

Grace

To what do we obey?

We all follow after something. We seek something all the time even if it is to do nothing. Some of us can do nothing and be very good at it. Others must do something all the time or they become fearful and plagued with anxiety. This may be why some people hate meditation. It's too uncomfortable and perhaps even painful to sit still for 30 minutes. Our comfort in business or idleness depends upon what we have set our minds to do and have practiced over a period of time. The longer the time, the more ingrained that behavior develops within our minds and bodies. When we can do things without much concentration it becomes more automatic. The behavior moves from conscious activity to subconscious activity. This is the development of being a slave whether to sin or to righteousness.

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

If we truly worshiped God, wouldn't we obey God more?

When we read or hear that verse in the Bible which points to how God loves us, do we then read further to see what God expects us to do to love Him back and then do it? Could it be that we are applying **selfish ambition** to see that we are okay with God, that God loves us and will take care of us, and then quickly neglect our call, responsibility, and role we must play to stay in God's grace?

Acts 5:29 NKJV "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to **obey God rather than men**. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the **Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him**."

The apostles make clear here "those who obey Him" receive the Holy Spirit. There is a very real cause and effect relationship with salvation, grace, goodness, mercy, and love. God apposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. If we choose to obey pride we miss the mark. If we humble ourselves we may receive grace. Obstinace, stiff-necked, disobedience, and choosing to be hard hearted keeps us from grace.

The role we play is by faith which comes from our beliefs. What are we going to believe. Belief does not develop out of thin air or by a magic wand. For most people belief develops through convincing, hearing, seeing, and ultimately what we think to ourselves about what we know. Keep in mind we have a subconscience, thoughts we do not see or are aware that exist. This fact as many know it today did was not known when the Bible was written.

Personal Experience

When I sought help from the 12 step program and its ideas I received a lot of information I knew nothing about. I was repeated told to trust God. Who was this God? They left it to me to find God through prayer, stories, and meditation. No one told me who God was they just told me how to look for God. I was provided a book with the prayer of St. Francis. Lucky for me I practiced that prayer each night. It is a prayer that teaches action and spiritual responsibility which can help guide a person into receiving grace.

I went through various experiences over many months obeying new methods of practices, ideas, and principles. I incorporated many new thoughts, and obeyed God while doing God's will more and more. Within me was developing Godly character which affected me greatly. I acquired through such obedience, experience, thoughts, prayers, and correction a new spiritual awareness and grace. I say acquired because I chose to die and pick up the cross. Anyone who has done it understands and those who have not does not. This is experiential understanding which separates those who have ears to hear and those who do not.

Cause and effect relationship of choosing God's will, grace, righteousness, and goodness over selfish-ambition, vanity, pride, greed, etc. There is in fact a direct relationship between doing God's will with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and receiving God's grace. Why else would Jesus emphasize the command to love God with all our inward authority? It's a choice. It's a commitment. Read the parable of the sower. We must choose, stay focused, and let it take root within us.

I believe I must share further what happened later when I turned to obey a path for a career. I gradually shifted my focus more toward school and less toward God for the sake of convenience. It became more difficult for me to find privacy at a dorm and I stopped meditation and prayer. It only took about

6 months to lose the faith and wonder if my experience was real. Doubt and uncertainty began to fill me. A year later I was spiritually empty. Cause and effect; I stopped obeying God and my faith withered away.

Through pain, loneliness, fear, and desperation I sought help which ultimately pointed me back again to God. I turned to trust God fully again and it didn't take long this time to regain or receive again that grace. Peace and love developed with me again. Seeking God's righteous ways, obeying Godly principles, reflecting on doing Godly good, and putting it into practice has a cause and effect relationship provided that my heart, mind, soul, and strength is toward knowing, loving, and serving God more and more. Cause and effect exists for those who let it, who receive the free gift of grace, and **"cling to what is good" Romans 12:9.**

We can seek God incorrectly with misbelief, self-deception, or a wrong attitude. We can think about God with evil in our hearts which will set the process to fail. We can be motivated by resentment or selfish pride which will hinder the experience. We can idolize building, rituals, and teachers ignoring the Spirit within us. We ought to caution ourselves to first remove the plank in our own eye, confess our sins, then repent to seek and rely upon God's goodness through the Holy Spirit. Are we skipping the Spirit within us and believing without knowing? Or are we in a spiritual relationship following the guidance of the Spirit God gave us?

