

Yet Not I, But...

Did you know that the Apostle Paul says “Yet not I” on 3 different occasions?

Why? What’s the significance of those three little words?

We’re going to start here in 1 Cor. 7. Look at vs. 10. He says, [1Co 7:10](#) “*And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband...*”

Of course, the point of this verse is pretty straightforward. When there are issues in a marriage, priority #1 is - don’t leave your spouse. Pursue peace as much as possible. Just as Adam said in Gen. 2:24 that a man *shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*, so too, the woman should cleave unto her husband.

But the bigger point is to be at peace. If at all possible, as much as lieth within you, be at peace. If your spouse is an unbeliever, if at all possible, be at peace.

But it’s interesting that Paul says, I command, but it’s not me, it’s the Lord. Paul may have been writing this commandment, but he was sharing the words of the Lord Himself. The Lord commanded Paul to command us, and Paul would later say in [1Co 14:37](#) *that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*. This wasn’t normal inspiration of Scripture by the Spirit, which is usually referred to as Non-Verbal, Plenary Inspiration in which the Holy Spirit moved the writer to pen the thoughts of God in his own words. This verse falls under the idea of Mechanical Inspiration. Which is dictation. “Thus saith the Lord Himself.” His words to us.

Identified with Christ

This next verse is so obscure we won’t even turn there. You’ve probably never heard it before.

A little verse found in Galatians 2:20, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*”

I know a lot of people love this verse for many different reasons, but I love this verse primarily because we who came to Christ in faith can embrace such a mighty declaration of our eternal life through our identification with Christ in the victory He accomplished for us at Calvary. The same tenets you accept by faith to become saved are the same tenets you accept by faith to reckon everything you are in Christ. It’s as if God the Father is saying, now that you’ve reckoned that my Son died, was buried, and resurrected for you, now go reckon that truth for yourself as being dead, buried, and resurrected *with My Son*.

Identification goes hand-in-hand with the gospel because in order for you to become a new creature alive unto God freed from the bondage and condemnation of sin, you to have become dead, buried, and resurrected *with Christ*.

The fact that identification goes hand-in-hand with the gospel is illustrated by Paul challenging you at the beginning of Romans 6 and says repeatedly, “know ye not?” He’s saying, basically, “don’t you realize the magnitude of what Christ accomplished for you, in you, and through you? In order for His eternal life to become a reality the moment you believe, by logical necessity, you must be dead, buried, and resurrected with Christ!”

When we place our faith in Him, we are forever identified with His work on the cross, spiritually transformed as Christ was literally transformed, and we’re made to be risen with Him by the same power found within the glory of God the Father, which raised Christ from the dead, which

means we're living His resurrection life through our identification with His work on the cross. And now we can say, we are dead, buried, and already risen with Christ. Just consider what the Scriptures tell us. Are we dead with Christ? Gal. 2:20 says, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live...*" Are we buried with Christ? Rom. 6:4 says that we are "*buried with him by baptism...*" And are we risen with Christ? Col. 2:12 tells us "*...ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*" We are dead, buried, and risen *with Christ* living in *His* newness of life right now! We can now say as Paul says in Gal. 2:20, I've died *with* Christ, but I'm not dead! I'm alive! How is this possible? Because of the life of Christ in me, His resurrection through my identification with His death with the baptism of the Spirit. His death became my death! His resurrection became my resurrection! And now *the life* that *I now live in the flesh*, the eternal life I now possess in this sin-cursed Earth-suite, this life *I live*, I live this life *by the faith of the Son of God*. Everything I have, every promise guaranteed is a sure thing because of the faithful integrity of the Son of God

1 Corinthians 15:10

1Cor. 15:10 "*But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*"

This is an amazing verse. Notice that Paul highlights three different aspects about His grace: the grace that transformed him, the grace that was upon him, and the grace that was with him.

He first says, "*by the grace of God I am what I am...*" This is the grace that transformed him, the grace that made him alive unto God as a new creature able to serve the Lord.

It is God's prerogative to say, *I am that I am*, and yet, it is our privilege that we can say, "*by the grace of God I am what I am.*" We are nothing but what God makes us, and by faith, we are rich in everything *because* of His grace to us.

