but for the kind of action that develops holiness. The passages of Philippians 1:9–11 and I Thessalonians 3:12–13 show the latter. Holiness is conforming to the will of God, i.e. obedience, but it is not just conformity to legislation, but the carrying out of functional principles which produce holy living.

(ix) Having Power Over Sin.

Romans chapter 6 shows that our (penal) death with Christ means we are ‘justified from sin’ (6:7). This means that the guilt of sin has been removed from us. In Romans 6:12–14 (as we have said above) Paul tells us we must not let sin (a) reign in our physical bodies, and (b) we must not obey it in its lusts. This is because the power of sin lies in guilt (‘sin shall not have dominion over you for you are under grace’; cf. I Cor. 15:55–56). Because the guilt is gone, the power of sin is broken. The second part of Romans 6 (verse 15ff.) shows us that we must yield ourselves to God as obedient slaves. We will be slaves—whatever! So better be slaves to God which brings righteousness, than to sin which brings death. In this way is the life of holiness lived.

(ix) Self-Purification.

The last principle we mention is that of purifying ourselves, which in one sense is linked with abstinence, and in another with mortification. It is seen in II Timothy 2:20–22, ‘If anyone purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work.’ II Corinthians 7:1 says, ‘Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.’ Likewise I John 3:3 has it, ‘every one who thus hopes in him [the Father, the Son] purifies himself as [God, the Son] is pure. ‘We cannot effect self-purification from our own resources, but since the Cross has dealt with all our evil—and deals with it, especially through the Spirit—then we can say, ‘No!’ to every form of impurity.

Conclusion to ‘The Ways of Effecting Practical Holiness’

We can see the basis of holiness is God’s plan of holiness for us, from before time, His effecting our purification through the Cross, the application of that purification by the Spirit—all of which assure us that by grace we have been made holy. We have seen that for our part we must use preventative measures against sin and impurity, and then exercise our wills continually in denying sin place in our lives, and where it rears its head, especially in the ‘mindset of the flesh’, then we must use the methods of denying it a place in our lives. Aided by the Spirit we can live holy lives—not by our own efforts, nor in perfection, but by the Spirit and in grace.

NCTM. Monday Night Classes, 2nd. Term, June 27th., 1988. G.Bingham

STUDY EIGHT: THE GRACE OF HOLINESS—VIII

PRACTICAL HOLINESS—CONCLUDED

God's Gift and Work of Holiness

1. God is the prime mover in the matter of holiness which is elective, separative, purificatory (God's crisis of holiness by the Cross and the Spirit), processive, progressive, and ultimate.
2. God (Father, Son and Holy Sp[irit]) is the One who initiates and enables by His power, when it is needed at any point it is needed. He always moves in grace.
3. As Father God clear the believer of accusation (Rom. 8:31–32), as the Son He intercedes against evil powers (Rom. 8:34), and as the Spirit He intercedes within the person. Because of these acts, nothing can pollute us, nothing can separate us from God (Rom.35–39).
4. What God has begun before time He will complete at the day of Christ's coming, for He working now to that end. See Ephesians 1:4f.; Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:22–23; I Thessalonians 5:23–24; Jude 24.

The Believer's Living of the Holy Life

The justified believer is expected to live a holy life (I Pet. 1:15–16; 3:15; II Pet. 3:14; Heb. 12:14), and he does this by, and in, many acts of living,

- (a) by obeying the law which is now the law of love, the law of Christ, the law written in the heart (Rom. 12:8–10; Gal. 5:13; Jas. 1:22–25; 2:8–12; cf. I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).
- (b) by 'putting off' the old man, and 'putting on' the new man (Col. 3:9–10; Eph. 4:20–24).
- (c) by walking in Christ's Lordship (Col. 2:6), in light and love (Eph. 5:3f.) in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16,18,25).
- (d) by abiding in Christ and depending upon him for power, mortification and fruitfulness Col. 3:3ff.; Rom. 6:15–23).
- (e) by the exercises of mortification, vivification through putting off and putting on what is necessary at any point of life. These acts must be done by the constraint of love, and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- (f) by the exercises of genuine good works—though we must not mistake ego-inspired works for these (Matt. 5:16; Eph. 2:8–10; Rev. 14:13).
- (g) by living the life of faith (II Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 6:16; I John 5:4).

Things to Watch in the Life of Holiness

1. That we do not become lazy, careless, and fail to live prophylactically, i.e. be prepared for every situation.
2. That we do not rely on our own strength and energies, so striving and seeking to handle holiness by ourselves.
3. That we do not remain passive, static and unalert expecting God only to work when He has told us to do so.
4. That we live every day in the joyous knowledge that we have been purified, have cleansed hearts and that 'the blood goes on cleansing from all sin'. Love, peace and joy will thus spur us on in holy living.
4. That we use the means of grace such as prayer, praise, the Scriptures, the fellowship sharing our life and possessions with others, looking forward to Christ's coming, living in faith in His promises with our hope strong because of them.

Holiness Our Ultimate Goal

We have seen that God has planned this grace electively and that He works in order to effect it, expecting us to be one with Him in that work.

Our desire is to see God face to face (Matt. 5:8; Rev. 22:4–5; I John 3:3). Our bodies being temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19) we will look to the day when they shall be glorified and we can worship Him as His kings and priests.

The Grace of the Church

STUDY ONE-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH—I

THE GRACE THAT PLANNED THE CHURCH

Introduction to ‘The Grace of the Church’

What do we mean by ‘the grace of the church’. We mean a number of things such as the grace which planned the church before time, the grace which brought it into being in time, the grace of the gospel which brings men and women into church, as also the grace of life which sustains them within the church, and which sustains the church in the face of so many enemies. There is also the grace which brings the church—i.e. us—to eternity and grants it what in our 4th. Term we call ‘The Grace of Eternity’. We will now look at some of these elements.

The Grace That Planned the Church

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, ‘I will build my church.’ This statement in Palestine during his ministry was not a new idea. In Acts 7:38 Israel in the wilderness is called the church’ or ‘the congregation’. The Hebrew *‘qahal’* is the Greek ‘ecclesia’ (church). In this sense the church has always been where there has been the people of God (cf. Gen. 4:26; 12:2ff.). This was especially so in the matter of Israel (Exod. 19:5–6; cf. I Pet. 2:9–10). The new church was born at Pentecost—a matter we will later discuss.

The plan before time for God’s people as the church is seen in Ephesians 1:4–14. In this plan we see that God’s people are holy, are sons, are redeemed by forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and are to be to the praise of the glory of His grace, and also to the praise of His glory. In Ephesians 2:1–10 we see the people of the new church were to be from both the Jews and the Gentiles, i.e. ‘the nations’. This is shown in Ephesians 2:11–22, where ‘the new humanity’ emerges from the work of the Cross. A ‘new humanity’ is minted, and in Ephesians 3:1–11 the ‘plan of the mystery’ is that those of Israel, and those who are the redeemed Gentiles are absolutely one, neither Jew nor Gentile is before or after the other. Together they inherit the great promises—the eternal inheritance.

The Church Was Born Through Grace

In II Timothy 1:9–10 it can be seen that those who called to be God’s people have been saved ‘not in virtue of [one’s own] works, but in virtue of his [God’s] own purpose and the grace which he gave [us] in Christ Jesus from times eternal’. In passages such as I Cor. 6:9–11; Titus 3:1–7, and Ephesians 2:1–10 it is clear that each redeemed person, and the corpus (body, the church) of redeemed people was born crucified, and born through spiritual resurrection from the dead (cf. Col. 2:11–15; Col. 3:1–5).

The Church Was Born Through the Spirit

The church was born at Pentecost, through the coming of the Spirit. It had continuity with the old *ekklesia* (Acts 7:38) for all who came into redemption at Pentecost were Jews. It also had discontinuity for all who refused the Gospel had their sins retained (cf. John 20:23; Acts 5:33). We can say—in a sense—that the Samaritans were also born into the church with the coming of the Spirit upon them (Acts 8:14–17), and likewise the Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10:44–48). In John 3:1–14 Jesus spoke of rebirth by the Spirit (cf. John 1:11–13), and in John's First Letter John speaks some seven times of such new birth.

In saying that the church was born of the Spirit we mean that the Holy Spirit applied the grace of the Atonement in the heart, spirits and minds of those listening to, and ready to receive, the Gospel. All this God had planned before time.

NCTM, Monday Night Classes. 3rd. Term, July 11th. 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY TWO—THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH—II

THE GRACE THAT FORMED THE CHURCH

Introduction to Christ's Grace For the Church'

Much of what we say in this study will seem to be what we have said in the former study, but in fact it is an elaboration of that study. It will help us to understand the operations of salvation as Christ wrought them, and the application of salvation as Christ works through his Spirit.

We saw that Jesus said, 'I will build my church'. Had he not done so there would have been no church. When we look at the figures of the church in the Gospels—especially John's Gospel—then we see something of its nature. In John 10 he is the Shepherd of the sheep (cf. John 21:15–19; Ezek. 34), i.e. the church is the flock. In John 15 he is the vine and the church is/are the branches. It has even been thought that the haul of fishes in John 21 is a picture of the church since the fish are numbered in the same sense that the sheep are named in John 10. In the Gospels also Jesus is the new temple as against the old which will be destroyed. The Epistles take up the idea of the Temple, and add to this the Bride (an OT name for Israel, God being the bridegroom). We have seen that the church was ever in Christ's mind and that he alone could build it—by nature of the case—he being the Head, and the church being the Body. The church is also 'the mother of us all' relating to 'the Jerusalem above', i.e. the heavenly city. All of this was in the mind of Christ.

Redeeming Into the Church

In John 4:19–24 Jesus showed the Samaritan woman that salvation was only of the Jews—the wilderness congregation. He pointed then to the new salvation, i.e. within the new congregation. He only was the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). Belief in him was essential to salvation (John 3:14, 17, 36; 5:24; cf. 20:30–31). The work which Christ did was that of salvation

The salvation of Christ as the gospel formed by him

There could be no entrance into the church apart from salvation. There could be no salvation until Christ formed the Gospel. Only Jews could know salvation through the sacrifices (John 4:22), but their covenant was to give away to the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31–34; O.T passim). Salvation was to be in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12; cf. 2:38; Matt. 28:19). This salvation was wrought by Christ's work on the Cross (II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24; I Pet. 3:18; Rom. 3:24; I John 4:10; Heb. 10:10–22). This salvation required the work of the Cross and the work of the Resurrection (Rom. 5:21–21; cf. 10:9). Men have to believe this Gospel (Rom. 10:9; Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8–9; Rom. 6:10), and they will be saved. They will thus be purified and enter the church. Entrance is by baptism following repentance and faith (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16f.).