If we hold something against God in our hearts we will not trust God. If we see God as angry, evil, or mean won't that affect our trust? We must become willing to "abandon ourselves utterly to Him" as it says in the 3rd step prayer of Alcoholics Anonymous page 83. Can we trust & love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength?

We must be willing to let go of anything that disagrees with letting the process work (**our negative bias**). Remember, it is a cause and effect relationship. We can say we are obeying God while praying, meditating, reading, and saying magic words (works), but if within our hearts and minds we are resistant or distracted it can make all that work meaningless. The cause and effect has more to do with our inward attitude than our outward action.

God is peace and love so we must take the attitude of accepting and receiving more peace and love within our thoughts, experiences, and prayers. We will

tend to find what we are looking for. If we believe something won't work then it probably will not. (Self-fulfilling Prophecy)

I know through my own experiences and through working with others that this cause and effect relationship exists. There are many teachers of God who do not know it because they have not experienced the grace available to them, lost it, and got it back again to see how it works. Yet they teach what they do not know and do not understand. I believe it is important to ask teachers to share what personal sacrifices they have made to walk in obedience to God. Have they died to self? Do they know through experience what that is, what it feels like, and the development of a new way of life through the Holy Spirit? But again, if we don't do it ourselves we will not know if someone else has either. If we do take this action it will open our eyes and ears to see so much more about God and others.

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20, Ezekiel 18, & John 15 see the common principle

Receive Grace NKJV

John 1:16 And **of His fullness** we have all **received**, and grace for grace.

Romans 1:5 Through Him we **have received** grace and apostleship for **obedience to the faith** among all nations for His name,

2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, **as workers** together with Him also plead with you not to **receive** the grace of God **in vain**.

1 Peter 4:10 As each one has **received** a gift, **minister it** to one another, **as good stewards** of the manifold grace of God.

The option of receiving or denying exists for us today in regards to grace.

Have we confessed, repented, and made right our wrongs or harms we have done to others? Are we increasing in Godly character, spiritual understanding, love, peace, patience, humble and sincere service, compassion, forgiveness, mercy, generosity, and kindly affection to others? If we are indeed in God's grace wouldn't that be producing good fruit around us and through us?

Hebrews 9:14NKJV how much more shall the blood of Christ, who **through the eternal Spirit** offered Himself without spot to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works** to serve the living God?

Acts 15:9 and made no distinction between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.**

When we are ready to receive grace: receive truth, receive peace, receive love, receive compassion, receive mercy, receive forgiveness, and receive justice then we will be ready to grow with God. If we chose within our minds and hearts to resist, deny, or block out these attributes of God we probably will not receive them.

Confession helps to purify our hearts and cleanse our conscience. Yet we must strive to submit ourselves to right our wrongs for this purifying and cleansing to finish its work. If our pride resists then our spiritual development will suffer. We must continue the good work of humbling ourselves and continue to obey love and peace.

Deception exists within us and around us

We could be following a delusion or self-deception. 2 Peter 2 tells us many false teachers will come. Romans 6 describes the results of grace, grace we ought to act on. Maybe we just want to feel good and skip out on the work that ought to be done, work which the Bible describes those who love God do. Does it make any sense to read Biblical instructions God says to do and then not to do it? Something happens inwardly that blocks the outward action. Something within our minds lead us away from accepting the instruction and thus receiving the grace we could have if we accept it as a new way to live.

To live by this free gift of grace is to walk more in alignment with God, recognize this dichotomy of thought, and consciously choose the right action despite the fear, confusion, or doubt that may tell us otherwise. To do this requires attention to our thoughts and the self-discipline to act on the good thought while denying the evil thought. To receive grace is to sense it and act by it. By grace we become vessels of increasing good.

