

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S GRACE

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Part 1 - Grace Vs. Performance

I. Introduction.

This portion of the study is about the importance of continuing to walk in God's grace after) initial experience of God's incredible work of grace in your lives. You say, "That's what I have been doing?" "What's the big deal?"

I believe many of us fail to walk in the fullness of God's grace and often revert to walking in a spirit of condemnation and guilt, which leads to a performance-based walk, because we fail to understand the reality of a continuous walk in God's grace.

Galatians 3:3 *Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal through human effort? (NIV)*

Trying to attain our goals in Christ by human effort is a common problem that exists among all Christians, regardless of our doctrinal background, because of our human nature, which we all share in common.

To get an idea of what I am talking about, let me ask all of you a question. If you knew you only one month to live, how would you prepare yourself to meet the Lord during that month? Would you pray harder? Would you memorize more Scripture? Would you read your Bible more? Would you be involved in more spiritual works? Would you give more money and get your tithes up-to-date? Would you witness to everyone you see? Or would you repent of every bad habit and sin that you could think of? If your answer was yes to these questions, you are a performance based Christian who is trying to work to gain God's favor. These are all good things to do, but this isn't what God expects from us to gain His favor.

There is no amount of work you can do to earn any more of God's favor. His favor has already been granted to you through His grace which is a free gift.

My question is, "Are you living by grace or are you living by performance?"

Galatians 5:4 *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

II. Our Need For God's Grace.

Before we go too far in this lesson, let's take a look at our need for God's grace and the provision that He made for our fallen, sinful nature.

1. Our Condition Prior To Our Salvation Experience.

Romans 3:10-12 *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understand, there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one."*

Isaiah 64:6 *But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

2. God's Answer to Our Need.

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Ephesians 2:8-10 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Definition of Grace: Grace is God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him.

(Jerry Bridges - Author of "Transforming Grace")

III. Living in God's Kingdom By Grace.

When we came to Christ, we recognized our need for His grace and love and had no problem accepting what He had to offer because of our helpless condition. But how many of us continue to live in this helpless condition, being totally dependent upon His grace and sufficiency to cover our lives?

Galatians 3:3 *Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal through human effort? (NIV)*

If we came into God's kingdom by grace, we must also live in it by grace. If we couldn't get into God's kingdom by good works, good works will not sustain us either.

1. We Must Be Continually Motivated By Grace.

Philippians 1:6 *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you [by His grace] will [will also by His grace] complete it until the Day of Jesus Christ;*

We are brought into God's kingdom by grace; we are sanctified by grace; we are motivated by grace; we are called to serve by grace; we receive strength to endure trials by grace; and we are glorified by grace. The entire Christian life is lived under the reign of God's grace.

Being motivated by grace means that we realize that it isn't our spiritual disciplines and works that earn us God's favor and blessings in our lives. In other words, everything we do in Christ continues to flow from His riches in grace, whether we deserve it or not.

There are many godly spiritual disciplines that we all need to be involved in of which are often constituted as our spiritual works. Things such as regular church attendance, daily devotions, Bible study, prayer, fasting, scripture memorization, witnessing, and giving of tithes and offerings are all good and essential Christian activities. The question is, do you do these things to earn God's favor, or do you do them in response to His love and grace?

What happens if I forget to pray or fail God? Does that mean I go through the whole day with God ignoring me and not desiring to use me? A person who is secure in God's love and grace doesn't get blown out of the saddle when they fail or do something wrong. They confess and forsake their sin. They get back up and go on, secure in God's love and grace.

Proverbs 24:16 *for a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.*

Hebrews 4:14-16 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,*

Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

2. Our Works Are A Result Of Walking In God's Grace.

Ephesians 2:9-10 *Not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

The truth of the matter is that our works are an indicator of how we are responding to God's love and grace. If we are doing things out of guilt, to please and appease others, we are performance-oriented.

If we are doing things out of a godly response to God's love & grace, we are operating under His grace.

James 1:25 *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

The actual work that God has for each one of our lives can only be released through His grace. When we examine the perfect law of liberty, we find that the spiritual work God gives us to do is somehow a part of our overall calling and gifting in Him.

3. God's Blessings Flow Through His Grace, Not Our Performance.

All of God's blessings and riches flow through His grace, and if we are walking as a performance-based Christian, we have actually fallen from grace and are losing our inheritance in Him as well. That's why so many Christians live unproductive lives.

