



**Title: Grasping the Liberating Grace of God**  
**Theme: Liberating Grace**  
**Series: Living in the Aroma of God's Grace**

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing? Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:1-7)

*There is something about us that causes us to want to take control of our lives rather than walk in step with God's will for us. This is even true with our spiritual growth.*

There was a young man who was powerfully touched by the Holy Spirit of Christ at his salvation. He was so excited about his new relationship with the Lord Jesus that he wanted to do all he could to please Him, and that was great. However, as time went along he felt like he had to start paying the Lord back for all the things he had done wrong. That is when he started losing his joy and started relying upon his works to obtain favor with God. His walk with the Lord started to become a burden to carry, rather than a walk that revealed the grace of God in his life.

The good news is that it was not long before he allowed the Holy Spirit to replace his joy by reflecting on the grace of God. Now the Word of God to him is not rules and regulations to be observed to gain favor with God, but rather revelation of the righteousness of God and Christ which are available to him by faith in Christ alone.

*I would propose to you that Christians have the greatest opportunity in this church age to enjoy and express a life that is liberated by the Holy Spirit of Christ. There is much that God's Word has for Christians in regard to overcoming everything that threatens to hinder the Spirit-filled life.*

*Just what does the Bible say about God's liberating grace?*

**It was by faith in what was preached**

*It begins first with a little understanding of what the apostle was trying to get his readers to see in regard to the direction they were taking.* It was by faith in what was preached, the gospel of Christ that enabled them to receive the Holy Spirit of Christ.

Judaizers were teaching in a sense that the new Christians needed to be circumcised in order to get all of God's blessings or to gain favor with God. The term "in human effort" is a reflection of a heart problem meaning "an independent reliance on one's own accomplishments against a spirit of dependence upon, and submission to what the Holy Spirit moves and empowers the child of God to do."

Christians who begin to walk away from the heart of the gospel begin to find their righteousness in religious observances and ceremonial performances. This results in disputes which prevent the expression of true Christian love through Holy Spirit given gifts which are meant to edify the Body of Christ. Christians are to rely upon their faith in Christ which enables them to enjoy a life of God's grace producing love, joy, praise to God and Christ.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned eighteen times in the Book of Galatians and He is the evidence of true conversion. Romans 8:9 says, "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the [Holy] Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." (Romans 8:9) The term "Spirit" in Galatians 3: 3 and 5 is given to the Person central in giving freedom and in enabling Christians to grieve over sin. He reveals truths out of God's Word, intercedes for the saints in prayer. He baptizes, indwells, seals and gives empowerment. Without His presence in the heart and life of the child of God, all acts of religious worship are nothing but expressions of an empty slogan.

There is another truth the Holy Spirit wants you to grasp from the phrase "suffered much" before we move on to living by God's grace. The Greek Word "suffered" (pascho)  $\pi\alpha\sigma\chi\omega$  in Galatians 3:4 can mean "to experience." (The Complete Word Study Dictionary; Thayer's Greek-English Dictionary; Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament; Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament) This word can have two applications in this text. One, when referring to the negative, Christians can experience the power of the Holy Spirit to give guidance and comfort in time of persecution as the result of surrendering one's life to Christ or in just suffering in general.

Second, when referring to the positive, Christians can experience all the blessings of living a Holy Spirit controlled life. They can enjoy the fruit of the Holy Spirit and all the gifts He chooses to impart throughout the Body of Christ as they walk in obedience.

The truth worth grasping in this first part of today's message is that Christians who have tasted the Lord's goodness should never consider relying upon religious works of any kind to gain favor from God or have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

**The child of God who is living in the aroma of God's grace is willing to ask himself probing questions like**

*The child of God who is living in the aroma of God's grace is willing to ask himself probing questions like, "Do I feel guilty when I take time to relax when I have so much to do? How often do I feel dissatisfied or discontent with myself or in my situation? Do I have a tendency to see something wrong with things rather than take notice what is right? Am I frustrated with what the Lord is doing? Is my relationship with Jesus a burden rather than a blessing?"* If any Christian can answer yes to anyone of those questions he is probably afflicted with the sin of perfectionism. Perfectionism is trying to prove your worth by being perfect.

This is not the same as trying to rely upon the power of God to reach the goal set for us by Jesus who said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) That goal is only accomplished by surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as we allow the Holy Spirit to create us into the image of Christ.

Christians who walk in the grace of God know that they do not need to wait for perfect conditions before they can walk in obedience to what the Lord tells them to do. Ecclesiastes 11:4 says, "Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap." (Ecclesiastes 11:4) Those who live in the aroma of God's grace will not wait until they have the perfect worship team, the best preacher, the best facilities or the largest amount of church attendance before they invite and bring people to church, or become steadfast in attendance themselves.