2 Corinthians 10:5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

There are false teachers that don't even know they are false teachers because they teach what they were taught which was from false teachers.

Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

We will be trained as well as the teacher we choose to follow. We have a spirit within us sent to teach us. We can learn from the spirit to the extent that we listen and obey it. If we obey an idea or thought to disobey we will choose not to be trained. If we choose to avoid disciplinary spiritual activity we will choose not to walk with God. If we choose to deny uncomfortable truth we will choose not to receive grace. Grace grows, trains, teaches, and saves. Yet we must choose to receive it.

Do we calm our zeal settling for a little good instead of the great good God has to offer? Many of us have difficulty praying once a day even as a ritual. It's easy to justify skipping days when other things become more important than God. Those who love God will sit quietly to listen to God's spirit for guidance instead of being too busy.

Facing uncomfortable truth

Are we offended and push aside Biblical teachings that are convicting?

Proverbs 12:1 "Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But **he who hates correction** is stupid."

Do we think evil about this verse or see the good in it?

John 15:6 If anyone **does not abide in Me**, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

Do we feel afraid of this verse or do we see it as something guiding us to do good?

Hebrews 12:15 **looking carefully** lest anyone **fall short of the grace** of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many **become defiled**;

If we look closely at the scripture and listen carefully to the spirit of God we may be able to notice a pattern developing amongst them.

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

Many Christians fear conflict which is absolutely contrary to Biblical teaching. What character in the Bible grow with God through conflict avoidance?

Matthew 10:22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

We ought to be growing in truth and righteousness to the extent that it is convicting to others around us. When others lie or use false flattery and we join them or even passively participate, aren't choosing evil and falling short of grace?

Matthew 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."

Are we offended by scripture? Are we being objective or biased to use scripture to make us feel good instead of grow? Should we live life the "easy way," and if we do, what story in the Bible would describe that? Does the happy message fit with the Bible? Didn't all Christians suffer?

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

We ought to be growing in grace

Have we searched our heart, mind, and soul for spiritual truth? Are we embracing God's love and grace to where we are trained by it and it flows out from us toward others? Do others sense God's love and grace from us? Perhaps we have some adjustments to make? Perhaps we have mislead ourselves into self-seeking instead of truly seeking God. Perhaps we have before us right now a choice. We can choose to seek God or choose to defend our current ways. We can choose to see how we can grow or sit on the fence of spiritual destruction and take no new action. We can choose to look at the

uncomfortable truth in the Bible that exhorts, encourages, teaches, and rebukes or biasedly seek out scriptures to support our evil ways. It's our choice. It's always been our choice and Jesus did not remove that responsibility.

The thinking problem

If we stand around thinking about the problem then we miss seeing the solution. Inward Authority is focused on the solution which involves much thought correction. Our thoughts mislead us due to our lack of experience with God's righteousness and goodness. Grace is good. Grace is not evil. God is good. God is spirit. Grace is all the character traits from God.

Do we see how we can obey Christ or make excuses

Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is [g]good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is [h]bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and [i]mammon.

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Do we spend more time walking the teachings of Christ through participation and practice or thinking about it? Receiving grace involves participation with the good of Christ.

James 4:15 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Self-deception exists. We deceive ourselves away from grace. We convince ourselves to fear, hurry, and lie. We justify resentments, exploit others, and follow greed. We idolize, envy, and practice vanity. We procrastinate in prayer and meditation. We are slothful in love. And we excuse this behavior continuously. All this spiritual destruction develops within our hearts and minds which flow outwardly.

We must develop a new system of thinking, reasoning, and decision making to change our choices that can lead us to grow in grace. Self-discipline and self-denial will be required. We must begin each day setting our hearts and minds directly on what grace is and our active role to participate with it. We have a responsibility to receive it. We ought to receive truth, love, compassion, justice, mercy, forgiveness, peace, patience, and to be stewards of it. If our hearts and minds are not with such grace, then we are not receiving the gift of God's saving goodness.