Paul wasn't bragging that HE excelled in his labors because of His grace. Paul was bragging His grace was what made him able to labor for the Lord, and in everything he did, he was always indebted to His grace for the results.

So why did Paul say *by the grace of God I am what I am*? What was it that God made him in Christ that would make Paul say such a thing? This can only come from our identification with Christ's work at Calvary. In that moment of salvation, we are joined in an eternal union to Christ in Heaven and the all-sufficiency of His work on the cross. Christ's life becomes our life. Christ's victory becomes our victory. Christ's riches become our riches. Christ's glory becomes our glory. When we place our faith in Him, we are brought into the very *perfection of Christ*. We are brought into the *perfection of His work on the cross*. We are brought into the *perfection of His victory*. When we place our faith in Him, we are forever identified with His work on the cross, spiritually transformed as Christ was literally transformed, and we're made to be risen with Him by the same power found within the glory of God the Father, which raised Christ from the dead. But, see, there's more to 1 Cor. 15:10 than just identification.

Grace upon Paul

Paul also speaks of the grace that was bestowed *upon* him, the grace that was *upon* him.

Isn't that amazing?

I'm reminded of what was said of the apostles at Pentecost in **Act 4:33** *"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."* Notice that it wasn't just grace that was upon them but *great grace* was upon them. Christ who knew no sin simply had the grace of God upon him, but these great sinners who were willing to courageously serve the Lord before an unbelieving people needed great grace to achieve great things on that great day of Pentecost.

So what did this mean, exactly, that *great grace* was upon the twelve disciples?

In the same sense as grace was upon the Lord. They were given unmerited favors of God in the spiritual *and* physical sense.

In the spiritual sense, they had supernatural spiritual gifts, like being able to speak in tongues or the gift of knowledge like we saw with Peter and Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

They were also recipients of God's favors in the physical sense such as when the angel released Peter from prison.

And so coming back to 1 Cor. 15, we have Paul, in the early part of his ministry saying of himself that God's *grace was bestowed upon* him. I'd suggest that Paul means this in the same sense as what was said of the twelve disciples. I think of **Gal 2:8**, *"For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles."*

Paul was given supernatural spiritual gifts, like healing, and God helped Paul in a physical sense, such as when he was stoned outside of Lystra. God brought him back to life and he was able to march right back into the town that killed him and continue preaching to the people.

One can't really suggest that this was merely an apostolic exception either. Many saints received supernatural gifts in the early part of Paul's ministry.

But can it be said of us that God's grace is upon us?

Absolutely. But in a different sense. Before God created the world, He looked down the corridor of time, and He thought of each one of us in this period of grace, and He determined not who would be saved but how we would be saved and what our standing before Him would be, holy, elect, and deeply beloved, as beloved as His Son. He also determined to shower us with His grace, all spiritual blessings in this life, working in us through His Word and His Spirit, and we're recipients of His grace in the life to come being co-inheritors with Christ, inheriting all things in Heaven and Earth.

God the Father could not do more for us and He would not do less. His grace is upon us all being given the gift of eternal life, being blessed with all spiritual blessings, being seated in Heavenly places, and in the life to come, being co-inheritors reigning with Christ.

Yet Not I, But Grace

Then Paul says something most interesting. He says, *"but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet **not I**, but the grace of God which was with me."*

Notice he doesn't say the grace of God that was IN ME, but he connects his labor to the *"grace of God which was with me."* He also speaks of grace with him in the past tense because it was with him when he labored abundantly.

What does it mean His grace was with him when he labored? How does that work exactly – this grace that was with him?

We can certainly say that His grace is with us wherever we go. Just as we cannot undo what

God has made us in Christ, so too, His grace never fails us nor leaves us. His grace is always why we are able to do any good thing we do for the Lord, because His grace is what transformed us to be alive unto God to do His good pleasure.

We also know that His grace is our influence, our inspiration, our motivation, the fuel to our engines, when we serve the Lord. The result of His grace is an attitude of gratitude in us as we serve Him. Because of His grace, we can and should give the Lord praise for every good thing we accomplish.

