

The Glory of Grace

By Richard Jordan

If you find it difficult to live the Christian life you are not alone. Many Christians live second-rate lives with feelings of insecurity, discontent, anxiety and impotency. For them, the joy and victory that the gospel of grace promises seem little more than a theoretical illusion, a fleeting ghost in the face of disappointments that trap them in a syndrome of stress, self-pity and depression. Sadly missing are the confidence, assurance and consistency that come from the life of freedom that faith in Jesus Christ brings for every believer.

Grace is the answer. Legalism is the enemy. Victory in the Christ life is obtained in the same manner as salvation: by appropriating, receiving, believing—not by works.

Romans 6:11-13 is a key passage every believer needs to master:

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

“Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.”

This is the process: “Reckon yourself dead unto sin, but alive unto God.” How is this possible? Just before the above passage, Paul had explained:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3).

The moment we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we die—*with Him*. Our baptism into Christ’s death sets us free from sin, “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (verse 7). But grace does not stop there: the wonderful thing is that we can die and yet still live—*with Him*.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

It is only after we die—with Christ—that we are able to really start living—again, *with Him*. Thus Paul goes on to state:

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:17,18,22).

All of this is succinctly summed up in a verse every sincere believer should know by heart:

“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” (Galatians 2:20).

How can I be dead and alive at the same time? The explanation is clear: It is not I any more but it is Christ who lives in me and it is His life—His power, energy and wisdom—that is to be on display in my actions and attitudes. The wonderful truth is that Jesus Christ gave His life *for me* at Calvary, so that He might give His life *to me* when I trusted Him, so that He might live His life *through me* day by day.

This is the glory of grace: not simply that it saves us from eternal damnation in “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8); there is more, *much more*. The glory of God’s grace to us in Christ is that His life is available to us right *now*.

Speaking about the saints, Colossians 1:27 says:

“To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

“The riches of the glory of this mystery” is defined as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” This wealth is what God wants His saints to appreciate and rejoice in. If all you understand about grace is that we are not Israel and they are not us, you are missing the real wealth, because the “riches of His grace” are found in God’s saving a bunch of godless Gentile sinners and then coming and living His life in them.

Being set free from sin and having the life that spoke the universe into existence living in us is “the riches of the glory of this mystery,” indeed.

It is this truth of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” that empowers the believer’s walk. To be “dead to sin” provides needed freedom from sin’s dominion; to be “alive unto God” provides the capacity to use this freedom to bring forth “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:11).

Galatians 4:1,2 demonstrates that a basic difference between a child and an adult is the issue of *freedom*. What child is *required* and forced to do, an adult does *voluntarily*. What a child does in *fear*, an adult does in *freedom*.

Freedom is an awesome thing. Although it can be and too often is misused, when it is used for its intended purpose, our freedom in Christ is our most valuable spiritual asset. There are two aspects to freedom: freedom *from* and freedom *for*.

By God’s grace we have been freed *from* sin—from both its condemnation and its control. Free from guilt and shame. Free from the downward impulses and urges we couldn’t stop when in bondage to sin. Free from the tyranny of others’ expectations, opinions and demands. But this is not all—not by far.

God’s grace has also made us free *for* service. We are free to obey, free to love, free to forgive others as well as ourselves, free to live beyond the limitations of human effort, free to serve and glorify Christ, free to live as adult members of the family of God.

When we come to appreciate the freedom of our Sonship, we recognize that we are free voluntarily to do that which formerly we did in fear. As adults we can voluntarily apply the wisdom of God to the details of our lives by making decisions based on the Word of God.

God is surely glorified when believers bear the fruits of their righteous standing in Christ. These “fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ”—that is, they are mediated through *Christ in us*. There is literally an outbreak

of the righteous character of God on the stage of human history through the lives of believers who bear these fruits.

This is, of course, the result of “the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (I Thessalonians 2:13).

We could never accomplish this by our own doings, no matter how well intentioned. Just as an apple tree bears apples because of the life that is in it, so the believer bears the fruits of righteousness because of the life of Christ living through us.

When Paul says, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13), he is referring to the Spirit of God working in the believer’s inner man through the Word of God. Our service is not born out of an outward constraint or necessity, but rather is the result of the life of Christ in us working itself out through the members of our body as we voluntarily apply God’s wisdom to the details of our lives. Thus it is that “the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (II Corinthians 4:10,11).

The glory of God’s grace to us in Christ goes far beyond simply what He has and is doing *for us*. It goes on into the manifestation of what He is doing *for Himself* through us, for we are simply “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).