Ephesians 2:7 *that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

When Jesus paid it all, He not only purchased your forgiveness of sins and your ticket to heaven, He purchased every blessing and every answer to prayer you will ever receive.

1 John 3:22 *And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*

The most important commandment that God has given to us is to love Him with all our heart, mind, and soul.

IV. Trying To Live In God's Kingdom By Performance.

Performance-oriented people work for God's approval. They believe they must constantly earn God's approval, so they become involved in numerous activities that may not even be in line with God's will for their lives. God's true giftings can never be recognized, because they are looking to their own means and sufficiency for motivation in the kingdom.

Galatians 3:3 *Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal through human effort? (NIV)*

Most of us are legalistic by nature; we innately think that so much performance by us earns much favor and blessing from God.

Peter had this same attitude when he said to Jesus in *Matthew 19:27*, "We have left everything to follow you. Therefore, what shall we have?"

Peter had already calculated his merit points, and he wanted to know how much reward they would earn. Jesus' answer to him was, "Many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Jesus then goes on to teach on the "*Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard*," which is a parable that deals with this whole issue of performance vs. grace.

▪ The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard - Matthew 20:1-16

The people in the parable who were chosen first had added up their merit points just as Peter had, and when they found out they were not to be rewarded on those terms, they were upset.

There are rewards that we will receive for our labors, but if our motivation is self-serving and not driven by a response to God's love and grace, we will probably lose our rewards.

If you were to conduct a study on rewards in the Bible, the one common denominator you would find would be humility. – *Matthew 10:42, Luke 6:35, Romans 2:8-11, and Ephesians 6:5-9.*

Proverbs 22:4 *By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life.*

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 *each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work, which he has built on, endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

If we are doing things out of guilt, shame, or eye service, as men-pleasers or some other self-serving motive, we are performance-based people who have fallen from the workings of God's grace, and as a result, we do not inherit the blessings that are ours in the kingdom. When we fail, we are guilt-ridden and full of condemnation, thinking God hates us and is mad at us, instead of receiving the forgiveness and security that come from abiding under His grace.

Let us all be motivated by God's grace and love, which will produce in us the godly character and good works that He desires in our lives.

Romans 2:10-11 *but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.*

Pt 2 - God's Grace In Holiness & Sanctification

I. Introductory Remarks.

This section of the study explores God's grace in relation to our holiness and sanctification.

We will examine the idea that God, in His grace, sees us as perfectly holy in Christ. God in His grace sends His Holy Spirit to create a new heart within us and to write His law on our hearts, thus changing our basic character traits. And then we will see that God in His grace continues to work in us through His Spirit to transform us more and more into the likeness of His Son.

Ephesians 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love... to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*

My goal in this portion of the study is to demonstrate how we are continually accepted by our Father God, due to the grace that has been poured into our lives through Jesus Christ. Often, when we look at our sinful condition that still seems to exist no matter how hard we try, we find ourselves in a battle over God's acceptance of us.

Hebrews 10:9-10 *Then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. " He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

II. Holiness Is A Gift Of God's Grace.

When we consider that God wants us to be perfect and without blame, we need to understand that holiness is a gift of God's grace as much as our salvation experience in him was.

To live by grace is to live solely by the merit of Jesus Christ. To live by grace is to base my entire relationship with God, including my acceptance and standing with Him, on my union with Christ. It is to recognize that in myself I bring nothing of worth to my relationship with God, because even my righteous acts are like filthy rags in His sight. Even my best works are stained with mixed motives and

imperfect performance. I never truly love God with all my heart, and I never truly love my neighbor with the degree or consistency with which I love myself. --
(Jerry Bridges - Author of Transforming Grace)

The Bible speaks of both a holiness we already possess in Christ before God and a holiness in which we are to grow more and more. The first is the result of Christ's work. The second is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The first is perfect and complete, and is ours the moment we trust Christ. The second is progressive and incomplete until the Day of Perfection.

Hebrews 10:14 *For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*

In one aspect of sanctification, we are already Holy because Christ's holiness is imputed to us. We have been made perfect forever. In another aspect, we are being made holy day by day through the work of the Holy Spirit, imparting the life of Christ to us.

III. The Holiness We Possess In Christ Before God.

As we have already seen, there are two kinds of holiness. There is the holiness we already possess in Christ before God, and there is the holiness in which we are to grow in more and more. This second aspect of holiness is progressive and incomplete until the Day of perfection. Let's take a look at the Holiness we possess in Christ before God.