This verse isn't simply about the life of Christ living in us but about us working alongside that specific aspect of His nature that reigns today, His grace. He says, "*I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*" This wasn't about Paul. This was about God's grace. Paul was always indebted to, and attributed any success he had in his labors to, God's grace that was with him. All that is good in us, all that is good that flows out of us comes from that same holy stream of divine grace.

Notice that Paul makes the connection between his labor and the grace that was *with* him, which has to mean that Paul was always working alongside of, working in conjunction with, operating hand-in-hand with, His grace when he labored. God doesn't turn us into robots. We must put effort into our own spiritual lives so that we may operate alongside His grace, which is always with us. True service for God today is living in a way that is in perfect synergy with His grace. Success in our walk is the result of our mind working in synergy with the sound doctrines of grace, and the result is that we'd be conformed to the image of His Son in our walk.

This spiritual synergy is us living in perfect alignment with how His grace operates today, us living in perfect agreement with what His grace has made us in His Son and how His grace motivates us. This must also mean that if we can labor alongside His grace, then it must also be possible for believers to live and to labor in a way that works *against* His grace.

How does that happen?

Working Against His Grace

First, you cannot help but work against His grace if you don't even know how His grace operates. You are working against His grace if you don't even know what His sound doctrines of grace are. You are working against His grace if you're living in the flesh because His grace freed you from the condemnation of sin.

You are working against His grace if you fall into the trap of legalism like the Galatians. Falling from His grace in that sense is the same as working against His grace, because grace is diametrically opposed to legalism. You are working against His grace if you believe that we're under some works-based acceptance system where we have to do things to earn God's approval to get into Heaven when Paul makes it abundantly clear that our salvation is not based upon His acceptance of what we have done for Him but rather our acceptance of what Christ has done for us on the cross of Calvary. As J.C. O'Hair would say, "We're not saved by how we live! We live by how we are saved!" So you are working against His grace if you think you have to do things, like asceticism, in order to achieve what God has already achieved for you when He identified you with His Son through the baptism of the Spirit.

But there is effort needed on our part in order to work alongside His grace, and that is to renew your mind, to study the Word rightly divided, which is to extract from Paul's letters God's

will for us today. If you do not study, if you do not meditate upon His Word, and if you do not pray, then you are not working *with* His grace because you're not growing spiritually *in* His grace. You will not appropriate the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, if the eyes of your understanding are never enlightened, if you do not know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

You will not be able to put on the new man, and you will remain stuck in the dead patterns and defeated thinking of the flesh. You will not experience the empowerment of the Spirit, what it means to be strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man when you gain the knowledge of all the spiritual blessings we've been given in Christ! You will not change your thinking by renewing your mind, the process by which you gain "*the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [our] Lord,*" a knowledge that brings us unto "*all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,*" a process in which you realize who you are in Christ, accepted in the beloved, eternally secure, sealed by the spirit unto the day of redemption, blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places, forgiven all trespasses, made righteous as Christ is righteous, literally and actually freed from the dominion of sin, and you live your life according to those truths knowing that His grace has become your sufficiency.

As we often say [on our Grace Life Podcast](#), the true battlefield of today's spiritual warfare is in the mind. Ignorance of His Word is defeat and the gain of spiritual knowledge is not only victory in our walk but it's how we access true power from His Spirit. So working with His grace first means a renewed mind studying the letters of Paul.

The Power of His Grace

Working with His grace is power. Consider **Eph 3:7** "*Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.*"

Notice here that Paul's gift was the grace of God itself, which made him able to become a minister.

How does one define the *gift of the grace God*?

I'd suggest it's more than just eternal life. It's the whole package of grace. It's every aspect of everything God made us in Christ. It's every spiritual blessing we've received from Heaven. It's the indwelling of the entire triune Godhead, and it's every ounce of glory that'll be revealed in us and given to us when it's all over.

It's also the gift of the new man, and us working with His grace is recognizing everything we are in Christ, reckoning the total transformation by His grace, and it's us fully putting on all the attributes of the new man. That's working with His grace.