Grace Defined (favor)

1. grace
 1. that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech
2. good will, loving-kindness, favour
 1. of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues
3. what is due to grace
 1. the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine grace
 2. the token or proof of grace, benefit
 1. a gift of grace
 2. benefit, bounty
4. thanks, (for benefits, services, favours), recompense, reward

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g5485>

1. elegance or beauty of form, manner, motion, or action: We watched her skate with effortless grace across the ice. Synonyms: attractiveness, charm, gracefulness, comeliness, ease, lissomeness, fluidity. Antonyms: stiffness, ugliness, awkwardness, clumsiness; klutziness.
 2. a pleasing or attractive quality or endowment: He lacked the manly graces.
 3. favor or goodwill.
- <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Grace>

God loves us. This love is freely given. God loves us no matter what we do. God will love us even if we seek evil to the point of spiritual hell. God is love and will always love us. God's grace is just like that. God's grace will always be available to us. God is grace. God is generous and giving (gift). We cannot make God through works, but we can choose to participate with God through works. God is good and spirit. God is many things and in many places all the time.

Grace is a term that can be used for any good from God. Grace is an ambiguous yet all encompassing Godly good. Anything good from God can be labeled with grace. Yet it falls under God's character, goodness, and righteousness. Grace will not create evil: lies, deception, pride, vanity, lust, idolatry, false flattery, nor selfish ambition. Grace is not a component of evil. Evil can lead others to repent which means turn to God or turn toward grace, but evil is not grace.

Sin is to miss the mark (God) so sin cannot be grace because God is grace and the mark. Yet if we are moving toward God, improving toward the mark, then we may be able to come to our senses, sensing grace more.

Imagine being down the street from a bar-b-q stand where we can smell the pleasing aroma of the delicious food. We sense the good and wonder at how it would taste, yet we must take action to get there and eat. As we take action and move toward it we may see others walking by us and eating. We may stand right in front of the food as it is cooking, but until we eat we will not really understand how good it is. If we eat it right off the grill we may even burn our tongue. We may need to go through some learning on how to handle grace. Yet every step of the way will involve choices and some of them can be life changing.

Following our Godly senses takes participation and practice.

“Grace” derives from the Greek, charis. In secular Greek, charis was related to chairō, “to rejoice.” As far back as Homer it denoted “sweetness” or “attractiveness.” It came to signify “favor,” “goodwill,” and “lovingkindness” — especially as granted by a superior to an inferior.

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1279-the-true-meaning-of-grace>

Grace is an intangible, unseeable, inward sensing experience. Those who have ears to hear and eyes to see have received and can understand grace. Such people are inwardly attentive to their hearts and minds, spiritually developing more with God.

Romans 6

Paul is the author of probably the most quoted verses about grace. Let’s take a look at Paul’s message in Romans 6.

Romans 6

Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

6 What shall we say, then? **Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means!** We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life.**

Paul seems to be arguing that we can’t claim to believe in Jesus and then continue seeking after sin. Also, we can’t have grace and not be living a new and different changed life. If we are saved by grace we will think and act differently.

5 For if we have been united with him in **a death like his**, we will certainly also be united with him in **a resurrection like his**. 6 For **we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,[a] that we should no longer be slaves to sin**— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also **live with him**. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again;

death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Meditate on this next one

10 “But the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God” (Take this message in deep and read John 15)

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Do you see the instructions? “Do not let sin reign in you mortal body.” Do not offer any part of yourself to sin.” “Rather offer yourselves to God.” And then there’s that extra description of how to do it, “as those who have been brought from death to life.” Yet he even adds more, “offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.”

These instructions are not writings to skim over. Anyone who skims over these instructions are choosing not to obey them. The effort and diligence Paul is describing to put forth in how we live our lives to God is of the highest amount. If we apply little effort, time, and resources to fulfill these instructions then we might as well ignore any other message Paul has about salvation and grace. But wouldn’t it be so much easier to believe we don’t have to do anything at all? Wouldn’t it be more comfortable to simply say we God love’s us and that’s enough? Yet God wants us as slaves.