Christ sent the Spirit to apply the work of salvation to believers

From John chapters 14–16; Acts 2:33 and 5:31–32 it is clear that Jesus sent the Spirit to apply the Gospel and so redeem humanity. In this respect see John 16:7–11; I Cor., 2:4–5; I Thess. 1:5; I Pet. 1:12; II Cor. 3:17, Rom. 8:1–3; I Cor. 6:9–11 and Titus 3:3–7. Apart from the Spirit Christ's redemptive work could not be effective in the hearts of men and woman.

The Grace That Saves and Preserves Within the Church

All the work we have nominated above is the work of grace. God has no obligation to redeem anyone. No one has a 'right' to salvation or to entrance into the church. The following references show us the immense grace of God; Romans 3:14; 4:1–8; 5:1; 5:20; Gal. 2:16–21; Eph. 2:5,8; Titus 2:11; 3:5, i.e. the grace that redeems. The matter of the grace of perseverance (or, preservation) we will later examine.

NCTM, Monday Night Classes. 3rd. Term, July 18th. 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY THREE—THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH—III

THE GRACE THAT GATHERED THE ELECT INTO THE CHURCH

Grace Embraces the Elect of God

We saw in our last Study that none can enter the church but those to whom grace has come in redeeming power. In this present Study we see that it comes to God's elect people. So see Acts 2:47, 'The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved,' Acts 5:14, 'And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women,' Acts 13:48, 'and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' In Romans 8:29 we read, 'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . and those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.' For similar thoughts see Ephesians 4:4–7; I Corinthians 1:2; 1:9; II Timothy 1:9–10; II Thessalonians 2: 12–13; I Peter 1:2.

We conclude, then, that if God were not to move in grace, none would—or could—be saved, that it is His grace that anyone is saved, and that those who are saved are not merely saved from destruction but unto glory and honour as they are conformed to the image of His Son.

The Preaching of Grace That Brought (and Brings) in the Elect

When Christ commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel the outcome of that preaching was in his hand, not in the hands of the disciples. For example he attested their word by acts of his own (Acts 4:29–30; 14:3; 19:11f.; Rom. 15:18–19). The commissioning passages of Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:44–47; John 20:19–23 and Acts 1:8 (cf. Acts 26:18) all show (i) that the message to be preached was 'repentance and forgiveness of sins', (ii) that the power for such preaching was the Holy Spirit, (iii) that the people to be preached to were—and are—Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles, and (iv) that the fruits of such preaching would be to turn men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and by repentance and conversion to bring them to the forgiveness of sins, and so to have a place in the church—'an inheritance amongst those who are sanctified by faith'.

The Message of Grace, and the Ingathering of the Elect

The Message of Grace

The message of grace can be traced in all the apostolic messages such as given in Acts 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 13, and can also be traced in the apostolic Letters. Acts 20:20–25 outlines the message in a number of points, and Romans 1:18–3:31 is an excellent statement of the Gospel of Christ.

The Ingathering of the Elect

In our last study we saw what an amazing privilege it is for men and women to be called into salvation and thus to enter the church. Acts 2 speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the bringing in of Jews into the church. Acts 8 tells us of the influx of Samaritans into the church. Acts chapters 10 to 28 speak of the third wave of the Gospels and the ingathering of the Gentiles (the nations) into the church—an ingathering which is still proceeding.

None of this ingathering of the elect is simply by chance. It relates to God's plan prior to creation (cf. Eph. 1:4–14; Rom. 8:29–30), and the ingathering of the nations was prophesied in the O.T (e.g. Isa. 43:6–7; Psa. 2:6–7; Luke 2:32–Isa. 42:6; 49:6–Luke 24:44–47; Acts 13:47). The extraordinary thing is that it is committed to the people of the church to proclaim the grace of God to the nations and thus bring them into the church.

The Gospel of Grace Constrains to the Preaching of Grace

The disciples of Christ could do nothing but preach the grace of God. Grace had redeemed them so they must share it with others. They simply needed the Spirit to open the truth to them (John 16:12–15), and they could open it to others—and this they did, following the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. Paul is an excellent example of this receiving of grace and the consequent telling it out. In Galatians 1:16 he said, 'It pleased God to reveal his Son in me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.' No sooner was he redeemed than he began to preach Christ. The church at Thessalonica is also a clear example of this receiving and proclaiming of grace. See I Thessalonians 1:5–10.

We who have received grace must immediately share this grace or it will go stale on us (cf. II Cor. 4:13–15).

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 25th. July 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY FOUR-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH-IV

THE GRACE THAT CAME UPON THE CHURCH

The Nature of Grace

In our three terms we have talked about the nature of grace. We have seen it contains the ideas of favour, loving kindness, restorative power, and power that enables God's people to do what they could not do of themselves. Grace can never be separated from God, it is God working as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For this reason we must look at the grace which came upon the church. We have seen grace as it brings the church into being and gathers into those elected of God. Now we must see it as enabling power.

Grace Coming Upon the Church

The classic passage for this is Acts 4:23–37. The church prays for boldness in preaching by the apostles, and for God to attesting signs and wonders through his servant Jesus. The response is that the Spirit comes upon the whole church, with two special results, (i) the congregation is filled with care unity, care and concern, and administers to those in need, (ii) the apostles preach the resurrection (Gospel) with great power. This is all described as 'great grace was upon them all'. In one way it was the power of the Spirit, in another mutual love and community living, in yet another it was power for preaching.

In Acts 11:19–23 we see the birth of the first Jewish-Gentile church at Antioch in Syria. Persecuted Jews preached the Gospel to both Jews and Greeks, and so the church was formed. Barnabas was sent down to examine the work and 'When he came he saw the grace of God'. That is he saw the working of grace.

From then on the book of the Acts speaks of grace,

In 6:8 Stephen *'full of grace and power did great wonders and signs among their people'*.

In 13:43 those who have heard Paul's sermon are urged *'to continue in the grace of God'*.

In 14:3 the Lord bore *'witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.'*

In 14:26 the apostolic band returned to Antioch where they had been *commended to the grace of God* for the work which they had fulfilled.

In 15:11 Peter says—in regard to the Christian Gentiles—‘But we believe *we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus* just as they will.’

In 15:40 Paul and Silas set out on the ministry which was to bring them into Europe, ‘being *commended by the brethren to the grace of God*’.

In 18:27 Apollos helped ‘those who through grace had believed’.

In 20::24 Paul describes the Gospel as ‘the gospel of the grace of God’, and says, finally, ‘And now *I commend you to God and the word of his grace* which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified.’

A Conclusion in Grace in the Book of Acts

We can see two strong elements in grace in this book, (i) it is grace which saves, and (ii) it is grace which keeps, enables, and empowers. We have said that grace is not a commodity nor an abstraction but God Himself working for good. This is so in Acts. What we need to realise is that this grace was always present, and was always working, and always effecting results. Thus the early church thought in terms of a great action and power of God to which they could commend each other. They knew that grace would always keep them, and enable them to preach the Gospel, and then go on in the Gospel. There should be no difference seen between the grace of God which saves and the grace of God which keeps, and the grace of God which enables, and then empowers for proclamation of the Gospel. It is all in the Gospel of God, the Gospel of grace.

The Grace of God in the Epistles

We will not trace the grace of God in the Epistles but simply point to the fact that—which we will discuss in our next Study—that out of the grace comes all that is necessary for true Christian living, i.e. the spiritual gifts, the spiritual weapons, and continuing enablement to fight spiritual warfare and proclaim the Gospel.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 1st. August, 1988. G.Bingham

STUDY FIVE-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH-V

THE GRACE OF MINISTRY

All Called to Serve

In the New Testament all are called to serve, i.e. to be servants and minister. 'By love serve one another', is the order of the early church. The *laos* are 'the people', i.e. all the people of God (Acts 10:42: cf. Matt. 23:8–12). There was an order of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, but there was nothing of domination in them over others. In fact these ministries were to 'equip the saints for the work of ministry (servantship)'. There were elders, i.e. pastors, and they did not 'lord it over the flock' (cf. I Pet. 5:1–4).. Model pastors are seen in Acts 20:28–30; I Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). That we are redeemed to serve can be seen in Eph. 2:8–10; Titus 2:11–14; Gal. 1:16–16.

Ministry is By and From the Grace of God

Paul would not have distinguished between the grace that brought him salvation and the grace that gave him ministry and enabled him in it (cf. Gal. 1:15–16). Acts 4:20 with 26:16 shows his conversion was with a view to converting others!

Ministry was From the Grace of God

Gal. 1:15–16 emphasises this. In Romans 1:4–5 Paul speaks of 'Jesus Christ our Lord through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,' and in Romans 15:17–19 and 16:25–26 he underlines this. Ephesians 3:1–11 speaks of grace given to him as 'the least of all the apostles'. In II Corinthians 4:1 Paul speaks of 'having this ministry by the mercy of God', i.e. that to be given ministry is mercy. He emphasises this in I Timothy 1:12–16. These three passages reward detailed study. In Galatians 2:7–9 (cf. Acts 15) Paul describes the apostolic recognition of his own apostolic ministry to the Gentiles, 'when they perceived the grace that was given to me', i.e. to proclaim the Gospel. We conclude then that it is God's grace which appoints us to ministry and permits us to have the privilege of ministering His grace to others. In I Corinthians 9:15–27 he shows how high a privilege he regards the commission to preach the Gospel.

When it comes to the action of our ministry then both the *domata* (Ephes. 4:7–11)—the gifts of ministry—and the *charismata* (Rom. 9:4–5; I Cor., 12:4ff.)—gifts to enable ministry—then these are of grace. Below we will see we need grace to minister them, but it is God's grace that we are given them.

Ministry was By the Grace of God

In Acts 4:30–33 we see the unity of the church and the boldness—in preaching—by the apostles was of grace, i.e. 'great grace'. In Acts 6:8 Stephen, 'full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs amongst the people'. So needful is grace to minister that

Acts 14:26 tells us that the apostolic band had been commended to ‘the grace of God for the work’ of the ministry. Paul commended the Ephesian elders to this same grace (Acts 20:32). The classic passage in regard to grace for ministry is I Corinthians 15:10, ‘His grace towards me was not in vain. I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I but the grace of God which was with me.’

The Necessity for such Grace

One only has to look at the work of Paul to see what he suffered (cf. II Cor. chs. 6 and 11) in the cause of the Gospel. It is clear in the New Testament that to proclaim the Gospel is to draw persecution and opposition from its enemies (see II Cor. 4:7–15). Without the enabling grace of God the message could not have been proclaimed, e.g. Stephen in Acts chapters 6 and 7 (see 6:8). Human flesh and blood could not stand such stress, and the same humanity could not have disclosed the mysteries of the Gospel to sinful and disobedient man.

