



Title: By God's Grace Go We
Theme: Living By Grace
Series: Living in the Aroma of God's Grace

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” (1 Corinthians

15:10)

This powerful truth was written by the Apostle Paul. Before his conversion this great laborer for the Lord was named Saul. He persecuted the church and oversaw the killing of Christians. (Acts 7:58; 9:1) He achieved a high position, had good personal morality and a righteousness that had the approval of the church of his day. (2 Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:4-6) Paul called himself the chief of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15)

Out of love for Jesus and after considering all that Christ had done for him, Paul was driven to work hard for the church. The word “work” (kopiao) means to labor to the point of being weary and exhausted.

It is not uncommon to see mankind put in many hours of labor for the gods of this world. Working from early in the morning to late at night, to exhaustion to see their dreams come true or enjoy what motivates their hearts. Men of this world think nothing of staying up late at night making the proper preparations for something they enjoying doing. It does not bother them to get up before daylight so they can get an early start on their day of enjoying some hobby, working in their careers and jobs, or just enjoying the pleasures of this world.

A child of God who is illuminated with the truth of Christ's sacrificial love for him works late into the night to make the proper preparations to get done what God has called him to do. He is up early so that he can get the most out of his day in his labors for the Lord. Working to exhaustion and being weary seems like only a small cost compared to the price Jesus paid on the Cross of Calvary to cover his many sins.

I would propose to you that our labors for the Lord are not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58) and we do not have to do our work for the Lord in our own strength. There is a grace available that will see us through victoriously in every work the Lord gives us, and that work will not be without an effect of some kind. Holy Spirit led Christians will face many battles for the Lord just as the Apostle Paul did and they will be able to say as he did, “...we [faced] hardships... far beyond our ability to endure... But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God... On Him, we... set our hope...” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)

Just what are some powerful truths to living by grace?

But by the grace of God

The first key to living by grace requires that Christians not forget that they secure God's acceptance or do great things for the Lord not by their own efforts, but by the grace of God. God does great things through common men who are sold out for the cause of Christ. The Lord will always have a faithful church serving Him. Romans 11:5-6 says, "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." (Romans 11:6)

In the passages of Scripture just before Romans 11:5 and 6, Paul gives proof of God's faithfulness to reserve for Himself a faithful church who has not surrendered their hearts to the gods of this world. Paul writes, "God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel: 'Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me?' And what was God's answer to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'" (Romans 11:2-4)

The worship of Baal all through Israel's history was a major sin problem for the Israelites. Baal was the name given to many different gods that drew people away from the true worship of the one true God. The name Baal almost always represents that which pulls faith and worship toward anything that draws attention away from God, Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. When we see people who live in this world worship their manmade gods, we begin to question, "Lord are we the only ones who hunger for your righteousness, who hunger for your Word and desire to see Your will done?"

Despite the fact that many in this country are rejecting the fear of the Lord, that fear reflected in the founding fathers of this nation. God has the same promise and hope for us as he did Elijah and the Apostle Paul. The Lord by His grace will reserve for Himself a chosen people.

These Christians are saved and empowered by His grace. Who they are now has nothing to do with their own merits or works. It is only a matter of surrender to the Lordship of Christ that enables the children of God to live by His grace.

A man is not saved from the effects of sin because he lives in a nation that says "In God We Trust." He is not saved because his dad is a preacher or because he has a long family history of professing Christians. He is saved because God on the account of the sacrificial love of Christ sent the Holy Spirit to draw his heart to Christ. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..." (John 6:44) In regard to the amount of the people who will respond to that call Jesus said, "...But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

Just as in Elijah's and the Apostle Paul's day there will only be a remnant who will truly surrender to the call of God, enjoy the love of Christ and walk in the step with the Holy Spirit. The Lord will reserve for Himself a people who will love and obey Jesus Christ and enjoy His grace that is given freely.

This "grace" (*charis*) mentioned in Romans 11:6 causes an unspeakable joy, brings pleasure and gratification. It allows the repentant sinner to find favor and acceptance and enjoy the abundant life in Christ. This grace literally transforms the repentant sinner and causes him to be hungry for the righteousness of God, thus the Lord is able to keep a chosen people for Himself and His work. This grace from God is constant, brings strength and guidance throughout the lifetime of the believer while he lives on this earth.