Slaves to Righteousness

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to

sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

God is offering us a free gift of slavery to righteousness. Here is an illustration. A man became homeless because he just got tired of life and all the responsibilities in it. He would always see the bills, complaints, and deadlines. One day he decided to quit work and unplug from responsibility. Freedom at last! Then after 6 months winter hits and he found himself freezing, hungry, dirty, and alone. He hit your knees and prayed for help.

Response #1

As he was getting up a police officer drives by, but he hid. In the morning a social worker visits the camp and speaks to him about a shelter. He learn the shelter has a lot of structure and that he would need to do chores, have curfew, and try to get a job. He thought of the responsibilities, work, etc. He thought about the loss of freedom and decided not to do it. The next day he sees his old boss who has pity on him and offers up a job, but he declines because of pride.

Response #2

As he is getting up a police office drives by, sees him and calls him over to the car. He humbly goes to the officer seeking to trust. The officer gives him coffee, food, and a blanket he just happened to have that night. In the morning a social worker comes by offering shelter, although uncomfortable and fearful for the changes that come with it, he humbly accepts. He continues to give himself, ideas, wants, and interests over to the trust in God and God's righteousness, which leads him into even more responsibility. Yet with his heart committed to seeking good, he finds it, and finds it in abundance. Instead of dreading the responsibility, bills, deadlines, and complaints, he sees the good in it and feels compassion. Instead of self-seeking, freedom and pride, he applies God-seeking, with love and peace. The next day his boss sees him, has pity on him and offers him a job. He becomes thankful for the opportunity to be placed in position to do more good for God. He finds he always liked working there and realized his attitude, thinking, and faith was the problem all along. He embraces humility to continue in love and peace to maintain his heart and mind as a slave to God's righteousness.

19 I am using an example from everyday life **because of your human limitations**. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so **now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness**. 20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What **benefit** did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? **Those things result in death!** 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have **become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life**. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in [b] Christ Jesus our Lord.

If we serve ourselves we seek after death. If we serve God we may find life. Each day we have a choice. If we forget to choose to serve God, don't feel like it, delay, or get distracted we will miss the grace offered to us. Our response impacts our soul.

22 “the **benefit you reap** leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.”

We will be slaves to something and we get to choose what that will be. This is a fact that is uncomfortable and it can create fear. Often times we respond with anger, defensiveness, and avoidance when information says we are wrong. We don't like to be wrong. But what does John say, 1 John 1:10 “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” If we hide from or avoid information that makes us uncomfortable we will not walk with God. God is perfect and being around others who are better than us can get uncomfortable. Yet being around others who are better helps us to become better. We must humble ourselves every day to seek Godly improvement. It always begins with a conscious choice.

The Unmerited Confusion

It's important to test our theology to see if it fits. Let's use our theology about grace and see if it fits with all areas of where grace is used in the Bible. If our theology only fits in certain verses and not others, we may need to change

our theology. Does it fit with salvation and teachings of Jesus? Does it fit with psalms, proverbs, and Moses? How well does our theology of grace fit?

Each person will need to work this one out on their own. Yet our theology will be proven by our lives and what we do with that grace. So let's test it for ourselves and ensure it fits with the rest of the Bible.

Think about the parables. How many parables describe a need for us to change, turn, repent, submit, humble, obey, serve, or follow? How many parables describe a negative result for those who choose wrong? Our choices have an impact on our souls.

Matthew 13:40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

Hebrews 6:8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

If we seek God and love God sincerely with all our heart, mind, and soul, humble ourselves to do God's will, and grow in God's ways we can receive God's goodness, the free gift of grace. If we choose to love and then do it we can know God. (1 John 4:7) These are conditions and facts throughout the Bible.

Works & Grace

There is a heavy emphasis on grace being a free gift. It is not something we earn or can create through works (going through motions with an ungodly attitude). Yet if we do not continue in good works (living right with God, righteousness) we may not receive grace. Read the parables and explain which one says God blesses those who don't grow and do good works. There are many parables that indicate God will judge our response to God's instructions.