The Goal of the Grace of Ministry and the Ministry of Grace

II Corinthians 4:7–15 is an excellent passage to study in this regard. Its conclusion is (verse 15), ‘as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God’. The paradigm for such grace-ministry is given in II Corinthians 8:9, ‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich’. Within this paradigm is the goal—‘that you might become rich’. When we think of ‘the riches of his grace’, his ‘great grace’, and his ‘glorious grace’, and when we see what it has done for us and all the elect people of God, then we realise that it is impossible that we should not respond to the grace of ministry given us and work in and by grace to effect the grace of God in men and women.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 8th. August, 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY SIX-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH-VI

THE GRACE OF WORSHIP-I

The Fact and Nature of Worship

Man is bound to worship. Because he is a creature and is not lord of the universe, he must be aided, he must have dependency upon something or someone. Because he lives in the universe he must evaluate all that is about him. He must give worth to creatures and things. Worship is 'to give worth', i.e. appropriate value to all that he sees, and to which he relates. He must do this in order to live properly in his universe. When he gives appropriate worth to creatures and things he can live in reasonable harmony in the creation. In practical fact man should worship God as primary, and in the light of that worship should give right value to all other creatures and things—including himself. Man cannot not worship.

All Worship is Due to God

The Psalmist said, 'All thy works praise Thee.' This is correct worship. In the book of the Revelation we are shown pure worship. This is given by the 'living creatures', by the celestial elders' and by 'all the angels'. It is also given by the redeemed of humanity. The primary reason for worship is that God is God. He is eternal, He is holy, He is Creator, He is just and judges righteously. The Lamb is worshipped because he has redeemed humanity, and has had victory over evil powers. Whilst the worship of the Lamb is because of redemption he, nevertheless, created all things in himself and so is worthy of worship for that reason.

Perversion of Worship: the Unreal Gods

In I Corinthians 8:1–6 Paul speaks of what we might call 'the unontological gods'. He says, 'An idol has no real existence', and that though there be 'gods many' and 'lords many', yet, 'there is no God but one.' We need to note that essentially there is no God but God. Romans 1:20–25 describes man rejecting the true God, and making his own idols and worshipping them (cf. Hosea 8:4; 11:2; 13:1–3; Isa. 40:18–20; Psa. 115:3–8). Man, then, has made his gods and worships them, but they cannot give him ontological satisfaction and fulfilment, by nature of the case. Isaiah 44:9–20 is a superb commentary on idols. The outcome of the idolator is, 'He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself, or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Wrong worship ends in tragedy. Paul shows that you cannot have idols to yourself without being involved in demons (I Cor. 10:19–22).

The Rich Joy of True Worship

Created man—unfallen—must have simply worshipped God in affinity with Him, being the image and glory of God. He lost that joy of worship, but regained it—or much of it—by the grace of covenant. We have only to read the history of Israel's worship to know how powerful was that worship. Psalms 42, 63, and 84—amongst many others—speak of the rich joy of personal worship, and many other psalms speak of the joy of corporate worship, i.e. the worship of Israel as a people. Such worship means man bows his heart and spirit before God, confesses his dependence upon him, praises the worthiness of God, and offers thanksgiving. Man is one with God in worship.

The Givenness of Worship: Worship Through Grace

Exodus 20:1ff. shows that Israel was commanded to worship God only, and this on the basis of grace, i.e. deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. This worship—which was at one with the given law—was a gift (Rom. 9:4). It had to be because man—by the fall—had forfeited his right to true worship, and had to be given a revelation of God so that he might worship Him. He was also given clear directions for such worship.

In the New Testament true worship is the gift transferred to the [new] church. This is seen in Romans 12:1–2; Hebrews 9:14 and Revelation 7:14–15. The coming of Christ as Son revealed the Father, and all worship proceeds from the Father and ascends to the Father (John 4:20ff.). This worship is of the Spirit (John 4:20ff.; Phil. 3:3) and through the Son (John 14:10–14; I Tim. 2:5; Heb.4:14–16; 10:19–22).

The church, then, has the grace of worship, and in it man expresses the restoration God has brought to him, and his adoration of the God of all grace.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 15th. August, 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY SEVEN-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH-VII

THE GRACE OF WORSHIP-II

We Worship by the Grace of God

In Romans 9:4–5 we see the gifts (charismata) of God to Israel, and one of these is worship. Abraham was taken from a situation of idolatry to have faith in the one true God, and by that was justified (Gen. 15:6). This gave him the privilege of covenant, and so of true worship. Israel was given this gift, and regarded it very highly. The same gift has been given to God's new people—the church. The promise of such worship was stated by Jesus to the woman at the well (John 4:20f.). Apart from promise (promise is always of grace) man would be doomed to be caught forever in the web of his idolatry. It is the great grace of God which turns him from idols 'to worship a living and true God' (I Thess. 1:9). What a difference there is between the two forms of worship!

The Grace of Worship Comes Through the Atonement

Three Scriptures show us that worship flows out of grace. These are (i) Romans 12:1–2, (ii) Hebrews 9:14, and (iii) Revelation 7:14–15. Romans 12:1 speaks of the mercies of God through which we are bound to worship God, Hebrews 9:14 speaks of the cleansing of the conscience from dead works, by which we come to serve the living God, and Revelation 7:14–15 speaks of those who have had their robes made white in the blood of the Lamb consequently worshipping God day and night in the temple—in heaven.

The substance of these passages is that those who are redeemed turn from false forms of worship to God, and are permitted to do so because they have been purified. Until the conscience is clear, until sins are forgiven, and until man is justified he cannot truly worship God. The effect of salvation on the new believer is to see God as the living God, i.e. 'the God who acts', and so he worships Him. His worship flows out of the love which comes from God loving him (I John 4:19), out of seeing God's glory, and out of gratitude and thanksgiving.

The Grace of Worship That Comes Through the Holy Spirit

Jesus had told the woman at the well (John 4:20f.) that a new era of worship was coming, and that it was linked with (i) God's Fatherhood, (ii) the truth, and (iii) the spirit of worship in man. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of Sonship, and the truth. Therefore the new era of worship would be that of the Spirit. This was what happened on the day of Pentecost for when the Spirit came new worship began, both in regard to what had always been worship in Israel, and what was now developing in the new church. Philippians 3:3 states that the church is the true circumcision which worships God in the Spirit. Paul said (Rom. 1:9) that he served (i.e. worshipped) God 'in the spirit', which could mean his own spirit, but then such worship would have to be through the Holy Spirit.

The Epistle to the Hebrews certainly set forth an entirely new worship, one which superseded the worship under the Mosaic covenant. In 9:8 the writer links the Spirit with the meaning of the old worship, and naturally he is linked with the reality of the new worship, all of which confirms Jesus' statement to the woman at the well regarding the new worship. The gift of worship, then, was not only to old Israel but also to new Israel, and such worship was totally structured on grace.

It is this grace we ought to appreciate when worship, not taking worship for granted, but seeing it as a gift of grace, and rejoicing in its goodness.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 22nd. August, 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY EIGHT-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH-VIII

THE MEANS OF GRACE FOR THE CHURCH

What Are the Means of Grace?

We have seen many times that there is no such thing as grace apart from the Father or the Son. It is 'the grace of God', or 'the grace of Christ', i.e. that action of grace which the Father, the Son or the Spirit works in our lives. We have said that grace is 'God going towards us to us good—whatever!' The question is, 'How does God do us this good?' The answer is, 'He Himself does what we cannot do. He works for us, He works in us, and He works through us.' If we ask, 'By what means?' then the answer is that He works in many ways through many means.

Some people take 'means of grace' to mean 'the means we use in order to get grace from God', but we should say, 'The means God uses to effect His grace in us, and through us.' We cannot obtain grace by the use of means, otherwise God would be bound to act when we use the 'means', but in fact God does work through means to give us the needed grace. In this sense, then, grace is as a power working in us, and through us, as is seen in I Corinthians 15:10. Hebrews 4:16 says, 'Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' Here coming to God in prayer is a means of grace, i.e. of God granting us required grace or help. Note: If grace arose from us there would be no need to use 'means'. If means are the way, then God will not fail to supply the need.

The Means of Grace

(i) Christ, the Grace of God

John said, 'Of his fulness have we received, and grace upon grace' (John 1:16). Christ is the means of grace. He is the grace of God. Hence, 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' As we live in him we receive grace from Christ for every need. Time and again it is written, 'The grace of Christ (or, 'of the Lord Jesus') be with you.' This means God works through Christ. Thus we are 'saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus', (Acts 15:11). Romans 5:15, 17 speak of us receiving 'the abundancy of grace' through Christ. It is this grace which has made us rich (II Cor. 8:9). When the N.T. writers say, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you,' through the personal grace of Christ. Christ then is our primary means of grace.

(ii) The Word of God

So many times in the book of Acts people are commended to 'the word of His grace', The gospel is 'the gospel of the grace of God'. The gospel and the word of God are one. There is the present 'word of his grace' which has the truth of the Gospel within it, and which aids and assists proclaimers of the gospel, those newly come to salvation, and those who live in the battle of opposition by Satan, and the world (see Acts 13:43;

14:26; 15–40; 20:32; I Cor. 15:10; II Tim. 2:1). Thus we read God’s word, we hear it, we obey it, and we proclaim it—all by grace. The word, then, is a means of grace.

(ii) Prayer and the Grace of God

Hebrews 4:16 certain shows that as we come to the throne of grace, we find help in time of need from that grace. In this sense prayer can be said to be a means of grace, but in fact it is the grace which operates from the throne at the time of our prayer which is always there, whether we pray or not. Prayer does not make it operate, but gives it its occasion to operate. In this sense prayer, and all similar exercises can be said to means of grace.

(iv) Practical Christian Exercises

We saw in our last two studies that we worship God by grace. We need grace to initiate worship. When we need grace to worship, but worship is one way by which the grace of God comes to us. When we search the Scriptures for any mention of worship being ‘a means of grace’ in the sense that the Father, Christ, the Spirit and the word are, then we do not find this term. Nor for that matter do we read that Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, prayer, fellowship, ministry and even proclamation of the gospel are ‘means of grace’, i.e. to us—of course these exercises can minister grace to others, or—more correctly—God works through them in grace to others. It is undeniable, however, that the grace of God is present as we worship, pray, celebrate the sacraments (ordinances), minister to one another, and proclaim the gospel.

It seems that God’s grace or working is present so that all these exercises can take place, and when they do then we draw from the fulness of the Father, and the fulness of the Son ‘grace upon grace’.

The Deliberate Exercise of Our Lives Within God’s Means of Grace

We do not have time in this study to examine closely the means of grace, but we nominate them as the study of the Scriptures, the person and corporate exercise of prayer and of worship, the life together in the Holy Spirit as the active working of unity and fellowship in the body of Christ, the use of the charismata, the proclamation of the gospel, the ministry within and outside the church, and all the service we render to God and man in love, concern, care and intercession.