Faith as Abraham expressed

Christians who live by grace are a chosen people for the Lord and they express the same faith as Abraham expressed. Romans 4:16 says, "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham... (Romans 4:16)

Abraham is the example of a man justified by faith alone. Paul writes, "What then shall we say [about] Abraham...?" The Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to say much about Abraham's faith. "...Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." (Romans 4:18-24)

The whole of Scripture presents Abraham's readiness to venture out on the mere Word of God. Faith is not a leap in the dark, but an obedient response when God has clearly spoken to you. God speaks to us today through the written Word of God and everything must be brought in line with it. The Christian life is based on the same three parameters as were set forth to Abraham; obeying the Word of God, returning to the Word of God and waiting upon the Word of God to be fulfilled in our lives.

Christians who live by grace have faith in the God who created all things by the word of His power, as in the beginning. (Genesis 1:3) Christians have the whole of God's written Word to establish all the faith they need to see them through every situation in life here and for eternity. Holy Spirit illuminated children of God are fully persuaded that God will not leave nor forsake them. (Hebrews 13:5)

As long as they seek first His kingdom and righteousness, He will provide for all their needs. (Matthew 6:33) His Holy Spirit will be within them for empowerment as long as they are obedient in their callings. (Matthew 28:18-20) Their labors are not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58) If they do not grow weary in doing good they will reap a harvest. (Galatians 6:9)

Work diligently

Christians who live by grace walk in the confidence and power that the Lord gave Abraham. They also work diligently at what God calls them to do because they know He saves sinners who call out to Him in Christ's name. Romans 10:13 says, "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:12-13)

Christians who live by grace have a longing for the gospel to get out where people can hear it. They long to know all that God's Word says about the life of the Lord Jesus. They constantly pray, "Lord, how can lost sinners call on the name of the Lord unless they have heard the message about Christ? How can people hear unless there is someone to preach to them?" (Romans 10:14-15)

To "preach" (kerusso) means to publicly herald or proclaim, announce or publish Christian truths with the attendant privileges and obligations along with an urging for a reception of His gospel. Christians who are living by grace have a heart cry that urges them to become involved in some way of getting the Word of God out to the public. They are not satisfied with the teaching of God only being taught within the church walls.

The Bible says "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" I thank the Lord for every Christian who lived out their faith in Christ before my life. I thank the Lord for those who shared God's Word with me and expressed a faith in prayer for my soul and relationship with Christ. They are the most beautiful people in the world to me.

God's Divine power to live

Christians who live by God's grace are actively involved in getting the gospel of Christ out and they enjoy God's Divine power to live a life that brings glory to God and Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-4 says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Before the child of God accepts Jesus Christ into his spiritual heart and life he is bound by sin, a slave to it needing to be set free. (John 8:34) I once knew a man who was bound by alcoholism. He was able to beat that bondage, but only to be surrendered over to a new bondage, a new sin that satisfied only the selfish flesh. It is impossible for the man without the Lord Jesus to understand the teachings of the Word of God about Christ. The Bible says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4) Jesus said, "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy..." (John 10:10)

Those who live by grace know and enjoy what Jesus said about Himself, "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) He also said, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36)

Christians who live by grace have tasted that the Lord is good and they walk in freedom from the sin that once had them bound. I heard a fine young man who was not a Christian say that he would never live as he had seen other men live. Within four years he was living exactly like and even worse than those he said he would never become like.

Over the years this same man came to know Christ and for over twenty years now has lived free from the bondages of sin that were destroying his marriage, career and keeping him from enjoying all that the Lord wanted for him. For over twenty years now he has lived by God's grace and has found abundant security and provision for living as a child of God.

It is God's mercy that he saves man from the gates of hell, which is what mankind deserves, yet He also chose to impart life abundantly to those who receive Christ. Those who live by God's grace through Christ are given an eternal joy, an unspeakable peace, and an abundance for preparing to walk in the Lord's perfect will for them. These Christians see God restore what sin had devoured, they are given wisdom when they ask the Lord for it, produce fruit of the Spirit from their regenerated spiritual hearts and walk in the authority of Christ's Name. They have communion with God and fellowship with Christ.

The Apostle Paul wrote about the power of God to change a man after the Holy Spirit takes the veil of the spiritual heart off so repentant sinners may enjoy a life being continually changed. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

Christians who live by grace have a supernatural power from God to express a freedom to say no to sin and yes to righteousness. They see and respond differently to the Word of God than those who see God's Word as rules and regulations.