1 Corinthians 1:30 *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*

Jesus has become our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. We understand that Christ is our righteousness and the basis for our justification. But He is also our holiness. The truth is that all believers are sanctified in Christ, even as we are justified in Christ.

Through justification, we are forgiven and are declared righteous in the courtroom of God's justice. Through the perfect holiness we have in Christ, our moral filth is removed, and we become fit to enter into the very presence of an infinitely holy God and enjoy fellowship with Him.

Colossians 1:22 *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight.*

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

How can we who are not only guilty but morally filthy possibly be holy in the sight of God, who knows our every motive and thought as well as our words and actions? The answer is that because of our union with Christ, God sees His holiness as our holiness.

When our Father looks at us, He does not see our miserable performance. Instead, He sees the perfect performance of Jesus. And because of the perfect holiness of Jesus, He sees us as holy and without blemish.

IV. Grace To Grow In Holiness.

Now that we have seen that we possess a holiness in Christ that enables us to come into the throne of God's grace continually, let's look at the holiness that we grow in through God's grace.

Sanctification or Holiness in us begins as an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit and is carried forward by His continued action in our lives. It takes a deposit of God's grace to continue to grow in this progressive sanctification. We cannot do it on our own.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

The above Scripture explains to us the progressive nature of our sanctification and holiness. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit, but it involves a response on our part so that we as believers are actively involved in the process.

God does not bring us into His kingdom and then leave us on our own to grow. He continues to work in our lives to conform us more to the likeness of His Son.

2 Corinthians 7:1 *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

1. Through God's Grace, He Creates A New Heart Within Us.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

It is God who puts His own Spirit within us and moves us to follow His decrees. God gives us a growing desire to obey Him. We no longer have an aversion to God's commands, even though we may not always obey them.

Psalms 40:8 *I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart.*

Romans 7:22 *"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

We find that His commandments are not burdensome, as stated in 1 John 5:3, but rather are holy, righteous, and good, as mentioned in Romans 7:12.

Submission to God's law arises out of a love for God and a grateful response to His grace and is based on a delight in His law as revealed in Scripture.

2. It Is God Who Works And Wills In Us To Act According To His Purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; **for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***

Paul's strong exhortation to the Philippians was based on the confidence that God's Spirit was working in them. He is working in them to enlighten their understanding of His will, to stimulate in their emotions a desire to do His will, and to turn their wills so that they actually obey, and then He gives the enabling power to do His will.

Progressive sanctification very much involves our activity, but it is an activity that must be carried out in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

3. The Christlike Character We Are To Grow Into.

When we take seriously the long lists of Christlike character traits we are to put on, as well as the negative characteristics we must put off, we see how impossible it is to grow in Christlikeness apart from the sanctifying influence and power of the Spirit in our lives.

Galatians 5:2-23

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Self Control

Colossians 3:12-15

- Compassion
- Humility
- Kindness
- Gentleness
- Forbearance
- Forgiveness
- Thankfulness

The critical thing to keep in mind is that all of these Christlike character traits are collectively referred to as the "*fruit of the Spirit*" — the result of the Spirit's work in us. Because it is the Spirit's work, it means we are both responsible and dependent. It is our responsibility to clothe ourselves with Christlike character traits, but we are dependent on God's Spirit to produce within us His "*fruit*." Our response is always obedience to God's Spirit.

Part 3 - Grace is Freedom and Liberty in Christ

1. Introductory Remarks.

In this portion of the study, I want to address the issue of our freedom in Christ and how it is a delicate balance that we must endeavor to walk in at all times.

Galatians 5:1 *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul addresses two crucial aspects of walking in God's grace. He deals with the issue of legalism and the issue of walking in the lusts of the flesh. When Christians fail to walk in the beauty of God's grace, they often find themselves walking in one of two extremes. Both areas are yokes of bondage that we must avoid.

Christians sometimes find themselves walking in either of two extremes in this area. They either turn the grace of God into licentiousness, which is a total disregard for any rules whatsoever, or they turn the grace of God into a legalistic walk that is full of rules and regulations.