Ephesians 2 Made Alive in Christ

2 As for you, you were **dead in your transgressions and sins**, 2 in which you **used to live when you followed the ways of this world** and of the ruler of the

kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

If we are alive in God’s grace we “are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” If we are not doing good works than we are not in God’s grace. Instead, we are “dead in your transgressions and sin.” Remember, sin means miss the mark which is the grace of God that leads to “good works.”

First we believe or have faith, then we follow and obey that belief which is God, God’s will, purpose, grace, righteousness, statutes, principles, character, ways, truth, path, etc. If we believe we respond accordingly in an improved Godly manner. We will be seeking after that which is more Godly. This grace of following the Spirit of God that has been given to us is a choice.

While we were sinning and disobedient, living in self-gratification, and following evil “desires and thoughts, we came to a point where we could receive God’s mercy. In Ephesians 2 it is obvious, for those who read the whole chapter objectively and thoroughly, the writer is describing a transformation. Keeping in mind we have a choice, which the writer skips over here (not mentioning it doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist), the person or people chose to be in God’s mercy, which means comply with and obey God from the heart, mind, soul, and strength which Jesus affirms us to do.

By grace, accepting God’s mercy, which means obedience and letting go the “gratifying of the flesh,” we were “raised up with Christ and seated in the heavenly realms,” which means we were now following Christ’s desires and

thoughts spiritually. This is an inward action we take to stay with grace, mercy, and God. “Through faith,” because by believing God is good and right we choose to obey God and are then saved by the gift of grace, God’s peace and love. It is “not by works, so no one can boast” because that would be about selfish pride which is not from God. It’s not the attitude of “look what I have done,” but instead it is the attitude of “look what God does in me as I serve Him.”

“We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Let’s take a good look at our attitude, thoughts, desires, and actions to see if indeed we are God’s handiwork doing good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Also, let’s ensure we are communicating and demonstrating more effectively how others who are God’s handiwork can do these good works.

The New Testament, Jesus Christ, and the Apostles teach it is about the manner of how we do things, love. Genetics do not affect us spiritually nor do genetics tell us what to do. We all have choices of what to do, obey, seek after, prioritize, think about, and follow.

There is a significant difference between outward actions and inward actions. Sometimes our outward actions match our inward conditions and sometimes they don’t. God’s Spirit, another gift, is within us. Are we listening to that Spirit? Jesus points to the cup as an example describing how it is what is inside us is more important than the outside. Jesus uses the term “white washed tombs” because some were focused on their outward appearance instead of their inward condition. Jesus emphasizes the one command that is the most important, love. We ought to love God with all our inward parts. All the law hangs on this love. This love is a free gift of saving grace with which we can now choose to think, feel, and participate.

The orienting of our hearts and minds correctly into this humble God serving attitude is to die to our old ways, customs, rituals, idols, wants, passions, interests, playthings, associates, and hangouts. Such a drastic change similar to recovery from addiction. Perhaps this is why many who recover from addiction and build a relationship with God can have a deeper spiritual insight. They have died from the old life and live life new with God. Yet, unfortunately, many give up following God, return to the old ways, and seek after destruction again. The life with grace is contrary to the world, Ephesians

2:2 “**used to live when you followed the ways of this world,**” so if we return to our old ways we will get the spiritual results we used to get.

Those who turn to God follow God with their heart, mind, soul, and strength. The following scripture describes what such people seek to do with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Those who read it and then forget it are not following God. Think about the children’s game follow the leader. They do exactly as they see their leader doing. This is exactly what Jesus was saying in John 15. Our sinful ways of thinking will try to change this truth. We choose what to obey, God’s truth or our sinful thinking.

"Behave like a Christian" Romans 12:9-21 NKJV

"Instructions for Christian Living" Ephesians 4:17-32 NIV

"The Christians walk" Ephesians 4:17 - 32 NASB

"What the Christians are to do" Philippians 4:1-9 NCV Colossians 4:2-6 NCV

"Christian Order" 1 Corinthians 11:1-22 NASB

Are we seeing how we can grow in these? Not looking at how to grow is avoiding growth. Think about it. Avoidance is simply not giving appropriate attention to God. Think about what appropriate attention to God is and how the Bible describes it. Those who are in God’s saving grace have good fruit. **Matthew 7:20 “Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”**

Colossians 1:10 “that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”

Personal Story - Intentions without action

There have been times when I get the idea to do something good, then another thought comes in and I choose to obey it. I remember a time I got the idea to get my wife a card and write something nice in it. I thought of her smile and how good she would feel. I felt good about that. Then I thought of something else and didn’t get the card. Grace was there for a minute and then I followed some other idea and left the gift. “The road to hell was paved with good intentions.”

