

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:4  
Topic: Grace  
Study First Corinthians  
Week 1 of 3  
Series 2

River of Life Church  
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## It all starts with God

### God does what He does by grace

**OVERVIEW:** The vision Paul had on the road to Damascus was not a passing emotional experience, but a vision that had very clear and emphatic directions for him. And Paul stated, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). Our Lord said to Paul, in effect, "Your whole life is to be overpowered or subdued by Me; you are to have no end, no aim, and no purpose but Mine." And the Lord also says to us, "You did not choose Me, but *I chose you* and appointed you that you should go . . ." (John 15:16). Whatever he became, according to his own statement, Paul owed it to "the grace of God."

When we are born again, if we are spiritual at all, we have visions of what Jesus wants us to be. It is important that we learn not to be "disobedient to the heavenly vision" not to doubt that it can be attained. It is not enough to give mental assent to the fact that God has redeemed the world, nor even to know that the Holy Spirit can make all that Jesus did a reality in my life. I must have the foundation of a personal relationship with Him. Paul was not given a message or a doctrine to proclaim. He was brought into a vivid, personal, overpowering relationship with Jesus Christ. Acts 26:16 is tremendously compelling ". . . to make you a minister and a witness . . ." There would be nothing there without a personal relationship. Paul was devoted to a Person, not to a cause. He was absolutely Jesus Christ's. He saw nothing else and he lived for nothing else. "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

1 Cor 1:4-9

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, 5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
NKJV

**GOING DEEPER:** The Corinthians are quite right about the importance of the Spirit as the key to Christian life; but they are wrong as to what that life looks like and how such people live and behave in the present world. Paul is bound to give thanks for them, since as chs. 12 and 14 demonstrate these are good things that have gone sour. Paul does two things in these passages, 1) gives thanks for God having "gifted" them and, 2) he redirects their focus back to the "grace" found through believing in Christ.

**SEEING WHAT'S THERE: God does what He does by grace.**

**The bible never gives us one definition of grace; though grace appears through its pages.**

## What does the word Grace mean?

### Some Definitions:

- *Grace is the freedom of living in righteous reconnection to God – realized (Made real) through faith.*
- *Grace is the empowering presence of God enabling me to walk upright.*
- *Grace is the empowering presence of God enabling me to become who God has called me to be.*
- *Grace is the empowering presence of God delivering us from our awkwardness*  
That sin like a virus comes in and corrupts our heart drive and we carry with us wounds that cripple us. Sin is awkward – But God’s Divine grace sets us free.

**One writer puts it this way:** Grace, is not only the divine act by which God initiates our spiritual life, but also the very power by which we are sustained, nourished, and proceed through life. The energizing and sanctifying work of the indwelling Spirit is the grace of God. It’s something we experience (Rom 3:24 ; 5:15,17)

The def we understand – grace is giving someone what he or she does not deserve. God’s unmerited favor of God.

- A. 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." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, (1 Peter 5:5-6 NKJV)
  - Gives unmerited favor to the Humble - Does not make sense if it’s something that **I cannot earn** why would god be giving it out in a **preferential** way. Why would he give it to the humble and not to the proud?
- B. “He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you. (Isaiah 30:19B NKJV)
  - This grace is not given freely – there’s somewhat of a condition.
- C. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. Gal 5:4 NKJV
  - You have fallen from unmerited favor. Does not make sense
  - Why would god give me something **I don’t deserve** and when I act like **I don’t deserve it** – take it away from me – does not make sense.
- D. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:40 NKJV)
  - The child grew in wisdom and the unmerited favor of God – are we ready to say that Jesus rcvd something he did not deserve.

- E. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NIV)
- We beheld his glory – full of unmerited favor. Was he full of something he did not deserve?

**Let's Go back and read these scriptures with this new interpretation.**

- A. Peter says God resists the proud. The proud would say I don't need God's empowering presence. (The proud are self sufficient)
- B. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (Gal 5:4 NKJV)
- C. Trying to justify themselves by keeping the law – but not live by the power of God ( 2 Timothy 3:5)
- D. With that def Luke Chap 2:40  
 “And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace (The empowering presence of God) was upon Him.”
- E. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of (The empowering presence of God) and truth. (John 1:14 NIV)

Everyone of those times in scripture use – unmerited favor or the empowering presence of God.

Would it be correct to say GRACE IS – Unmerited Favor or

- Grace is the freedom of living in righteous reconnection to God – realized (Made real) through faith. When my trust and believe that I am righteous based on What Christ has accomplished I am empowered to walk as a new creation. The **empowering presence of God enables me to walk in upright?** UNDERESRVING – NEUTRAL; ILLDESERVING – ENEMIES OF GOD

*THIS EMPOWERING PRESENCE STARTS AT SALVATION AND DOES NOT STOP UNLESS WE DO WHAT THE GALATIANS DID*

**1. Give up on earning Grace**

Grace is the freedom of living in righteous reconnection to God

Remember the background of the Corinthian Christians; Very sordid, imperfect.