There ought to be a deliberate concentration on these means. We know them, their value, and yet we can neglect them to our own spiritual declension, and even our peril. God sends His ‘great grace’ upon us, and that grace works in the ways He designs. Even so we can be indolent, rebellious, lethargic, and even asleep, and we must stir ourselves to come fully into light, to blow up the remaining spiritual and moral embers until a fire of grace starts afresh. We can provoke one another to love and good works. We can keep fully alert and stretched out to do the will of God. It is in these situations that the grace of God moves us effectively, and enriches us who are weak by nature. This seems to accord with Paul’s statement, ‘If by any means’ (Phil. 3:11–14) and Peter’s ‘be the more zealous’ (II Pet. 1:10–11 cf. 1:3f.).

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 29th. August, 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY NINE-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH-IX

THE GRACE OF SERVICE

Service and Ministry

In Study Five we looked at ‘The Grace of Ministry’. There we saw that all ministry which came by the Gospel was through grace. Passages such as I Corinthians 15–9–11; Romans 12:3ff.; Ephesians 3:2,7–11 show that only out of grace can one receive ministry and render that ministry. Again in Ephesians 4:7–16 Paul shows that gifts of ministry—which come from *charis*, i.e. ‘grace’—equip the saints for the work of ministry so that they may help to build up the body of Christ in love. The ministry of which we speak is service first to God, then to fellow believers and so to all mankind, where that is deemed necessary.

‘By Love Serve One Another’

Paul enjoins the Galatians to do just this—Galatians 3:13–14. This is supported by Romans 13:8–10 and James 2:8–13. Whilst we rarely see grace—as such—mentioned as being linked with service yet it is the case. In Acts 2:44 and 4:32–35 we see the church sharing its resources in love to all needy members. This action is described as ‘great grace was upon them all’, i.e. out of grace they were able to share what natural self-security would have denied them doing. It was a great thing—sharing their resources with the needy—the widows and the poor. Later Paul was to say, ‘Do good unto all men, but chiefly those who are of the household of God.’ Probably those of the household of God were most needy because of the prevailing persecution and loss of employment because of their faith.

He Who Serves God Serves Man

Peter tells us that the prophets—who were called ‘the servants of God’ in the O.T.— were ‘serving not themselves but us’ (I Pet. 1:10–12). Many New Testament references to serving God (Greek: *latreuo*) are related to worshipping Him (Rom. 12:2; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 7:15; Rom. 1:9; Phil. 3:3), but there are many situations in which believers serve man.

If we ask why grace is needed to do this then it is because fallen (sinful) man serves himself, and himself only. If he serves others then it is in order to get benefit for himself. A study of Philippians 2:1–11 shows that ‘the mind of Christ’ is needed in order to ‘look not only on one’s own things, but to mind the things of others’, and ‘to count others better than one’s self.’ Christ had taught that the greatest is the one who serves—not the one who is served. Elsewhere we see that true love gives itself for others, and that through love serves others. Christ came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). This is the paradigm for all service and certainly takes great grace, and when such grace is present in and on the church then believers will have this spontaneous drive to serve (love) others—in action!

Who Serves Who?

In II Corinthians 4:5 Paul says, ‘We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your servants (slaves) for Jesus’s sake. ‘ In Romans 12:6–7 he links grace and serving. In I Corinthians 16:15 Paul speaks of the household of Stephanos who ‘devoted themselves to the service of the saints’. In Philippians 2:25–30 he speaks of Epaphroditus who is a minister (servant) to his (Paul’s) need, and who has risked his life ‘to complete your service to me.’ In Romans 15:27 Paul suggests that if Christian Jews have ministered to (Christian) Gentiles then the latter ‘ought to be of service to them in material blessings’.

There can be no doubt—God serves man in creation, redemption and the renewal of the universe. Man is expected to serve God, and all men to serve one another. Service in the New Testament is that act of love whereby believers serve the world in bringing the Gospel to them. It is that act of love in which believers first care for the household of God, but go beyond it to serve others.

The Grace That Aids, Motivates, and Constrains

We saw in I Corinthians 15:9–11 that Paul claimed to work harder than others, but put it down not to his own self-constraint or powers, but to the grace of God. We have seen that all ministry is a gift given by the grace of God and aided by that gift. It is in II Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 that we see the true nature of grace, and particularly in 8:9, ‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich.’ This really says everything. Grace impoverishes us that it might enrich others. In this lies the mystery of Godliness. To serve is to be like God. It is to work from God to others. It is to bring the best to men and not merely to temporarily supply needs, or assist them to live whilst they sin. It is to bring them to so be changed that they, too, serve both the living God and impoverished man.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 5th. September, 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY TEN-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH-X

THE MESSAGE OF GRACE THE CHURCH PROCLAIMS

The Grace and its Message

'Grace', we have said, 'is God going towards man to do him good.' Man is unworthy of this 'good' but it arises not from man's need, but from God's spontaneous and generous love. We saw that in the O.T. such grace was understood as *chesed*—God's loving kindness and compassion and *chen*—God's favour towards a person made by Him out of His sovereign choice. These two ideas became one in the Greek word for grace which the early church chose and filled out, i.e. *charis*. Thus man is 'surprised by grace', for he does not work in it at all, though he does work from it. God proclaims to this world by His church, 'Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven,' 'Be of good cheer your moral defilement is wholly purified,' 'Be of good cheer, you are released from the judgement of the law—you are justified,' 'Be of good cheer, you are released from the powers of Satan and his evil forces,' 'Be of good cheer, you are reconciled with God, and He with you!' This is the heart of the message of grace.

The Basis of the Message of Grace

The basis of the message is the incarnation of Christ, his life, his Atonement through the Cross and the Resurrection, and the confirmation and attestation of this through the Ascension. II Corinthians 8:9 says, 'You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich.' Romans 5:12–21 says that his obedience brought 'the abundance of grace' to us. Indeed that obedience of Christ was accredited to us. In Romans 3:24 the gift of grace justifies the sinner who believes, because of the propitiatory act of the Cross.

The Call for Faith in Christ, and Obedience to the Gospel

The proclamation of the Gospel can be looked at in many ways. It is telling good news to bad men. It is presenting the salvation of God to unsaved sinners. It is a message which has to be obeyed (Acts 5:31–32; 6:7; II Thess. 1:8). It is an exhortation—even a beseeching—to unsaved person to come to Christ (II Cor. 5:19). It is the call for acknowledgement that Jesus is Lord because risen from the dead, and so man must come under his Lordship (Rom. 10:9). It is the news that man has been redeemed from the powers of darkness and can be released into the full liberty of Christ (Col. 2:14–15; Heb. 2:14–15; Col. 1:13–14).

Beginning in the Grace of the Gospel

Somewhere there must be a beginning. One comes to this beginning of ‘repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ’ by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11). Men and women are told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and they shall be saved (John 3:14, 16, 36; 5:24, 20:30–31; Acts 16:31). Their inability to save themselves does not mean they cannot repent and believe, and so be saved (Rom. 5:5–11). Repentance and faith are gifts of God which have to be received and exercised (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Ephes. 2:8–9; Phil. 1:29). Then the believer has to recognise that his/her sins have been forgiven (Ephes. 1:7; Col. 1:13–14), that the pollution of sin has been purified (Heb. 1:3; 9:14; Titus 3:4–7; I Cor. 6:11), the penalty of the law has been remitted by Christ’s suffering of the wrath of the law (Gal. 2:16–21; 3:10–14), that eternal life has been given (II Tim. 1:9–10), that the believer has been made a son of God (Gal. 4:4–6), that the gift of love has flooded him/her (Rom. 5:5; I John 4:10, 19), and the Holy Spirit has come—giftwise—from God.

The Church, Grace, Going on From the Beginning

The church proclaims this message. Men and women hear it from the church. The church was commissioned to preach the word (Rom. 9:10–17; Matt. 28:19–20, etc.). Men and women who believe are brought into the church, become part of it as members of the body of Christ who is the Head. The church ministers to each new member, supplying the milk of the word, and later the solid meat of the word. It supports the new person with love and care, but also urges it immediately into sharing the word of grace with others who do not know it (cf. I Thess. 1:5–10). In the context of love, prayer, worship, service and the other elements of love we have shared in our previous studies the new person becomes strengthened and so grows in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. His/her principle is ever, ‘As you received Christ Jesus as Lord, so go on walking in him’ (Col. 2:6).

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 12th. September, 1988. G.Bingham

STUDY ELEVEN-THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH— The Church Out of Grace

THE CHURCH IN THE GRACE OF GOD

In our previous two terms we spoke of (i) the grace of justification, and (ii) the grace of sanctification. This has led in our third term to the grace of the church. What we have to keep constantly in mind is that there is no grace apart from the Father and the Son. That is the Father ‘graces’ us and so does the Son. Grace does not come to us apart from them both for God is ‘the God of all grace’. The Spirit is only once called ‘the Spirit of grace’ (Heb. 10:29) and this may even mean ‘the Spirit given by grace’. We recognise he is the Spirit of grace because he imparts the grace of the Father and the Son to us, which means, even more, that we cannot have grace apart from these two.

We have also seen that we can ‘receive the grace of God in an empty way’ and every moment is a new moment of grace which we must realise so that we live continually by grace (II Cor. 6:1–2; cf. I Cor. 15:9–11). We have also seen that we can fall away from grace (Gal. 5:2–4) as persons. What we now need to see is that we can fall away from grace, or receive it in an empty way as a church, or even as churches. History shows us how many times this has happened. When ‘the means of grace’ have become our means to get God’s grace, instead of His means to impart it, then we have again fallen away from grace, because it is something we seek to prompt, rather than what which we receive from God. In Romans 5:1–2 Paul makes it clear that we have access ‘into this grace in which we stand’, i.e. we are always in grace. Great grace is always on us, but we need to appropriate it.

We will now look at the ways in which go outside of grace—as a church.

The Church in True Context, or Out of Context

The context of the church is (i) that it is in the Father (I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1), (ii) that it is in Christ, as the epistles so powerfully point out, and (iii) that the church is in the Spirit, in that all its actions are led by the Spirit, its unity and fellowship is in the Spirit, and its power, gifts, love, worship, prayer, proclamation are in and from the Spirit. There is strong evidence from the New Testament that churches were always tending to carry out their life and tasks in human wisdom and by human powers—with disastrous results. Today churches face the same problems. We need to live in the grace of the Father, and the grace of the Son, by the Spirit. We need to see that our life and action always stem from God, and our aid comes from the throne of grace. Church history shows us that we often lose sight of one or more—if not all—the Persons of the Triune Godhead. This greatly affects the life and actions of the church, gives rise to heresies, weakens the life of the community of Christ, and brings divisions.

The Church Under ‘Law-way’ and Not Under ‘Grace-Way’

The Epistle to the Galatians shows how grace can be ignored when we try to justify ourselves by works, and not by faith in His grace-work. It is possible that for decades, if not centuries, the church can descend into ritualism, sacramentalism, liberalism and

humanism—among many other diversions—and generally the root of these problems is dependence upon human effort and human wisdom which determine the patterns of ecclesiastical organisation and living.