(Read the parable of the sower now and see the similarity)

Instead of just talking about God's love we ought to be walking in it. We ought to be walking with others in demonstration of it. Instead of standing around smelling how good the bar-b-q is, being satisfied with the idea of eating, we ought to take action to get to the food and eat. God's love is great, but we need to drink and eat that love to have it and help others toward it.

Two Stepping

In the book "Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions" on page 113 it describes how some people decide all of the steps are not needed. It uses the term "two-stepping" describing how some people do the first step, admitting they have a problem, and then the 12th step, go and try to help others. Does this sound familiar? Think of Christians who say they believe in God, skip confession and repentance, and then seek out to save others. There is an old saying in 12 step meetings, "carry the message, not the mess." What does Jesus say?

Matthew 7:5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Put everything to the test. **1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

Anyone who talks about God's grace and love, but does not provide it, may be speaking from another motive. How well can someone who is dishonest follow the God of truth or someone impatient follow a God who is patient? Yet in order to see whether anyone is growing with God we must understand where they are coming from. We must witness their path over time to see truthfully whether they are progressing, regressing, or stagnate. Most importantly and primarily we must see that we are progressing.

Faith gives access to grace

We always have a choice and many times it is a difficult one. We have access to grace through faith, the faith of Abraham, and Abraham made a very difficult choice to prove his faith. Are we making choices like Abraham to prove our faith. Just how much exactly does our faith demonstrate our love for God?

Luke 3:8 “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”

It is essential that we learn God through obeying, not by reading alone. It is through the giving of ourselves to God in love for others that we experience God’s grace more and more. As we humble ourselves and grow in God’s ways we become able to examine and understand God more and more. As we become more patient and compassionate we can experience patience and compassion that can teach us the intangible spiritual qualities of God. As we embrace peace and love we may witness its spiritual goodness. As we right our wrongs, cleanse our conscience, purify our hearts, and restore others faith we can cover a multitude of sin.

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”

Fervent love means great zeal. Loving others is not saying “I love you,” it is acting in ways where the other person feels loved or blessed.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

We ought to love each other with actions and not just words.

We can fall from grace

Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

If it was true that grace is unmerited, that we have not control over being with it or in it, then how can we fall from it? We have a choice.

2 Timothy 1:9 He has saved us and **called us to a holy life**—not because of anything we have done but **because of his own purpose and grace**. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus **before the beginning of time**,

2 Peter 3:18 But **grow in the grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Not only can we grow, but we are instructed to grow, which implies we know how to grow in it.

Hebrews 12:15 **See to it that no one falls short of the grace** of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

“See to it” means we are able to influence grace and the being in it. We can guide people toward it.

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

Those who choose to humble themselves can get more grace than those who choose pride.

Responsibility through grace

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 **“By the grace God has given me**, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will **test the quality of each person’s work**. 14 **If what has been built survives**, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will **suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.**”

In this passage, the worker has been given a tool, grace, to build. This implies the worker understands grace, how to use it, and what to do with it. This worker has been trained and is able to do God’s will. Now if the worker does

not do their job, that worker will suffer “as one escaping through the flames.” Think about fleeing from a burning building. How does that feel?

More various verses with grace

1 Peter 4:16-19 16 However, **if you suffer as a Christian**, do not be ashamed, but praise God **that you bear that name**. 17 For it is **time for judgment** to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, **what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?** 18 And, “If it is **hard for the righteous to be saved**, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” [a] 19 So then, **those who suffer according to God’s will** should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Isaiah 26:10 But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the Lord.