They do not wait for a call before they start preparing for any service to the Lord. No, they start preparing to exercise their Holy Spirit given gifts now, with an expectancy that the Lord is going to open the door of opportunity. If they preach, they are prayerfully preparing now to have the message ready when the call comes. If it is teaching, they are preparing teachings now, so they are ready when the door opens. If is serving someone, they are making sure they have time open, ready to serve when the call comes. This principle is the same for all the Holy Spirit given gifts found in Scripture.

Those who live in the aroma of God's grace are careful not to overreact to the faults of others, and they strive to administer to others the same grace given to them by the Lord. Proverbs 17:9 says, "He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends." (Proverbs 17:9)

This passage of Scripture gives us all an opportunity to really grow to spiritual maturity. How Christians respond to the weaknesses of others and their ability to keep those weakness to themselves reveals how well they can administer the grace of God to others. Harping on the past has destroyed many marriages, relationships and churches.

### **Christians are able to look to the only place where they can find true liberty**

*Once the children of God have enjoyed the blessings of walking in obedience and stop expecting perfection from each other they are able to relax in their relationship with Christ.* These Christians are able to look to the only place where they can find true liberty. Psalm 119:89-96 says, "Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you. If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. Save me, for I am yours; I have sought out your precepts. The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes. To all perfection I see a limit; but your commands are boundless." (Psalm 119:89-96)

There is nothing more liberating than the precious Word of God. While many who live in this world consider the commands of God to be binding, Christians find the written Word of God to be liberating.

I remember a job I had at Wheeler's when I was around 15 years old and was given a task I never had done before with no one to help me to do the job. I was given some instructions to read, but having poor reading and comprehension skills I could not understand what I read. I did not have a clue on how to do the job, thus I failed and was let go. I was so miserable. As I grew older I learned the hard way the joy of working through my reading handicap. I learned the joy of receiving orders and instructions and seeking out answers to what I did not know how to do. It took all the pressure off of me once I understood what was expected of me and how to get a task done.

That is why God gave us the written Word of God and sends the Holy Spirit to give us revelation and illumination. Revelation gives understanding and illumination makes the truths of God's Word come alive and intrigues us to want to accomplish God's will for us. When we fully understand what the Lord wants for us, we will have no problem crying out to Him for enablement and empowerment to achieve the task He sets before us.

Those who live in the aroma of God's grace understand the joy of obedience to the written Word. When the Lord tells them not to, they don't. Likewise, when the Lord tells them to do something they do it. They know the joy of allowing the Holy Spirit to take the Word of God and wash the heart, for it can reach the innermost parts, touch the most secret emotions, and strengthen the weary recesses of the soul. It is able to discern the intents of the mind and heart, and sets them on a right course to grasping the will of God.

The most successful marriages are the ones that have husbands who understand what it means to love their wives as Christ loves the church and wives that know what it means to compliment what God has called their husbands to do. The most successful families are those who have sought the Word of God. They have children who have the understanding of what it means to obey their parents in the Lord and parents who encourage their children to develop their talents for the glory of the Lord rather than self. It is liberating because there is no arguing with God on what is right, thus there is victory over everything that sets itself against God. There is liberty for those who do not try to live in obedience by their own efforts, but achieve obedience through the grace of God. Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God..." (Galatians 2:20)

Liberating grace is only enjoyed when Christians do not try to obtain righteousness by observing the law, but by allowing the written Word of God to reveal to them what is attainable to them through the nature and character of God and Christ.

The children of God who enjoy liberating grace make this proclamation, "The Lord's Word is never changing. In spite of all evil forebodings, the Lord will always be perfect concerning the work He has for me, and He will continue His work in me." They have full confidence in the Lord Jesus who "...is able to keep [them] from falling and to present [them] before [God's] glorious presence without fault and with great joy." (Jude 1:24)

### **Joy of being called the children of God**

*Christians are given a liberty to overcome sin, to walk in the righteousness of Christ, and to know the joy of being called the children of God.* 1 John 3:1 says. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God." (1 John 3:1)

The Holy Spirit moved the Apostle John to remind Christians that they are the children of God and this is something to be excited about. It is by the work of God that mankind comes into being, and it is only by His grace that he becomes a child of God. There are two English words which are closely connected yet at the same time whose meanings have a different effect upon a child. One is parent, which describes a relationship in which a man is responsible for the physical existence of the child. The second is fatherhood. This word describes an intimate, loving relationship that has a powerful effect on the direction of the child's life.