The Church in Wrong Use of the Weapons

Passages such as Ephesians 6:10–18; II Corinthians 10:1–4; I Thessalonians 5:8; Romans 13:11–14 show us the armour and weapons which the believer uses in spiritual warfare. Looked at from one point of view these weapons are quite simple and even appear useless for battle and advancement in the Kingdom of God. Jesus did not use political or physical force. The sword which goes out of his mouth (Rev. 1:16; 19:15) is the word of God. Jeremiah 23:23ff. tells us this is powerful. By it alone shall the nations be smitten. Revelation 13:5–11 (cf. Dan. 7:25f.; 14:12–13) shows that we are not to use the same weapons as does the world system. We are to submit as though defeated—just as Jesus did on the Cross. Only this way shall we win.

Unfortunately, in history, the church has often used the power and political weapons, and fought the world-system with its own weapons. In all of this the church departs from the grace of God.

The Church and Social Justice, Social Welfare, and Social Change.

Sometimes we identify what is happening in this world with the advance—or retreat—of the Kingdom of God. We fear that the church will be inundated by outside forces, so that the Kingdom of God will fail. We fail to see the sovereign grace of God is at work. All men, everywhere, have a responsibility to all men, everywhere, but the fulfilling of that responsibility is not a scheme. We must work according to the will of God. Good done can often be relative and not ontological. We need to see that our ‘good works’ are ‘true works’. We need to see something of our motives in our so-called ‘good works’. We can do these for fame, recognition, guilt payoff, and similar reasons. The parable of Matthew 25:31–46 should be studied closely, to see whether it refers to all men in need, or primarily to proclaiming—and beleaguered—believers in need. We need to see that God is at work in justice and judgements, and that we must work with him these. We must believe in His never-wavering grace.

Grace and the Gifts

The word *charis* means grace. The charismata are the gifts of Christ distributed through the Spirit. The word charismata is not the plural of grace. There is no plural of grace. We may mistake the use of the charismata for grace. The charismata can be ‘means of grace’, i.e. Christ works his grace through them, but if we mistake the gifts of themselves for grace of itself then we will again be moving away from grace. We will be in the realm of man-operated works. Paul warns us against this in I Corinthians 13:1–3 (cf. I Cor. 4:7).

Conclusion on The Church Out of Grace

We have named but a few of the things by which the church moves out of grace. There are many more. They are all efforts to be free of true dependence upon God. I Corinthians 15:9–11 is a safe guide and principle by which to live as a person and as the church.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 3rd. Term. 19th. September, 1988. G. Bingham

STUDY TWELVE—THE GRACE OF THE CHURCH

GRACE SPREADING TO MORE PEOPLE BY THE CHURCH

Grace Coming and Going

The body of Christ is composed of members who have been admitted to it by grace—the grace of the Cross, the grace of Covenant, the personal grace of the Father and the Son. The grace that brings salvation has appeared in Christ and saved us (Titus 2:11–14; 3:5–7; Ephes. 2:8–9). The commission by Christ to his apostles—and so to all the coming church—was to preach the Gospel to every person, to make disciples of all nations, and the substance of the message was ‘that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his (Christ’s) name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem’ This is seen at the conclusion of each of the four gospels and in Acts 1:8.

The substance of the message of grace we saw in Study Ten, but in form we can trace what was the kerygma, i.e. ‘the proclamation’. It was (is) that (i) that the prophets prophesied of the Messiah to come, (ii) Jesus proved to be that Messiah, (iii) his life and ministry were of God under the Holy Spirit, (iv) his resurrection proved him to be Lord over all things since he defeated death, so showing he defeated sin, (v) his Cross is the source of man’s redemption. Christ’s work is God’s grace towards man who must repent, have faith in Jesus Christ, and so receive—by faith—the gifts of grace, i.e. forgiveness, justification, cleansing of sins, adoption, the love of God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Having received grace, the true people (persons) of God will wish to to—and are commissioned to—tell the grace of God to others. This is a corporate ministry. Doubtless the church must be strong within to tell the Gospel to those outside. The condition of ‘grace going out’ will be in ration with ‘grace coming in’. We mean that the church which lives and moves in the Spirit will be strong to proclaim the Gospel.

To Receive Grace is to Proclaim Grace

We have two excellent examples of this principle. The first is Paul who was met by Christ on the road to Damascus. All the accounts show that Christ not only converted him to the faith, but converted him with a view to Paul converting others. See Acts 9:15; 22:14–15; 26:16–20, and Galatians 1:11–16. The second example is the church at Thessalonica. In the first chapter we see that church was formed amidst tribulation and affliction, and—far from being discouraged—immediately began to tell the Gospel in Macedonia and Achaia, and even further abroad. We take it that this was the pattern for all new churches, and would rightly continue in this way. Roland Allen’s book, ‘The Spontaneous Expansion of the Christian Church’, is an excellent thesis on the principle we are setting out in this paragraph.

Preaching Free Grace is a Costly Matter

In the gospels Jesus taught the costliness of discipleship. At that point discipleship involved following him. From his resurrection onwards it involved being sent by him. In I Corinthians 1:17-31 Paul outlined the opposition 'the word of the cross' inevitably raised in those who heard it, and would not accept it. Jews would see it as a 'scandal', and Greeks as 'foolishness'. In II Corinthians chapters 6 and 11 he gives a detailed account of the suffering he had experienced in preaching the Gospel. It is in II Corinthians 4:7-15 that he outlines the principle of the suffering which comes from such proclamation. The following points can be adduced,

- (i) The Gospel of grace is contained in earthen vessels so that its power may not be seen to arise from men who proclaim it (verse 7).
- (ii) There will be incessant opposition and consequent suffering, but this will not prevent proclamation (verses 8-9),
- (iii) Proclaiming the Gospel is really carrying about in one's body the 'killing of Jesus', and such demonstration will cause a similar reaction in hostile hearers as it did in hostile viewers of the Cross at Calvary,
- (iv) Just as the death of Jesus showed his true life to be saving, so when those who proclaim the Gospel suffer because of its message, then life will come to hearers, i.e. to those who believe (verses 10-12),
- (v) All this suffering—far from discouraging the proclaimers—will strengthen the faith of believers, and so they will believe and speak the Gospel.

Paul's conclusion, then, is, 'For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving to the glory of God' (verse 15). This, then, is the coming of grace to God's people, and the going out of that grace to people who need to hear and receive 'the gospel of the grace of God' (Acts 20:24)

The Grace of Eternity

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY ONE

THE GRACE THAT IS TO COME

The Grace That Was, Is, and Will Be

From the time of man's fall grace came into action—not being needed prior to that since grace is primarily restorative. *Chen* is primarily favour shown and *chesed* is really covenantal loving kindness or steadfast love where God watches over and aids the weaker partner to the covenant, and does not desert him—whatever. The OT prophesied of a coming grace—that of Christ who would be the King of God's people. Also he would bring forgiveness of sins.

As it turned out 'the grace of God appeared [in Christ] bringing salvation' (Titus 2:11). Grace then was the saving power of men and women who repented and believed in Christ (Ephes. 2:8–10; II Tim. 1:9–10). It also aided new `believers to live the life of faith (I Cor.15:9–11), helping to discipline and train them in godliness (Titus 2:11–14). These things we have seen in our previous 3 terms under the headings of 'The Grace of Justification', 'The Grace of Sanctification', and 'The Grace of the Church' . Now we will turn our attention to 'The Grace Which is to Come'.

The Grace Which Is To Come

We all know that grace is of the Father or the Son, or both, together. We might assume that such grace is given to us in this life, and will not be needed in the life to come. However since we will receive everything in the life to come, then that everything will be of grace. We immediately think of resurrection, eternal life, glorification and seeing God and since all these things do not come to us by merit but by grace, then there is a grace which is yet to come.

In I Peter the writer speaks of a revelation of Christ which is yet to come. In 1:7 he speaks of the genuine faith of believers may be 'to praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ'; in 1:13 he enjoins his readers to 'set your hope fully on the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ', and in 4:13 he speaks of believers being glad 'when his glory is revealed'. Believers then look to the coming of Christ for they 'love his appearing'.

All of this adds up to the fact that there is a grace that is yet to come, i.e. 'the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'. Such grace must be of a great nature, and this can be seen by reading I Corinthians 2:7–10. What is coming is in one sense ineffable. We have no point of comparison in this world at which to start. We should also see I John 3:1-3 and Philippians 3:21. I Peter 1:8 implies that we are already tasting this since our present joy is 'full of glory'.

The Power and Wonder of the Revelation of Jesus Christ

We have already had a revelation of Jesus Christ. In Galatians 1:11–16 Paul speaks of his revelation of Christ, and ours is similar. In all cases it comes by the Holy Spirit (John 16:12–15), and though its forms may differ its substance does not. All we truly

know we have received by the Spirit (cf. I John 2:22–27; 5:12). It is true that our vision can become blurred (II Pet. 1:9) and that we can drift from the truth (Heb. 2:1–3; 3:13–14) if we will not constantly hear and obey the word, but it is also true that we can have a continuing ‘spirit of wisdom and revelation’ (Ephes. 1:17–19), and keep fresh in the present revelation of grace. Such revelation occupies us continually, and is sufficient for this life for ‘we walk by faith and not by sight’ (II Cor. 5:7), and such revelation is sufficient (cf. Col. 1:19; 2:3; 2:9).

Even so what we will be greatly conditions what we are being—now! This is seen in I John 3:1–3 and in II Corinthians 7:1. Because we know—in some measure—what we will be (I Cor. 2:10) we are confident to set about being like it now!

Note: The following 7 studies show the various elements of our hope. As we have pointed out, our hope for the future is a present dynamic to true, practical, and useful human living. The more we see the hope that is ahead the more we can ‘give a reason for it’ (I Pet. 3:15), and the more practical we will be in living this present life. Present grace may be but a foretaste to the ‘greater grace’ which is yet to come to us, but present grace is all-sufficient for us.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 4th. Term. 3rd. October, 1988. G.Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY TWO

THE GRACE OF COMING SONSHIP

Our Present Sonship and Its Grace

We know that we already are sons of God. This doctrine is seen in Romans 9:4–5; 8:14–17, 29; Galatians 4:4–6, cf. John 1:12–13; 3:1–3. This doctrine is strongly linked with God's Fatherhood of His Son, Jesus Christ (Ephes. 1:3; John 1:14, 18; 14:1–10). Through the Son we come to the Father (John 14:6; Matt. 11:27). All this is of grace.

The present sonship comes to us by the grace of adoption (Rom. 8:14–15; Gal. 4:5–6), and regeneration (John 1:12–13; I John 3:9–10).