Those who set their minds on evil and ungodly things can miss grace. They do not look for it so they do not see it.

Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication.

Grace is spirit. God is spirit.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Grace works with truth just as God is truth. God is full of grace.

Acts 15:11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

Acts 15 NKJV⁸ So **God, who knows the heart**, [a]acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, **9** and made no distinction

between us and them, **purifying their hearts by faith.** 10 Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus [b]Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

This purifying the heart by faith is discussed by different authors in the New Testament. It seems to be necessary for Christians. It could play a significant role with grace and salvation.

We ought to live a Holy life

2 Timothy 1:9 NIV He has saved us and **called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done** but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

2 Timothy 1:9 NKJV **9** who has saved us and **called us with a holy calling, not according to our works**, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

2 Timothy 1:9 NASB **9** who has saved us and **called us with a holy calling, not according to our works**, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

2 Timothy 1:8-10 Message “We can only keep on going, after all, by the power of God, **who first saved us and then called us to this holy work. We had nothing to do with it.** It was all his idea, a gift prepared for us in Jesus long before we knew anything about it. But we know it now.”

2 Timothy 1:9 NET **9** He is the one **who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not based on our works but on his own purpose and grace**, granted to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

2 Timothy 1:9 WEB **9** who saved us and called us with a holy calling, **not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace**

A holy calling means we change and are different. We follow something holy in obedience. We seek it out and act upon it. We obey not because of a law, but because our hearts and minds desire God’s purpose and grace.

2 Corinthians 1:12 [Paul's Change of Plans] Now this is our boast: **Our conscience testifies** that we have **conducted ourselves** in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with **integrity and godly sincerity**. We have done so, **relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace**.

2 Corinthians 6:1 As God's co-workers we urge you **not to receive God's grace in vain**.

2 Corinthians 8:6-8 6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this **act of grace** on your part. 7 But **since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you[a]—see that you also excel in this grace of giving**. 8 I am not commanding you, but I want to **test the sincerity of your love** by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

Galatians 1:6 [No Other Gospel] I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who **called you to live in the grace** of Christ and are **turning** to a different gospel—

We are to choose grace.

Galatians 2:21 I do not **set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness** could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

We can set grace aside. This passage seems to identify grace as righteousness.

Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have **fallen away from grace**.

Is this unmerited disfavor? How does one fall from grace, trying something else? And what is trying something else? It is choosing something else and taking action toward it.

Ephesians 3:7 I became a **servant of this gospel** by the gift of God's grace given me **through the working of his power**.

“Through the working of his power” is to do God’s will.

Ephesians 6:24 Grace to **all who love** our Lord Jesus Christ with an **undying love**.

This verse indicates a certain type of person, one who loves Christ with and undying love.

Colossians 1:6 that has come to you. In the same way, the **gospel is bearing fruit and growing** throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and **truly understood God’s grace**.

We can truly understand God’s grace. Those who bear fruit and grow.

Colossians 4:6 Let your **conversation be always full of grace**, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

We are to see that our “conversation be always full of grace” meaning we can choose to participate in it.

2 Timothy 2:1 [The Appeal Renewed] You then, my son, **be strong in the grace** that is in Christ Jesus.

WEB “be strengthened in the grace”

Message “throw yourself into this work for Christ”

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared that **offers** salvation to all people.

NKJV “grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **12** teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,”

This “grace of God that brings salvation” teaches us how to live.

Philemon 1:25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ **be with your spirit**.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then **approach** God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may **receive mercy and find grace to help us** in our time of need.

We can "approach God's throne of grace with confidence" and we can "find grace to help us."

1 Peter 1:2 **through the sanctifying work of the Spirit**, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours **in abundance**.

"Through the sanctifying work of the Spirit" and being "obedient to Jesus Christ" we may have "Grace and peace."

1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should **use whatever gift you have received** to serve others, as faithful **stewards of God's grace** in its various forms.

We ought to be "stewards of God's grace."

2 Peter 3:18 But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

2 Peter 3 NKJV Be Steadfast

14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, **be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless**; 15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but **grow in the grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.