Parenting of all men came from God because He has created us and He becomes our Father in Heaven when we accept Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord. The Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to tell Christians, "...But you received a Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry Abba Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15-16) Galatians 4:6-7 says, "...God sent His Spirit into your hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba Father." (Galatians 4:6-7)

The word "Abba" is a untranslated Aramaic word. This is the word Jesus used in connection in prayer (Mark 14:36) and expresses the character of God as our Father when we are in great need or in trouble.

The last couple of years I have been able to spend more quality time with my boys, and there have many times they have come to me with great confidence when there was a need that must be met. They needed dad's help and they knew I would give it. This is what God is to us, His children. He is always available, and able to help, we need only to call by faith. Abba is a very personal term. Our position as His children makes Him a personal God to us.

In many families children inherit their parents' estates; each child is an heir and the children together are co-heirs. Similarly, since Christians are God's children, they are His heirs and they are co-heirs with Christ. Christians are recipients of all spiritual blessings. (Ephesians 1:30) Now and in the future they will share with the Lord Jesus all the riches of God's kingdom.

1 John 2:29 says that Christians are born of God, and we know it is through adoption. Being a child of God means that our old self is dying to sin and we have a new nature hungry for the righteousness of Christ. Through the washing of the Word of God and regeneration of the Holy Spirit repentant sinners start to become increasingly changed into the image of Christ. Christians were rebels and God's love enabled them to become born a second time to enjoy God's provision, protection and life changing power.

When a baby lies in the crib, parents often gaze upon the baby with great joy and hope. Most children grow up with parents who sacrifice a lot for them to achieve all they can. All children have the opportunity to choose just how much they want to enjoy their parent's provision, protection and life directing influence as they grow up.

There was once a man who had a horse ranch in Colorado which had everything anyone could want and need to succeed. This horse ranch consisted of breeding stock, stalls, working arenas, and the best nutrition that could be found. The owner's children showed no interest in the sacrifice of time and money their father made in order for them to have all that was needed to become real horsemen. They chose other directions that completely separated them from the protection and provision of their earthly father. I know of another father who was a horse trainer who also had great horse facilities, breeding stock, diet, and a name that was well known in the horse business. His children took seriously the sacrifices made by their father and chose to walk in his footsteps. They, like their father, are associated with national champions and they have a living vibrant walk with their father.

Christians have a Father in heaven and a Savior who paid the highest price possible for their redemption from the sin that separates sinners from fellowship with God. Through having Jesus Christ, who got victory over sin and death as their personal Savior and Lord, Christians have all they need to become champions in Christ. They have His full protection from the lures of the world, the lies of the devil and the cravings of the flesh. They have the guarantee of His provision as long as they are seeking His kingdom and righteousness. They have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of Christ who enables them to have all the gifts they need to accomplish God's will and to edify the Body of Christ. Through the feeding on the nutritious Word of God and abiding in fellowship with Jesus they produce the fruit of a real champion in Christ which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Under His Name they develop Christ-like character which marks them as members in the family of God.

### **The greatest thing about being a Christian is to be a child of God and we can rest in His mighty hand**

*The greatest thing about being a Christian is to be a child of God and we can rest in His mighty hand.* 1 Peter 5:6-7 says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:6-7)

Being under the hand of God symbolizes discipline and deliverance. The children of God have a Father who is able to hand out the right discipline and bring about necessary deliverance. In due time, whether it be in suffering or enjoying the blessings of God, the Lord will bring success to all He is calling and enabling you to do.

Everything we face in this life causes anxiety, whether it be starting a new job, starting a new school, or starting up anything new. Having to contend with everything that comes up as the results of living in a sin-cursed world will cause anxiety. As long as you are walking in the center of God's will for you, no matter what happens is God-ordained and He will be with you every step of the way.

When you need to pray or need prayer intercessors, the Holy Spirit will empower you to pray in the Spirit and raise up people to pray for you. When it is wisdom He will give you the wisdom you need. If it is any real need He will provide for those needs. "He cares for you" literally means that it matters to Him what is going on in your life, how you are doing, what you need and how your relationship is going with Jesus Christ.

It has been noticed by many that even a child full of anxiety over sins committed will run to get help from someone who he knows cares about him, even if that means suffering the consequences of his sin. The Lord cares more than anyone about our present situation and there is no one more able minister to our needs than the Lord Jesus.

Living in the Aroma of God's grace presents to all who see the lives of Christians that liberating grace produces kindness in the home, honesty in business, courtesy in society, fairness in work ethics, help to the weak, resistance to the wicked, strength to trust God, forgiveness to the repentant and the Love of God to all. Christians find liberty worshiping in Spirit and truth, understanding God's will through the written Word and casting all their anxieties into the loving hand of God.

Let us pray!

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