Sonship also involves the doctrine of the familyhood of believers. We are all brethren (Matt. 23:8; I John 3:10ff.) and the church is 'the household of God' (I Tim. 3:15; Ephes. 2:18–19; Heb. 3:1–6). To live in the family under the Father (Ephes. 3:14–15; 4:6) is a rich situation which makes for social, spiritual and moral health.

Practical Sonship–Now

Christ's Sonship is the means by which we become sons (Gal. 3:26; John 14:6; Matt. 11:27; Ephes. 1:5–7; Ephes. 2:18–19). His Sonship whilst primary relational with the Father (John 1:18; 10:30) is also actional, i.e. the Son works with the Father and does what He requires (John 5:17–19; 4:34; 8:28; 14:10; cf. Heb. 2:10). This Sonship set out in Psalm 2 finds its fulfilment when the nations are the world are brought Under Christ's rule, and then given to the Father (I Cor. 15:24–28).

Man's original sonship of God (Acts 17:28; cf. Luke 3:38) was an actional one if we read the creational in Genesis 1:28f. mandate given to man Just as Jesus did what was the Father's will so man should do the same. Revelation 21:7 shows true sons to be conquerors. Thus in the grace of God which will come with the appearing of Jesus Christ true sonship will come to fulfilment.

Fulfilled Sonship and the Inheritance

I John 3:1–3 and Romans 8:29 (cf. Ephes. 1:5) show that our sonship will come to completion in the presence of the Father (Rev. 14:1; 22:4–5) We—as sons—shall be exactly like the Son, and in this God's Fatherhood will be evidenced in fulness. We will participate in Christ's Sonship then as we participate in it some measure now. Thus we shall be a kingdom of priests because he is the true Son and the true Priest.

Sonship is linked with 'the inheritance'. This is seen in Romans 8:17—'fellow heirs with Christ'—Galatians 4:5–6; Revelation 21:7; cf. I Peter 1:4–5; Ephesians 1:13–14, 18; 3:6). In Romans 4:13 Abraham and his people inherit the earth (cf. Matt. 5:5),

and in Revelation 21:7 the true sons inherit all that is in the new heavens and the new earth. The 'kingdom of priests' reigns over all the earth (Rev. 5:10; cf. 20:4, 6; 22:5).

There are other elements to this inheritance, and we will see these in future studies. However what we do know that this is a 'glorious inheritance', and like any inheritance assures us that we shall be people of substance, and shall possess all things (cf. I Cor. 3:21–22). We shall not want for anything or be poverty stricken, but the inheritance will also ensure a rich life of ministry and worship. We will inherit it together—as the Family of God, together with our Elder Brother (Heb. 2:17ff.).

This is all part of 'the grace that is coming to you at a revelation of Jesus Christ'.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 4th. Term. 17th. October, 1988. G.Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY THREE

THE GRACE OF RESURRECTION

Our Bodies Doomed to Death

Romans 8:10 says, 'Your bodies are dead because of sin,' which is often translated, 'Your bodies are doomed to death because of sin.' Romans 5:12 tells us that by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, for all sinned in Adam. Genesis 2:17 warned the primal couple that they would die if they sinned. We take it that they did die—relationally—to God. Man—of himself—is not immortal (I Tim. 6:16; cf. 'dust', Gen. 2:7; Eccles 3:20, 12:7; I Cor. 15:47–48), although it is clear that man—as an entity—is never annihilated (cf. John 5:28–29), although the impenitent will suffer what is called 'the second death' (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). Man fears death (Heb. 2:14–15) because after death is judgement (Heb. 9:27; cf. I John 4:18) so that man is afraid of death not so much because he has to die, as that he deserves to die (Paul Tillich). Man's fear of death really determines the way he lives. Death has a sting which is sin, and which is linked with man's guilt (I Cor. 15:55–56).

Christ Destroyed the Fear of Death and Promised Resurrection

Hebrews 2:14–15; John 5:24; 10:10; 11:25; 20:30–31—amongst other promises—shows that in Christ has killed the fear of death, and in him all shall be made alive (I Cor. 15:22). I Corinthians 15:12–56 Paul expounds the resurrection of the believer. He shows that Christ's death has brought forgiveness of sins to the believer (cf. Rom. 4:25), so that the penalty of death—the 'second death'—no longer obtains. Doubtless—as with Romans 8:10—the body's death is linked with man's primal sin, and his continuing sin, yet because of justification and the Spirit man will rise. In Christ all that is Christ's is his. Hence we rise in Christ (Col. 3:3; I Cor. 15:22; cf. Rom. 6:10). We are risen morally and spiritually (Ephes. 2:4–5; Rom. 6:1–10; Gal. 2:20), but we shall also rise bodily at the time of the general resurrection of the dead from the grave.

The Mode of Our Full Resurrection

Most Christians believe they will rise from the dead as new persons. Some believe in the resurrection of their flesh or their own bodies. There is some confusion on these issues. II Corinthians 4:16–5:8 seems to propound the following, namely that whilst this physical body—our present 'tent'—is being worn down by the attrition of persecution, and—perhaps—of natural wastage of age, yet 'the inner man' is being constantly renewed.

This could mean that when this tent is worn ‘paper thin’ then we cast it off in what is called ‘physical death’, and the full new man is then manifested both bodily (materially) and in heavenly glory (cf. I Cor. 15:35–64). Some think Paul means that whilst the believer who has died is with Christ yet the bodily form—the ‘heavenly dwelling’—will not be worn until the day of resurrection in time. Others believe the moment of human death is the moment of receiving the heavenly dwelling. Some think that in respect to eternity ‘the moment’ of death will be coincidental for all with ‘the moment’ of the resurrection in time.

I Corinthians 15: 35–54 suggests that the dead body of the believer is cast off and is a seed to the plant which results with such sowing, i.e. that the identity of the person may remain the same, but the person’s body does not retain its exact identity but is the seed of the glorified body to be. (We will deal with the glorified body in our next study).

The Present Power of the Resurrection

We have already suggested that the resurrection of the body is part of ‘the grace that is to come at a [the] revelation of Christ’ (I Pet. 1:13). We have already had a moral resurrection in Christ, in consequence of which we will be raised wholly on the day of resurrection. Christ’s resurrection guarantees our own. The penalty of our sin have been paid we have no fear of judgement (John 5:24; cf. Rom. 8:1 and I John 4:18). This results in present moral power and boosts our morale by genuine hope. John 11:25 assures us—in fact— that we shall never die. This destroys the fear of death, leaves us free to live in faith, hope and love. The thought that we shall never see death, encourages us to live truly. Future grace helps us to live presently in grace. The thrilling message of the Gospel (II Tim. 1:10) is that ‘he has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light’.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 4th. Term. 24th. October, 1988. G. Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY—STUDY FOUR—

THE GRACE OF GLORIFICATION

Our Beings Are Destined For Glory

One of the great passages of the N.T. is I Corinthians 2:6–10. It tells of ‘a secret and hidden wisdom which God decreed before the ages for our glorification’. Here Paul says nothing in this world can compare with, or be a starting point of, comparison for what God has prepared for His elect—in the age to come. Many N.T. passages (as also in the O.T.) refer to the life beyond this one, and the plan of God to (i) let us share in His glory (Rom. 5:2), (ii) see Christ’s glory revealed (John 17:24–26), (iii) see the glory of the new heavens and the new earth (Rom. 8:18), and (iv) be, ourselves, wonderfully glorified (Ephes. 1:11–14; Phil. 3:21; cf. I Cor. 15:35–54; I Cor. 2:6–10). All these things will prove to be to the praise of God’s glory (Isa. 43:6–7; Ephes. 1:11–14).

What Does Glorification Mean?

Passages such as Isaiah 43:6–7; Ephes. 1:4–14; I Cor 2:6–10 and Romans 18:18–25 show that God has destined man to be a glorious creature. Originally as he was made in the image and likeness of God he was a glorious creature (Gen. 1:26; 5:1–2; 9:6; Psa. 8:3f.; I Cor. 11:7), and although he has ‘died to God’ (Gen. 2:17; 3:1–6; II Cor. 5:15), yet, ontologically, that image cannot be erased. Whilst man has ‘fallen short of the glory of God’, and so has fallen short of his own glory, yet regeneration (John 3:3–6; Titus 3:5–7; II Cor 5:17) is the renewal of that image (cf. Ephes 4:20–24; Col., 3:9–10; cf. Rom. 12:2), as glorification is the completion of that renewal. As we have seen above God has destined believing man to glorification. This glorification means the created image will be wholly restored, but will have the ‘plus’ of eternal life through resurrection. Since ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God’, then man must receive a new body (see Study 3) in order to live in the glory of God and inhabit the new heavens and the new earth ‘in which dwells only righteousness’.

What Causes the New Glorification and What Will It Be?

Philippians 3:21 tells us that we will have a body of glory ‘like unto his body of glory’. That this body has its own glory is the subject of the long passage of I Corinthians 15:35–54, and this shows that the different species of creation have bodies according to their specie. The ‘man of dust’—i.e. man in Adam—is doomed to dust and to have only the image of the earthy progenitor. Man in Christ will be shaped like Christ himself

(Rom. 8:29–30; cf. 8:18–25) and will ‘bear the image of the heavenly man’. Something of this is indicated in II Corinthians 4:16–5:8 for man will have a heavenly body (building) which will give him dimensions which are beyond the temporal (cf. Eccles. 3:11) although mankind will ‘reign upon the earth’ (Rev. 5:10). Our being will in the character of Christ, fully mature, and our bodies will be substantial, not ethereal. They will be designed to function within a perfect creation.

II Corinthians 3:18 (cf. II Cor. 4:16–18) indicates that this process of glorification is proceeding even now and will be culminated in the resurrection (I Cor. 15:51–54) when we shall be ‘to the praise of His glory’, i.e. like Him, for we shall see Him face to face (I John 3:1–3). This requires us to concentrate upon him who is the author and completer of our faith (Heb. 12:1–2). It is the hope of what we will be which gives us present power for living.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 4th. Term. 31st. October, 1988. G.Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY FIVE

THE GRACE OF THE NEW WORSHIP

The Worship We Know Here

The worship that we know in this world is perhaps the most comprehensive of subjects we could pursue. Genesis 4 tells of the first worship of fallen man, which was sacrifice. The history of man is the history of worship, whether true worship or idolatry. Man must worship—whatever! The primary words for worship in both the OT and the NT mean both worship and service. To serve God is to worship Him, to worship Him is to serve Him. The nations should worship and serve God, but Romans 1:18–31 (cf. Gen. 3:1–6) shows us how man became idolatrous. At the same time Hebrews 11 tells us of the stream of faithful humanity which worshipped God—in faith. In the background of covenant we have true worship given as a gift (Rom. 9:4). In the NT we have worship also given in the New Covenant (Heb. 9:14; Rom. 12:1, etc.) We must understand that we cannot worship God without the action of grace upon us (Heb. 9:14), and to be permitted to worship is grace.