1. Defining Licentious Behavior.

Jude 1:4 *For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The Expository Dictionary of Vines defines licentiousness or lasciviousness as excess, absence of restraint, indecency, and wantonness. Webster's dictionary defines it as lewd and lawless behavior. Other words to describe this behavior are debauched, promiscuous, carnal, lustful, indecent, obscene, and smutty. The words used to describe licentious behavior are what happens when one takes the grace of God and uses it as a license to sin.

2. Defining Legalistic Behavior.

Legalism is anything we do or don't do in order to earn favor with God. It is concerned with rewards to be gained or penalties to be avoided. It consists of conformity to manufactured religious rules, which are often unspoken but very real.

Mark 7:6-8 *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men; the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."*

As already mentioned, these are the two extremes that God wants us to avoid as we seek to walk in the beauty of His grace. Neither one of these areas represents the Grace of God. The people who are caught up in these bondages do not understand the meaning and purpose of God's grace in their lives. Let's examine God's word more closely regarding these two extremes.

II. God's Word Concerning Licentious Behavior.

Again, licentiousness or lasciviousness is an excess or absence of restraint. It is indecency, wantonness, and a total disregard for any rules whatsoever. It is a habit of habitual sinful behavior.

1. The Grace Of God Teaches Us To Deny Ungodliness.

We need to understand that the grace of God actually teaches us to deny ungodliness and to live soberly and righteously in this world, rather than continuing in our old, sinful nature.

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*

Romans 6:1-3 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*

If we have truly been born again, we should be dead to sin and alive to God and His grace working in our lives to produce the fruit of His Spirit rather than the lusts of the flesh.

2. He Who Continues To Practice Sin Does Not Know God.

1 John 3:6-7 *Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.*

When I speak of those who continue to sin, I am referring to those who have never come to repentance but have turned the grace of God into a license to continue in their sin. They have no desire to quit sinning because he has never really been born again. If we have truly been born again, the Holy Spirit in us causes us to hate and despise sin to the degree that we want to repent of it, not continue to wallow in it. The operative word in the above passage is "practice". We find this again in the passage in Galatians concerning the works of the flesh. The word "practice" speaks of habitual behavior.

Galatians 5:21 *Just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 5:24 *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

III. Avoiding Legalism.

The other extreme that Christians sometimes find themselves in is that of walking in legalism, which nullifies the grace of God. To counteract the sinfulness of Licentious behavior, some in Christian ministry have fallen into legalism. It has been taught, either directly or implicitly, that God's grace is conditional, that there is a degree to which it is based on our performance. There has been an undue focus on God's law and a ridiculing of liberty. The freedom set forth in Galatians is not freedom from God, but from those who insist on some form of legalism in the life of a believer.

Galatians 5:4 *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

Galatians 5:1 *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

Legalism is anything we do or don't do in order to earn favor with God. It is concerned with rewards to be gained or penalties to be avoided. It consists of

conformity to manufactured religious rules, which are often unspoken but very real.

Legalism requires conformity to the *"dos and don'ts"* of our particular Christian circle. We try to force this legalism on others or allow others to force it on us. It is conformity to how other people think we should live, rather than how the Bible instructs us to live. Like the Pharisees of Jesus' time, we have tried to help God by adding our manufactured rules to His commands. Jesus' charge against the Pharisees remains valid today.

There are many ways in which we tend to fall into legalism. We build fences to keep ourselves from committing certain sins. Soon, the fences become the issue rather than the sin. Differing opinions also cause legalism. E.g., makeup, music, movies, TV, Holidays, eating, etc.

Romans 14:5 *One person esteems one Day above another; another esteems every Day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.*

Legalism happens when we try to enforce our convictions on others for the sake of conformity and acceptance.

Charles Swindoll told of a missionary family who were literally forced off the mission field over a dispute involving peanut butter. They were sent to a location where peanut butter was not available, so they asked friends back in the States to occasionally send them some. The problem was that the other missionaries considered it a mark of spirituality not to have peanut butter. But the pressure from the other missionaries to conform became so intense that the newer family finally gave up and left the mission field.

IV. True Freedom And Liberty.

John 8:36 *"Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

God has called us unto freedom and liberty and desires for us to walk in the fullness of His grace, experiencing great liberty and freedom.

Romans 8:2 *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

Galatians 5:13 *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty,' only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

James 1:25 *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

When you focus on grace in its full meaning, you will maintain the proper relationship between law, liberty, and love. But if you focus on any one of them instead of grace, you will invariably end up in legalism or licentiousness.