Matt 22:8-13 – “And he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren't worthy of the honor. 9 Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.' 10 So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to meet the guests, he noticed a man who wasn't wearing the proper

clothes for a wedding. 12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?' But the man had no reply. 13 Then the king said to his aides, 'Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**God's standard is perfection**, if there is one tear or stain in our garment, we're toast. We have all cut the thread between God and ourselves.

What is this passage saying? We need the correct clothing.

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. (Isaiah 64:6 NKJV)

How do people try and get dressed and ready for this day to be right before God? (Works)

(INSERT STATES ON % CHRISTIAN IN USA – See book by G.Barna)

The bible puts it this way in Isaiah 64:6, “ *All our righteous acts*” – in other words, my best days and your best days – “*are like dirty rags.*”

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Rom 3:23 NKJV)

“For all have sinned and fallen short of the empowering presence of God”  
 “We have allowed other posers (counterfeit beliefs) to extend their reign in our lives – rendering us impotent of real life”

Now wait a minute Gary – I'm not as bad as so and so. I've lived a pretty good life – I give to the poor. But even the smallest sin has cut the **THREAD** between God and us.

We are into Clothes – we try this suit on and that pair of Jeans and we try to repair this hole and that tear and it's all – insufficient. And we can never even on our best days repair the tare in our relationship with God. And through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ God gives us an opportunity to make a choice.

We all had a choice as to what we were going to wear today. We picked out the outfit and no one forced us to wear it. It covers us it looks presentable.

**Even on our best days we can never earn God's favor – it's ours already in Christ.**

**LET ME ASK YOU AGAIN WHO ARE YOU WEARING – CHRIST RIGHTEOUSNESS of A FAKE OUTFIT?**

## 2. Accept what Christ earned for you

Rom 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What leads to death? – sin.

Does it matter what level or degree the sin is? – No

Is there grace to Ted Bundy– law student who murdered more than 35 women

**Illustration:** Imagine coming to a friend’s house who has invited you over to enjoy a meal. You finish the delicious meal and then listen to some fine music and visit for a while. Finally, you stand up and get your coat as you prepare to leave. But before you leave you reach into your pocket and say, “now, how much do I owe you?” What an insult. You don’t do that with someone who has graciously given you a meal. –

- How often do we think there’s something we must do to pay God back?
- Somehow we are hoping that God will smile on us if we work real hard and earn his acceptance.
- But that’s acceptance on the basis of works.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:8-10 NKJV)

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”  
(Gal 3:27 NKJV)

That’s what happens on the cross. We put our stuff, our junk, on the cross. We take off our old garment and put on Jesus. We put on his forgiveness, his grace, his mercy, his purpose, and his power. And, man, that’s the sweetest fashion statement that we can ever make. **Our desire for clothing is nothing more than an intrinsic desire to be clothed with Christ.**

### **We made a trade with God:**

Jesus took my punishment so I can receive forgiveness

Jesus took my sickness so I can receive His healing

Jesus took my sin so I can receive His righteousness

Jesus took my death so I can receive His life

Jesus became poor so I can receive His riches and abundance

Jesus bore my shame so I can share His glory

Jesus experienced my rejection so I can have acceptance

Jesus became a curse so I can have His blessing.

WHAT ARE YOU WEARING? – Righteousness or rags. If you are wearing righteousness you are wearing Christ.

### **3. Look for real life confirmation**

You've heard the saying – *“If it's too good to be true; lets it's too good to be true.”*

**Quote-** D.L. Moody *“God never made a promise that was too good to be true.”*

Vs. 6 “even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you,” NKJV

Vs. “This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true.” NLT

Paul states the fact that you have all these “gracious endowments.” Means that what I told you about Christ is true. In other words Christ power is real, it is empowering – but it's not for you to show off your gifts and boast in what you can do – it's so that you can boast in the Lord. If the genesis of these expressions of grace is from God then certainly God should be praised – that is why Paul starts the letter with Thanking God for them

We use grace to describe many things in life:

- A well-coordinated athlete or dancer
- Good manners and being considerate of others
- Beautiful, well-chosen words
- Consideration and care for other people
- Various expressions of kindness and mercy.

These statements remind me of Christ. Jesus never used the word at all in his entire ministry --- yet he taught on it. He lived it....

Rom 6:1-4 -- What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. NKJV

What does this passage tell us about grace? Grace empowers us to walk in a new way - If we have not learned to access and walk in the empowering presence of God- grace is not abounding. ***Let's PERSONALIZE THIS:***

***Don't believe the LIE that your sin is greater in its power to produce evil (chaos, confusion, destruction) than is God's grace in it's power to produce good.***