The Grace of Worship in Eternity

Many beautiful passages in the book of the Revelation show us pure worship. That is the four living creatures, the celestial elders, the celestial creatures such as cherubim and seraphim and all angels worship God in purity. Their worship stems from (a) the nature of God as He is in His holiness, eternity and Creatorhood, and (b) from His nature and work as redeemer, and (c) for the judgements which God brings upon the creation for its evil. In the latter two elements the Lamb is worshipped for he is with the Father on His throne, and assists in heading up the Kingdom.

Because the book of Revelation is describing God's actions in history we have events in heaven which happen in the course of history. Thus we see specifically the following situations of worship—in heaven: (i) the worship of God by the redeemed—7:9–17, (ii) the worship of God (on Mt. Zion) by the 144,000—14:1–5, (iii) the worship of God by those who had overcome the beast—15:2–4, and (iv) the multitude in heaven which seems to be of both celestial and glorified terrestrial worshippers, worshipping God for (a) His just judgements over all evil, and (b) the occasion of the wedding of the Bride and the Lamb—19:1–9. If we examine these passages closely we can detect the wonderful nature of worship in heaven.

The Matter of Worship in Time and Eternity

We need to keep two things in mind, (i) we now, are God's temple (I Cor. 3:16; Ephes. 2:18f.; I Pet. 2:1–10), and each of us is a temple of God (I Cor. 6:19; Rom. 12:1). Thus we worship here on earth by the Spirit (John 4:20f.; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 1:9; Heb. 9:14). The problem we have in understanding worship is one of prophetic interpretation.

The prophecies point to a new worship on the earth by the people of God—true Israel—in which the nations join. See Isaiah 2:1–4 (cf. Mic. 4:1–3) where the nations will want to join the true Israel in worship and service to God. When we look at Isaiah 45:14, 22–25; 49:12; 55:5; 60:3–6; 66:18; Zechariah 8:20–23 and similar prophecies we see the nations will come to Mt. Zion to worship—becoming part of God’s people. In particular Isaiah 56:6–8 points to the Gentiles worship in Israel at the temple, for the temple will be called ‘the house of prayer for all nations’. Our problem is to know whether this Mt. Zion is physical and geographical—here on this earth—or is symbolical of heaven, and even in heaven itself.

Since now the church is the new temple is the present time the time of the new worship (i.e. worship by and in the Spirit) as promised by Christ in John 4:20ff.? Or, is this new temple the one which will be in heaven, and even though in heaven also on earth, in the worship indicated in Revelation? Various prophetic interpretative systems place it in one or other or both of these contexts. We ought not to be dogmatic in our systems, if indeed any such system can be correct. From Revelation we know that we are to be a ‘kingdom of priests unto our God’ (1:6) and that as such we shall reign upon the earth (5:10; cf. 20:4) and reign for ever (22:5), though whether on earth or both at the one time is not clearly distinguished.

Worship Now and Then

One thing we do know, namely that we have the great joy and privilege of worshipping God now, and will worship and serve Him throughout all eternity. This is grace indeed. Here we worship with many impediments, but we worship, and this worship is the very essence and heart of our life. There we shall worship in utter purity, without any impediment of evil or temptation or stress. We shall worship in the wonder of glorified bodies, and be a priesthood which serves God and the whole creation. We do not altogether know what this means, but we look to this ‘grace which is to come at a (the) revelation of Jesus Christ’. It will be a time of great joy, and peace and glory.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 4th. Term.7th. November, 1988. G. Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY SIX

THE GRACE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

The Bride and the Lamb

The classic passage in the Epistles regarding the matter of the Bride and the Lamb of the N.T. is Ephesians 5:21–32. In this Paul tells us that husbands and wives should see each other—and themselves—in the light of the (coming) marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. He details their relationships. In modern terms we would say that Christ is the archetypal or fontal Husband, his wife—the church—is the archetypal or fontal Bride, and human husbands and wives are ectypes (copies derived from the original) of these. This also is the case with relationships of the earthly husband and wife.

When we ask where this image comes from—for why should it be used, at all?—we are shown that it derives from the Old Testament, from God’s relationship with Israel. In Isaiah 54:5 God says, ‘For your Maker is your husband’. In Hosea (cf. 2:19) the prophet shows in many ways that Israel is the spouse of God. Ezekiel 16 is a sad chapter describing her unfaithfulness, but in the N.T. the Woman is the true Spouse. In Revelation 12—though not nominated as God’s wife—she is the woman who brings forth the child who is to rule the nations. In Galatians 4:21–31 she is ‘the Jerusalem above, the mother of us all’. In Romans 7:4 and II Cor. 11:2–3 the church is seen as wedded to Christ. So then we can accept the fact that the Bride is most significant.

The Wedding Feast of the Bride and the Lamb

The descriptions surrounding the event of the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb are informative and important. We look at the Bride, and see the following, (i) she is virginal (Rev. 19:8; 21:2; cf Ephes. 5:21–23) dressed in white linen, (ii) she is beautiful, being suitably adorned, and ‘having all the glory of God’ (Rev. 19:7–8; 21:2, 10–21), (iii) she is the whole people of God. This is seen clearly in all images such as the Vine and the branches, the holy temple, the holy flock, the body—and so on, (iv) she is the holy city. This a rich principle which begins with Jerusalem in the O.T., and is developed so that the Holy City is ‘the Jerusalem above’ the true ‘Mt. Zion’ which is ‘the city of God’. The holy city embraces all the nations—as the elect people of God. Her gates are opened day and night and the nations stream into it. The river of life, the tree of life, and the throne of God and the Lamb are some of her elements, (v) she is the true, holy temple. We saw in our last Study that the church is the temple, and we saw this temple will be ‘the house of prayer for all nations’. In Revelation 21:22 the temple—as such—is no longer something in the City for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are now the temple, i.e. they are one with their people, as the Lamb is one with his Bride.

When we look at Bridegroom who is Christ, the Son of God and the Lamb, we see that he is the Warrior King who has fought the powers of darkness and defeated them (cf. I Cor. 15:24–28; Rev. 14:15; 19:15ff. etc.) He is the true Bridegroom, loving the Bride, giving himself for her, wedding her, is her Head, leading her, and is one who ‘nourishes and cherishes her’, and with her brings forth fruit

The Grace of Being at the Ultimate Marriage Feast

Because this has not taken place, and because it is the archetypal Wedding Feast, we cannot describe it by other than human descriptions from what we know of earthly weddings. The remarkable thing is that we will be there as ‘guests’ and as part of the Bride herself. Together we will see the beauty of the Bride, the majesty of the Bridegroom, and we will be united in the great joy of the multitudes who praise swell triumphantly. We know that as members of the Bride, and as Christ’s true body we will not be sterile and barren. All eternity will be the bringing forth of fruit together with Christ, even though we—as yet—do not fully know the nature of that fruit. Man will be joined to God without becoming God, though God—in one sense—has become man.

The Value of Ephesians 5:21–31

Paul is not likening the marriage of Christ and the Bride to human marriage, but is saying that the principles of human marriage can only be understood from the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. We do not work from the ectypal to archetypal, but we discover the meaning of the ectypal from the archetypal. This discovery is powerful, very enriching and helps us to live, functionally within marriages, our families, and the family of God. Each wedding, then, is a prophetic action, an eschatological event, a showing forth of the ultimate Wedding, the fruit of redemption—since purity has been restored— and so is a foretaste of the great Marriage to come!

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 4th. Term.13th. November, 1988. G. Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY SEVEN

THE GRACE OF THE NEW CITY

Cities and The Holy City

As we suggested in our last study, the idea of the City of God is one found throughout Scripture. So is the idea of the city of man, i.e. man founding his own city. The mandate of God to man (Gen. 1:28f.; 9:1-7; Psalm 8:3f.) was in essence to spread across the earth and have dominion over all of it. Perhaps the thought was to have an even spread across the whole earth, without the structure of cities. Significantly Cain was the first to build a city (Gen. 4:17) and in it both art and industry grew. Following the flood it seems Ham's descendants—in particular Nimrod—built cities (Gen. 10:9ff.). In Genesis 11:1-9 the building of Babylon with its infamous tower is singled out for description. In the confusion caused by the birth of many languages men were again scattered across the earth.

The building of Babel is set out in 11:4 where it is clear that the city was to be enclosed, protected, have a watch-tower for defence, and be autonomous, in defiance of the mandate of God. This is the primary idea of the city. Hence in the O.T. Babylon is the symbol of human defiance of God, and the establishment of man's autonomy.

By contrast Jerusalem becomes the city of God, the place of God's presence and of His worship. It is a 'holy city'. Jacques Ellul in his book, *The Meaning of the City* (Eerdmans, U.S.A., 1970) pursues the principles of 'from Cain to Jerusalem', and 'from Eden to Jerusalem'. The full picture is, of course, 'from Eden to the ultimate Eden', and 'from no city to the City of God'. It is certain that all history is really the story of two cities—Babylon and Jerusalem, the city of man and the City of God.

The City Here and the City to Come

The writer of Hebrews said, 'Here we have no continuing city, but we seek the city which is to come' (13:14). In 11:10 he had said of Abraham, 'For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Already in the O.T. Jerusalem had become the centre of all things. God dwells at the mercy seat overshadowed by the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. The Psalms have innumerable references to the beautiful, powerful and unique nature of this city. See 87:1-3; 78:69; 46:4; 48:8. The prophets too have wonderful things to say about Zion, as in Isaiah 60:1ff and 52:1ff. It is the holy city, the beautiful city, the glorious city, the joy of the whole earth. All nations shall desire to go up to her (Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-3, and many other references).

In the N.T. Paul speaks of 'the Jerusalem above which is 'free', and is 'our mother'. As we have seen the book of the Revelation takes up the theme of the Holy City in chapters 19, 21, and 22.

The Unholy City, Babylon

When we trace the history of Babylon in the O.T. we find a city at which we well might marvel. John the Seer marvelled at Babylon when he saw her in Revelation 17. She was certainly an impressive city and one of great political and international power. Nebuchadnezzar built the city and became inordinately proud of his accomplishment. (One tradition has it that this vast city was built in a fortnight!). In the book of the Revelation Babylon is the antithesis of the Holy City. It is unholy, impure, evil, cruel, seductive, politically powerful and morally defiling. Whilst it was a city open to all nations yet it was so in order to seduce them with harlotry, i.e. idolatry. It was in league with the evil beast, the cone of the great red dragon. This principle of the evil city sought to alienate man from God and establish itself as the central power of the universe. Ultimately this city is destroyed by the very power which helped to found it.

The Ultimate Holy City

We can now look at this City. Whilst Jerusalem was always ‘the Holy City’ representing the God of covenant, and the people of the covenant, yet, also, it was often viewed as wrong and rebellious. The prophecies are often directed against its rebellion, and its abominations, some of which were practiced in the temple, as we see in Ezekiel. Ezekiel first shows the glory of God, and at one point the glory leaving the city. Only grace and mercy spared Jerusalem. In Revelation 11:8 the city is called ‘Sodom and Egypt’. Psalm 50:1 nevertheless says, ‘Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.’