Part 4 - Appropriating God's Grace

I. Introductory Remarks.

In this final part of the study on God's grace, I would like to examine some of the practical aspects of applying God's grace in our lives.

2 Corinthians 9:8 *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.*

The above Scripture is a powerful promise to us in God's word concerning His grace towards us. The Scripture means that no matter what the situation we are going through, no matter what the problem we are dealing with, and no matter what the task we are involved in, God's grace and sufficiency will be there to sustain us and help us in all that we undertake.

2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.*

Philippians 2:12-13 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,' for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Grace Defined:

The grace of God involves more than the dimension of it simply being God's unmerited favor towards us. It is also God's divine enabling through His Spirit. Through God's grace, we are enabled to cope with whatever adversity, trial, or dilemma we face in a godly manner. We are also equipped by His grace to perform the spiritual tasks He assigns to us.

With this in mind, let's examine some of the key principles for practically applying God's grace in our lives. In other words, let's look at what it will take for us to seize or capture His grace in our lives.

II. Keys To Appropriating God's Grace.

Key #1 - We Must Come to the Throne of Grace and Ask for His Help.

Of all that I will be saying in this message concerning appropriating God's grace, this is the most important key that you can have working in your life. Without the key to the throne room of God's grace, you will never be able to open the door.

Hebrews 4:14-16 *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

God's grace will never be released in our lives until we learn how to come to Him through His mercy being poured into our lives. When we approach the throne of grace, we come first needing mercy, because we come as a person in misery or distress. God in His mercy gives us His grace--that is, the divine enabling through His Spirit--to help us in our need. We must come to Him in prayer, asking Him to pour out His grace into our lives.

Hebrews 10:19-22 *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

As we approach the throne of grace, we find that Jesus, our Great High Priest, has gone before us and is, even as we come, already interceding for us.

Hebrews 7:25 *Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them.*

What are you going through today? What kind of trouble, anxiety, perplexing problems, or dilemmas have you encountered recently? Whatever your need is, you need the divine ability of God's grace working in your life. It starts with coming to His throne of mercy and grace.

▪ **The Example Of Jesus' Disciples In The Book Of Acts.**

Acts 4:29-31 *"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy*

Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

▪ **Paul's Example of Going to the Throne of Grace.**

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 *And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

I believe when Paul received the word from the Lord, *"My grace is sufficient for you,"* that he received the strength and the determination to go on, because God had spoken deep into His spirit. It came as a result of his going to the throne of grace in a time of distress and need.

Key #2 - We Must Receive From The Word Of God's Grace.

Paul committed the Ephesus elders to the word of grace, which was able to build them up.

Acts 20:32 *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

God uses His word to impart grace into our lives as well. He will bring to mind some Scripture or Scriptures that are appropriate to the situation we may be going through. This happens through personal study & time in God's Word, through hearing sermons, reading inspirational books, or through a friend who encourages you by sharing an appropriate scripture from the Word of God.

Proverbs 12:25 *Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes him glad.*

It takes giving yourself to a time of meditation and reflection upon God's word. We must become intimate with Scripture so that we can call it into remembrance when it is needed. Growth in God's grace requires growth in our assimilation of God's Word.

John 14:26 *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

Romans 15:4-5 *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Jesus.*

In order to take up God's word as a sword, we must have it at our disposal. We must be like David, who said, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against You."*

The word stored in our heart provides a mental depository for the Holy Spirit to use to mediate His grace to us, whatever our need for grace might be.

When we have a command of God's word, we are not only to use it for our own benefit, but God will also use it in our ministry to others. Give examples of counseling experiences when God has given to me a specific scripture to speak to someone.

Proverbs 25:11 *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*

Key #3 - We Must Clothe Ourselves in Submission and Humility.

A crucial key to receiving God's grace is to clothe ourselves in humility and submission before God and others, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1 Peter 5:5-6 *Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*

God gives grace to the humble, to those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God's providence. We tend to become angry and rebellious towards God for allowing us to go through particular circumstances.

Joseph recognized that God in His sovereignty used even the heinous sins of his brothers to accomplish His purpose.

Genesis 45:8 *"So now it was not you who sent me here, but God, and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."*

We, too, must see God's sovereignty ultimately ruling in all the circumstances of our lives if we are to appropriate God's grace. Even in the most difficult, disappointing, or humiliating circumstances, we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.