The Apostle Peter wrote of the power of God's Word in 1 Peter 1:23, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:23) Christians who live by God grace have Holy Spirit illumination that the Word of God is not rules and regulations through which man tries to gain favor with God. However, they understand that the Word of God is a mirror that reflects the righteousness and holiness of God and Christ. Therefore when they expose their spiritual hearts to cleansing work of the Word of God, they behold Christ and pray in the Divine power of God's Holy Spirit to make them Christ-like.

Nathaniel Hawthorne told the story of a little village that had a mountain with a rock formation that looked like the face of a man. There was a legend that held nearly every child captivated and gave hope of a future for the people. It was said that some day a man would come in to the village who would look just like the formation of that rock and that man would bring great blessings upon everyone who lived in the village. One boy took that legend to be true. Year after year he would gaze upon the rock formation and meditate upon the character of the man who he believed was going to come some day. He imagined what it would be like to be this man who would bring such great blessing to the people. After many years of gazing, hoping and reflecting, old age overcame him. Without even realizing it his character changed and his face had the appearance of that old rock formation on the mountain.

One day, as this old man walked down the street of his village, he met a young lad who too believed the legend. When the young boy saw the old man's face, he looked up toward the rock formation and ran through the village saying "He is here, he is here."

Christians who live by God's grace have grasped the truth of what it means to become a disciple of Christ. "Disciple" (*mathetes*) of Christ means to accept in the Christian's mind and heart the views and practices of Jesus Christ. They allow the Holy Spirit of Christ to mold them into the image of Christ as they behold the Christ revealed through the written Word of God. Christians who live by grace have this as their theme song, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

God who longs to be gracious

Through God's grace Christians have all they need to be changed into the image of Christ and accomplish all that God has called them to do. They also serve a God who longs to be gracious. Isaiah 30:18 says, "Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him." (Isaiah 30:18 NAS)

The Lord did not give you and me I what we deserved while we were indulging our selfishness and worldly lust rather than respond to the Holy Spirit's promptings to come to Christ. We deserved His judgment and eternal separation from God.

God's love caused Him to stay His hand of judgment in regard to those He foreknew would come to Christ. The Bible says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Here is the intimate bond between God the Father and Christ His Son and their commitment to express the mercies of God. The Bible says, "He is patient with [sinners], not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

I clearly remember a time before I was a Christian. I was being used by boys who were claimed to be my friends to meet a girl that one of the guys liked. They saw me in town and asked me to get in their car with them and we drove to the town of which that girl lived. While we were on our way they gave me a beer, I was in the back seat and the young man who like the girl who we were going to see was in the front seat on the passenger side of the car. The driver and he were having a beer drinking contest while the car was going down the highway in speeds well over 120 miles an hour. This was done on several occasions as we drove along. At any moment we could have hit a deer or lost control and gone off the road. At that speed it would have been highly unlikely that anyone of us would have lived. By God's grace none of was hurt or killed.

However, just a few months later, the driver was killed after spending a night out with friends drinking and driving. All of us who knew the boy that was killed had to sit in a room with a father who had lost a son to drinking and driving, listening to his plea to change how we were living.

God's justice was severe, "a man reaps what he sows," while at the same time He was gracious on my life and waited for me to come to Christ. I am very thankful to have been involved with so many Christians at that time of my life who were praying for me to come to Christ before it was too late.

Christians who live by grace spend much time in prayer for those who do not know Christ, knowing that God longs to be gracious to those who will come to Christ.

By God's grace go we. Living by God's grace is the greatest life that can be offered to anyone and it is a life that is enjoyed by many a child of God. By choice sinners can surrender to the Holy Spirit's call to come to Christ and become a very special part of God's chosen--people a remnant sold out to the good purposes of the Lord. Living by grace enables Christians to express that same faith in God that Abraham did. Living by grace motivates the children of God to be diligent in getting the gospel out to a lost and dying world, knowing that the Lord saves all who will call out to Him. Living by grace enables Christians to enjoy God's power to live in a way that brings glory to Christ. Living by grace causes Christians to marvel and appreciate the fact God longs to be gracious to sinners who will someday come to Christ.

That is why we have opened our church doors for more prayer and why we are investing in making a prayer room where Christians can pray and not be interrupted by all that is in this world that keeps the children of God from praying.

It is our hearts' desire that God would extend His grace to those who live in Norton County Kansas.

Let us pray.

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