The descriptions the Holy City in Revelation 19 as the Bride about to be married, and prepared for that event is very strong. In 21 the ‘new Jerusalem’ is the Holy City and the Bride, in whom God Himself dwells, and is a place where there is no suffering and no death. The things of the past have passed away. This city has ‘all the glory of God’, is most beautiful—as the Psalms constantly insist. It is open day and the night to the nations, whereas the ancient walled cities were heavily guarded. All the nations walk by the light of that City, as well they may, since its throne is that of God and the Lamb, who themselves are the very Temple—the union of God’s people and Himself. The river of life and the tree of life are available to the nations. Within it all is pure, and its inhabitants—who constitute a kingdom of priests— shall see His face, and shall reign for ever. So wonderful is the City!

Nothing could better sum it up than Hebrews 11:22–24, ‘But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.’

NCTM Monday Night Series. 4th. Term. 21st. November, 1988. G. Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY EIGHT

THE GRACE OF THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

‘A Kingdom of Priests’

Revelation 1:6; 5:13; 20:4 and 22:5 show us that we are already ‘a kingdom of priests’ and (ii) that we will have this kingly ministry, and reign on the earth—as such— and reign forever. This is part of ‘great grace’s greater grace’. In Ephesians 3:1–11 we see that all ministry is by grace, and in II Cor. 4:1 that is by God’s mercy.

The Meaning of ‘the Royal Priesthood’

The terms ‘royal priesthood’ and ‘holy nation’ are found in Exodus 19:5–6, and are repeated in I Peter 2:9. They obviously had some meaning for Israel, and would be understood, as ‘a kingdom in which all are priests’. Israel was God’s Kingdom and His people. They were therefore His people and His priesthood. This could mean (i) they were initiated and owned by Him, or (ii) they acted towards Him as priests must do towards God, and then towards men, as priests must act towards men. In some sense priests have the role of mediators between God and His people, God and mankind, and also as witnesses (Isa. 43:9–12).

Israel Prophesied To Be ‘the Priests of the Lord’

Isaiah 61 is a famous chapter for our Lord read it at Nazareth, and then accredited it to himself. One of the Messianic promises regarding Israel is (verse 6), ‘But you shall be called the priests of the Lord, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God.’ In Isaiah 62:12 also spoke of Israel, ‘And they shall be called The holy People, The redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought out, a city not forsaken.’

Doubtless these promises refer to the last times and even beyond, into eternity, and we can safely say they are being fulfilled by the true ‘Israel of God’ (Gal. 6:16). They certainly link with Isaiah 56:6–8 with the New Temple—‘the house of prayer for all nations’, and so I Peter 2:9–10; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:4 and 22:5 all refer to the ‘kingdom of priests’ the new community born at Pentecost, and having a priestly ministry in the world.

The Present Priestly Ministry

We Bring the Message and Forgiveness of Christ to the Nations

In I Timothy 1:1–5 Paul calls for the church to pray for all men, linking it with salvation for mankind, and yet asserting that only Christ is the mediator between God and man.

He is the true High Priest, and the one after the order of Melchizedek as the writer of Hebrews so well expounds. Whilst I Peter 2:1–10 expounds both the new temple and the priesthood we are not told by the writer what order of priesthood we constitute. Even so we can see the duties of that priesthood, namely ‘to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’, to ‘offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ’ (I Peter 2:5), for Hebrews 13:15–16 speaks of ‘a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name’, adding that these sacrifices are ‘doing good’ and ‘sharing what you have’. In John 20 Jesus anointed the disciples with the Holy Spirit and told them ‘Whoever’s sins you remit they are remitted and whoever sins you retain they are retained’, thus showing that the declaration of forgiveness (not magisterial but ministerial, not sacerdotal but declaratory) is a communication of forgiveness which can be called ‘priestly’. All of these things speak of the present priestly ministry—in Christ the true priest—which we have as the priestly community.

Living in the Last Times As the Royal Priesthood

Because it is a holy priesthood we ought to be holy, and this in the face of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet and the Unholy City is no small undertaking. However in Daniel 7:18,22, 27 (cf. I Cor. 6:2) the saints were promised rule in—and as—the Kingdom of God, for they are to rule over the nations. In Luke 22:28 this kingdom was assigned to the apostles (cf. Luke 12:13), and Revelation 5:10; 20:4 and 22:5 show that this reign will fully take place at the end time. So then the true community lives in this hope, but living in the hope ‘reigns in life’ through grace (Rom. 5:17). It brings the message of God’s victory to its times, overcomes the evil one (I John 2:12; 4:4; 5:4; 5:18), and anticipates the final victory.

The Future Royal Priestly Ministry Through Grace

All that we have said above shows a continuity of priestly ministry from Abel’s offering, through the patriarchs, Israel and the church into eternity. We will minister to God, i.e. lead the creation into worship, for we shall be above angels since we judge them (I Cor. 6:2). That worship will constitute praise and adoration, i.e. ‘telling out the wonderful deeds of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light’. We will be the holy people offering spiritual sacrifices (I Pet. 2:1–10; cf. Heb. 13:15–16. Daniel 7:18, 22, 27 shows this ministry as belonging to the saints of the Most High. The intimacy of such ministry is shown in that there will be no temple apart from God in the Holy City, but God and the Lamb. His holy royal Priesthood shall be intimately and wholly one with Him.

NCTM. Monday Night Series. 4th. Term. 28th. November, 1988. G. Bingham

THE GRACE OF ETERNITY-STUDY NINE

THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

In I Peter 5:10 God is called 'the God of all grace'. This means of course that there is no grace but His. He is the Source of all grace. So, then, when we meet grace it is from God. In I Peter 4:10 it is called 'varied grace', or 'many faceted grace'. It is not that grace has different forms, but that it meets different needs. It is the one grace of God, i.e. 'God always going towards man to do him good'.

Grace in the Old and New Testaments

We have seen that what we call 'grace' in the N.T. (*charis*) is God's 'steadfast love' in the O.T. because God has—so to speak—contracted with Israel in covenant to do her good, and no matter how much she fails that *chesed* is always there—in action. Whilst it is not deserved it is, nevertheless, promised. Another word is *chen* which speaks of 'favour', and generally that of a superior to one below him. When we put the two words—*chesed* and *chen*—together then we come to something like *charis* in the N.T. Even so there is still a difference. Titus 2:11 speaks of the grace of God coming and appearing with Christ's entrance as a man into this world (cf. John 1:14, 16–17). This grace is very special. 'Steadfast love' in the O.T. was specially for Israel, but in the N.T. grace is for all men. God's grace as shown in the Cross and Resurrection certainly transcends anything in the Old Testament. It is the complete revelation of God, and is of immense power to redeem us.

The Varied Grace of God

This year—in our studies—we have seen grace under four headings, 'The grace of justification', 'The grace of sanctification', 'The grace of the church', and 'The grace of eternity'. If we go back over those many studies we can refresh ourselves in the vast expanse of God's grace. What we should remember is that grace is the personal action of God towards those whom He graces. So we speak of grace—'from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. The apostles constantly used this salutation-prayer, and saw that their readers and converts needed a constant action of grace from God. They often linked grace with peace, mercy and love. In John 1:14 grace is linked with truth, and this is thought by some to be a summary of the covenantal goodness of God as stated in Exodus 34:6–7 and similar references. The whole amazing truth is that the God all grace is amongst men, active in their affairs and doing wonderful things for them.

The People of God and His Grace

We saw in Acts 4:33 that 'great grace was upon them all', i.e. on the church. In Acts 11:23 Barnabas saw the grace of God on the new church at Antioch. In both cases it was the exceptional life of the church. In Acts 'the grace of God', 'the Gospel of grace', and 'the word of [His] grace' are terms which show us that God's grace was His personal action and power which kept the church, enabled it to expand, to proclaim the

Gospel, and which protected people from destruction through over-heavy pressures and persecution.

We saw in ‘the grace of justification’ that God’s gift of justification comes out of grace (Rom. 3:24) and causes believers to ‘reign in life’ (Rom. 5:17)—so vast is the triumph over sin and judgement; this grace was planned prior to time (Eph. 1:4–7). This grace frees from the fear of death and the reign of sin (cf. Rom. 6:12–14).

In ‘the grace of sanctification’ we saw that this grace set us apart as God’s holy ones prior to time (I Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:3–4), and then in time cleansed and purified us by the work of the Cross and the application of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5–7), the Holy Spirit daily keeping believers in the dynamic life of holiness.

In ‘the grace of the church’ we saw the vast range of the work of the Spirit, not only in ‘cleansing a people for Himself’, and making them ‘a people zealous for good works’ (Titus 2:11–14), but grace for living together in love, mutual caring, and generosity operated continually (e.g. Acts 4:33). This grace encouraged God’s people to give generously (II Cor. chs. 8 and 9). At the same time there was grace for ministry within the people of God (cf. Rom. 12:3, 6), and grace for the ministry of proclamation (cf. Eph. 3:1–11). This was so that grace would ‘extend to more and more’ (II Cor. 4:15) and bring so praise to God.

Finally, in ‘the grace of eternity’ we saw that we are to fix our hope upon ‘the grace that is to come to us at a revelation of Jesus Christ’. This we called ‘great grace’s greater grace’ for the final ultimate revelation of that grace will be of a vast action of God in the fulfilment of our resurrection, glorification, full sonship, full (royal) priesthood, our total worship of God and the Lamb, the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, our inheritance of all things, and our reigning over the earth. Certainly we cannot comprehend this great grace. Ephesians 1:7 and 2:7 tell us that this grace will be seen by all creation—to the glory of God.

Our Present Ways of Living in Grace

We have seen that ‘great grace was upon them all’, the apostles ‘urged them to continue in the grace of God’, the apostles had been commended ‘to the grace of God for the word which they had fulfilled’—and so on. Daily the church lived in grace. Daily we need to live in grace, i.e. walk by the ‘gospel of grace’—its truth, and the God of grace Who is operative through His Son, His Spirit and His word. John reported, ‘And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace’. This we need continually.

We can receive grace ‘in an empty (vain) way’ (II Cor 6:2). We can ‘fall away from grace’ (Gal. 5:4). We can try to justify and even try to sanctify ourselves by ‘law way’ as against ‘grace way’. We can boast in our own efforts and energies used instead of the grace of God which alone can achieve true actions and results (I Cor. 15:10). We should resist the attempts of twisted legalism, or lawless antinomianism to cancel grace and set the pride of man in the centre of things. He Who is the God of all grace will assist us in this, and bring us the joy, serenity, and love that always flows with dependence upon grace.

Praise be to Him, the God of all grace, the Redeemer of the human race.