I love the fact here in Eph. 3:7 that God's gift of grace is also intricately tied to His *power*. God's grace and power go hand-in-hand, and we appropriate that power when we walk in conjunction with His grace. He says *according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power*. What Paul is saying is that God's eternal power gave him that whole package of grace, which transformed his life and made him able to be a minister for Christ. The same eternal power found within the glory of God the Father that resurrected Christ from the grave, is the same power that spiritually transformed Paul, which transforms all of us

the moment we believed, making us all dead, buried, and risen with His Son, victorious with His Son over sin and death, making us new creatures, freed from sin - all accomplished through His power in that *gift of the grace of God*.

We cannot have the whole package of His grace and be transformed by that gift without the instrumentality of God's eternal power, which is the Holy Spirit.

But, see, the gift of grace is even more than this. It's more than just the power that was used to transform us into new creatures. Something else comes with that big package called the *gift of the grace of God*. We are also given His power to work in us and through us, particularly when we are weak. Part of that gift of the grace of God is the power of God working inside us, which is also what Paul's saying here in Ephesians 3:7.

It's not just the power that transformed him that made him able to be a minister. It's the effectual power that continually worked in him to continually make him an effective minister, which is true for all of us. The power of His grace continually works in us through His Word and His Spirit to strengthen us and make us effective in our ministries especially when we are weak. The point is – we can only appropriate His power when we are working *with* His grace. You might remember that Paul's prayer for us in Ephesians 1 is that through our studies we may come to grasp *what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power*, and he reminds us in Ephesians 3 that God *is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us*. We won't even know we have that power if we do not study His Word, and we cannot appropriate that power unless our walk is in alignment with His grace. And it's when we study the entirety of His gift of eternal life that we find ourselves swimming in the deep ocean of *His grace*. Then we reckon those truths a reality. We live our lives according to those truths. We walk alongside His grace, which empowers us, and the result is great labor and good works. And in all of this love, all of this knowledge about His grace, which gives us power, as well as all of this peace of mind and heart, we are made able to work in conjunction with His grace knowing His grace transformed us, knowing His grace has become our sufficiency, knowing His grace abounds in us, knowing His grace will never fail us nor leave us. Because of the empowering knowledge about his whole package of grace, we can labor abundantly with Paul and have no reason to fear anything in this life, because *in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*.

Because of that gift of grace, we have no reason to fear anything. Because of that gift of grace, we were transformed by His power and God is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us*. Because of that gift of grace, we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts and our comprehension of the fullness of His love for us enables us, empowers us to be *filled with all the fulness of God*. And because of that gift of grace, we have peace with God and the peace of God, we have peace of mind and heart, the peace that surpasses all human understanding.

To grow in our spiritual lives, to perfect holiness in our walks, and to find empowerment from His grace, we have to labor alongside His grace, not against it. And any success we have, our response is always, "yet not I, but Christ" or "yet not I, but grace."

I think of **Col 1:29** *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*. Here, Paul connects his labor with God working mightily within him, his power to strive intensely for the ministry is in direct proportion to how much Christ was working in him and through him, but Christ cannot work in us or through us if we are working against His grace.

Closing

So the question becomes, “How empowered are you?”

Empowerment begins with you reckoning as true everything God says you are in His Son – dead, buried, and risen with Christ, the old you gone forever, you’re now a new creature, *behold all things new*, and you are literally freed from the power and bondage of sin.

How do you see yourself?

Do you look up at the Lord in tears and regret through the eyes of the old man or do you look upon yourself with joy and gratitude through the eyes of the new man because you now see yourself as God sees you in His Son – perfect, complete, and as righteous as Christ Himself? How much time do you spend in His Word? Because your inner man is strengthened by the Spirit through the study of His Word. You cannot appropriate that power you already have without a renewed mind and having the words of Christ dwelling in you richly.

And all of this leads to the final question – are you wrapped up in the things of this world? Then I have to ask, where is your mind? Is it down here full of anxiety because unbelievers are acting like unbelievers or is your mind fixed above? Because you’re already risen with Christ and where is He? He is at the right hand of the Father. And you are declared by God to be complete in Him who is Head over all things.